Istanbul

From Wikitravel

Europe : Turkey : Marmara : Istanbul Province : Istanbul

Contents

- Districts
- [-] Understand
  - History
  - Orientation
  - Climate
- [-] Get in
  - By plane
  - By train
  - By bus
  - By boat
  - By car
- [-] Get around
  - [-] Public transport
    - By bus
    - By metro
    - By tram
  - [-] Information for disabled travelers
    - Buses
    - Trams
    - Metro
  - By boat
  - By train
  - By taxi
  - By shared taxi
- [-] See
  - Tulips
- [-] Do
  - Hamams
  - Nargile (Hooka/Water Pipe)
  - [-] Walking tours
    - Theodosian Walls Walk
    - The Classic Bosphorus Cruise
  - Football
- [-] Learn
  - Ottoman Turkish
- Work
- Buy
- [-] Eat
  - Snacks
- Drink
- Sleep

Istanbul is a huge city with several district articles containing sightseeing, restaurant, nightlife and accommodation listings — consider printing them all.

Istanbul (Turkish: İstanbul) is Turkey's most populous city, and its cultural and financial center. Located on both sides of the Bosphorus, the narrow strait between the Black Sea and the Marmara Sea, Istanbul bridges Asia and Europe both physically and culturally. Istanbul's population is estimated to be between 12 and 19 million people, making it also the largest in Europe and one of the largest cities in the world.

Istanbul is one of three European Capitals of Culture in 2010 [1]

Istanbul Kuponlar
Her gün muhteşem bir kupon. İstanbul'u %70 kadar azına yaşayın.
www.SehirFirsati.com/Istanbul

3+1 Residence Göktürk
Konfor ve Huzur mu
Anyorsunuz? Saban
Residence Sizleri Bekliyor!
sabaninsaat.com/
Residence_Gokturk
Districts

Sultanahmet—Old City
Essentially Constantinople of Roman, Byzantine, and much of the Ottoman period, this is where most of the famous historical sights of Istanbul are located.

Galata
Housing many of the nightlife venues of the city, this district which includes Beyoğlu, İstiklal Street, and Taksim Square has also its own share of sights and accommodation.

New City
Main business district of the city, also home to many modern shopping malls, and districts such as Elmadağ, Nişantaşı, and Etiler.
**Bosphorus**  
European bank of Bosphorus that is dotted by numerous palaces, parks, water-front mansions, and bohemian neighborhoods.

**Golden Horn**  
Banks of Golden Horn, the estuary that separates European Side into distinctive districts. **Eyüp** with an Ottoman ambience is located here.

**Princes’ Islands**  
An excellent getaway from the city, made up of an archipelago of nine car-free islands—some of them small, some of them big—with splendid wooden mansions, verdant pine forests and nice views—both on the islands themselves, and also on the way there.

**Asian Side**  
Eastern half of Istanbul, with lovely neighborhoods at the Marmara and Bosphorus coasts.

**Western Suburbs**  
Western chunk of the European Side.

---

**Understand**

**History**

Expanding the ancient Greek colony of **Byzantium** by the order of the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great, the imperial city of **Constantinople** was for nearly a thousand years the last remaining outpost of the Roman (later termed Eastern Roman or Byzantine) Empire. It was finally conquered by the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II on May 29th, 1453, an event often used to mark the end of the Middle Ages. It was the nerve center for military campaigns that were to enlarge the Ottoman Empire dramatically. By the mid 1500s, Istanbul, with a population of almost half a million, was a major cultural, political, and commercial center. Ottoman rule continued until it was defeated in WWI and Istanbul was occupied by the allies. When the Republic of Turkey was born in 1923 after the War of Independence, Kemal Atatürk moved its capital to the city of Ankara. However, Istanbul has continued to expand dramatically; today its population is approximately 14 million and increases at an estimated 400,000 immigrants per year. Industry has expanded even as tourism has grown. It continues to be a city that creates its own history at the intersection where both continents meet.

**Orientation**

Istanbul is divided in three by the north-south **Bosphorus Strait** (Istanbul Bogazi), the dividing line between Europe and Asia, the estuary of the **Golden Horn** (Haliç) bisecting the western part and the **Sea of Marmara** (Marmara Denizi) forming a boundary to the south. Most sights are concentrated in the old city on the peninsula of **Sultanahmet**, to the west of the Bosphorus between the Horn and the Sea. Across the Horn to the north are **Galata**, **Beyoğlu** and
**Taksim**, the heart of modern Istanbul, while **Kadıköy** is the major district on the comparatively less-visited Anatolian side of the city. The Black Sea forms the northern boundary of Istanbul.

### Climate

Forget the stereotypical Istanbul image of a city of 1001 Nights situated in the desert amidst date palms. It lies on the same latitude as New York City to which it bears many similarities in climate and vegetation, as they both do not enjoy warm sea currents such as the Gulf Stream unlike the Mediterranean cities of Naples and Barcelona which also lie on the same latitude and are therefore much warmer and exotic in climate and vegetation than is normal for this latitude and for the very northerly Western Europe as well. And again unlike the stereotype it snows in this city, almost every winter - and a lot occasionally, although the standard precipitation is rain and sleet.

Summer is generally hot as expected averaging around 27ºC during the day and 18ºC at night. High relative humidity levels and the ‘concrete-island effect’ only make things worse. Expect temperatures of up to 35º C for the hottest days of the year. Summer is also the driest season, but it does rain, albeit not a lot, as showers which tend to last for 15-30 minutes, and the sun usually reappears again on the same day. Flash floods are a common occurrence after heavy rainfalls (especially during summer), due to the city’s hilly topography and inadequate sewage systems.

Winter is cold and wet averaging 2ºC at night and 7ºC during the day, and although rarely below freezing during the day, high relative humidity levels and the wind chill makes it feel bitterly cold and very unpleasant.

Snowfall which occurs almost annually is common between the months of December and March, with an annual total snow cover of almost three weeks, but average winter snowfall often varies considerably from year to year, and snow cover usually remains only for a few days after each snowfall, even if it snows a lot.

Late spring from second half of May to the first half of June and early autumn from the second half of September to the first half October are very pleasant and therefore the best times to visit the city, as it is neither cold nor hot, and still sunny, though the nights can be chilly.

---

**Climate**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>Jun</th>
<th>Jul</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sep</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily highs (°C)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nightly lows (°C)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be cloudy, rainy, or even snowy in Istanbul.
and rainfall is common.

For visitors an umbrella is essential during spring, autumn and winter, and during the summer to avoid the sun and occasionally the rain. However, it’s not such a big problem, since streets of Istanbul are suddenly filled by umbrella sellers as soon as it starts raining. Although the umbrellas they provide are a little shoddy, going rate is only TL 5 –about US$ 3- per umbrella (though you can find much better umbrellas for that price at shops if you look around a bit).

Light clothing is recommended during summer and a light jacket and/or light sweater if the summer evenings do become chilly, warm clothing is essential during winter and a mixture of the two during spring and autumn.

Also take note that due to its huge size, topography and maritime influences, Istanbul exhibits a multitude of distinct microclimates.

That is why different parts of Istanbul can experience different weather conditions at the same time. For example, at the same moment, it can be heavily raining in Sariyer in the north, mildly raining in Levent (northern terminus of metro line), while Taksim, the southern terminus of metro line, is having a perfectly sunny day.

Get in

By plane

Most planes arrive at Istanbul Atatürk Airport [2] (IATA: IST), 20 km west of the city centre. From the airport, there are various options for getting into Istanbul: you can take a taxi (about 30-35 TL to Taksim, and 25-30 TL to Sultanahmet), the express bus service run by the local airport service called "Havaş" [3] which departs half-hourly between 4AM-midnight and costs 10 TL to Taksim (and also to Etiller, and Kozyatağı), the public bus (line #96T) run by İETT costing 2.50 TL, which also stops at Aksaray close to Sultanahmet. Travel times are 20–40 minutes, but depend a lot on traffic, and Istanbul is heavily congested!

Then, there is the metro (signposted "light rail" in the airport, when you get outside the baggage claim its about a 10 minute walk in the airport to the metro line. Just follow the signs), which will take you directly to the Otogar (bus station) or to numerous stops within Istanbul (Aksaray in the city centre is the last stop, transfer stations for tram heading for deeper into old city is available at Zeytinburnu and Aksaray). It costs 1.50 TL (+an extra 1.50 TL when boarding the tram) and getting to Aksaray takes around 45 minutes. It is possible to be at your bus departing from Otogar within less than one hour after landing by taking the metro.
When entering the metro station, you need to buy a jeton (token) for 1.50 lira. Just hand the cashier 1.50 lira and he'll give you a token. They don't accept credit card or foreign currency here. This will get you on the red metro line (towards Aksaray). From this line, if you are going to Sultanahmet, you can transfer at Zeytinburnu and buy another jeton (1.50 lira). Note that the jeton token here is different than the first one. From Zeytinburnu, take the blue tram line T1, towards Kabataş which passes by: Sultanahmet, Eminönü and Tophane. The trip from the airport to Sultanahmet takes about 45 min.

**Other Notes:** Note that people are working on commission at the airport trying to make you use special shuttle buses for very high fees (30+ TL), so for people who wish to travel more economically the Metro/tram-combination is easy and fairly quick, and offers very good value. Travel by metro/tram cost 1 token per trip which is equal to 1.5 TL. No matter how long you travel, it cost 1 token per trip.

**Visa:** Depending on nationality, foreigners arriving in Istanbul may need to purchase tourist visas (USA and some EU citizens, depending on exact nationality, do). This must be done upon arrival before queuing for passport control. The windows for purchasing the visa are located immediately to the left of the main passport control booths. You may pay using foreign currency or Turkish Lira (TL) (only cash is accepted, though, no credit cards). The fee varies depending on the visitor's nationality. The fee is $20 (or €15 or 10 GBP) for visitors traveling with U.S. and Australian passports. As of Sep 2008, Canadians pay US$60 (or €45). As of Aug 2009, EU pays €15 (note that GB citizens may pay in Pounds), or the fee is 35 TL.

Note that **food and drinks** at the airport may cost up to five times more than in the city proper, like in other international airports. If you are traveling on budget and plan to spend some time at the airport, it may be wise to bring your own meals from town instead of buying them there. If you come from the Metro, there is a supermarket in the tunnel leading to the elevators / stairs to the airport proper where you can do some last-minute shopping.

Istanbul also has a second airport, **Sabiha Gökçen International Airport** [4](http://sabihagokcen.aero/home_page) (IATA: SAW), located in the Anatolian side of the city. Charter flights as well as European low cost carriers operate from here most of the time. A **Havaş bus** connects this airport with Taksim in the city center for 13 TL and takes about an hour. There is also a Havaş service to Kozyatağı, a transportation hub of Asian Side, which costs 10 TL. If you arrive in the middle of the night, you can move to the departure hall after passing customs and rest on very comfortable seats — you will even find coin-operated Japanese massage chairs. Then, at about 4AM (but better ask to be sure) the first Havaş bus will take you to town. The Havaş bus schedule is sometimes linked to the arrival/departure times of planes. A cheaper option is to take **public bus** line #E10 which brings you to Kadıköy, the main centre of the city in Asian Side, in 70 min (3 TL) and which operates 24 hours a day (once every hour between midnight and 6AM, more frequent in the rest of the day). From Kadıköy, you can take a ferry to Eminönü.
or Karaköy. Various private operators offer Internet bookable shared minibuses to central locations - a good choice when arriving late. A typical price being EUR 90 for 4 people to a hotel in Laleli.

By train

International trains from across Europe arrive at the station in Sirkeci, close to Sultanahmet. Asian trains arrive at Haydarpasa station. To get between the two, catch a ferry across the Bosphorus (see Get around). Marmaray, the Rail Tube Tunnel and Commuter Rail Mass Transit System is being built, and is projected to be one of the most challenging infrastructure projects in Turkey.

**Due to the collapse of a tunnel on the railtracks, trains between European destinations and Istanbul are currently terminating at Çerkezköy, with replacement bus service provided for the last ~100km to Istanbul.**

International trains to and from Sirkeci:

- Daily overnight train **Balkan Express** from Belgrade (Serbia) via Sofia (Bulgaria).
- Daily overnight **Bosphorus Express** from Bucharest (Romania) (departure at 12.16PM from Bucharest, arrival at 8.30AM in Istanbul, but expect about 2 hours delay) Cost: 146 Lei (about 30 euro) for a second class sleeper. No restaurant.
- **TransBalkan Express** from Budapest (Hungary) also has one of its cars attached to **Bosphorus Exp.** in Bucharest, thus providing a direct service from Budapest to Istanbul.
- Twice a day there are trains to Thessaloniki (Greece) - the slow morning train that takes almost a whole day and the fast night train that is quicker but more expensive.

International trains to and from Haydarpasa:

- Weekly trains to Aleppo (Syria) - taken out of service in 2008; it is unknown whether and when this service will resume.
- Weekly train to Teheran (Iran) (from Haydarpasa station) every Wednesday 10.55PM, costing 105 Turkish lira. It is also a good way to drive in the Eastern part of Turkey. You change trains on Friday at Lake Van which requires a four hour ferry ride to get across. Both the Turkish and Iranian trains are comfortable and clean. Waggon restaurants are rather cheap. Arrival in Tehran on Saturday at 6.45PM (but expect up to 10 hours delay...).

Schedule and price list of railway trips can be gathered from TCDD (Turkish Republic State Railways) [5] (http://tcdd.gov.tr/).

When arriving at the Turkish border from Europe, you may need to
buy a visa before getting your passport stamp. This counter accepts only Euros or USD, not Turkish Lira. You need to go to the visa counter first to purchase your visa, then to passport control to get it stamped.

**By bus**

Buses and coaches terminate at the colossal Esenler *Otogar*, about 10 km west of the city center, located on the European side. Courtesy minibuses or taxis will easily get you into the center. The metro also stops at the Otogar. There are several daily buses to/from cities in Romania and Bulgaria.

With 168 ticket offices and gates, shops, restaurants, hotel, police station, clinic and mosque, the Büyük Otogar is a town in itself. From/To Thessaloniki (Greece): ticket prices around €35 (one way) Sofia (Bulgaria): 10-15€

"Harem" is the major hub for the buses on the Anatolian (Asian) side, which can be reached easily from the European side with a Ferryboat.

**By boat**

International ferries, carrying tourist groups from outside Turkey stop at Karakoy Port. The port is ideally located close to Sultanahmet and Taksim.

Cruise ships often dock close to downtown. Passengers not on tours will find taxis readily available at the port entrance, and modern streetcars a short walk away.

**By car**

Traffic in Istanbul can be manic; expect a stressful drive because you will be cut off and honked at constantly. The city currently holds more than 1,500,000 automobiles and there is a strong demand for building of new or alternate highways.

If you've arrived in Istanbul by car, and you're not familiar with the streets, it's better to park your car in a safe place and take public transportation to get around.

The city, lying on two different continents and separated by the Bosphorus, is connected by two bridges. The bridge on the south, closer to the Marmara Sea, is called the "Bosphorus Bridge". The bridge closer to the Black Sea is named "Fatih Sultan Mehmet Bridge" and is longer than the first one. Both are toll bridges, and you must pay a fee to cross.

Since 2006, the Bosphorus Bridge toll stations do not accept cash, and payment must be made using electronic cards, either manually (KGS) or automatically via a transponder mounted on the front of the
car (OGS). The Fatih Sultan Mehmet Bridge does not accept cash either, only KGS or OGS.

On weekdays, drivers should be aware of potentially hour-long traffic jams on the highways leading to both bridges, particularly heading west in the mornings and east in the evenings, since most people live on the Anatolian side but work on the European side.

There is a great shortage of parking in Istanbul, and existing lots are quite expensive. You will see many cars parked on the sides of the road, in front of garage doors even.

Drivers unfamiliar with the city should also be aware that street signs are rare. It is a common thing to pull over and ask for directions, something the natives and taxi drivers do quite often.

## Get around

### Public transport

Istanbul's public transit system can be difficult to figure out; maps are rare and you often have to transfer, and pay another fare, to get where you are going. However, if you put some effort into it, you can avoid taxis and not walk too much.

Each time you use a tram, metro, bus, or boat on the public transport system, you will need to use a token. The small metal tokens cost 1.50 TL and can be bought at various ticket kiosks at bus, train, and metro stations. Ticket fares across buses, trams and metros are at a flat rate (i.e. not dependent on how far you go).

Buying an AKBİL (AKıllı Bİlet - Turkish acronym for "Smart Ticket") is a good idea if you are in Istanbul for more than a day or two, and intend to use public transport. AKBİL is a small electronic device serving as a ticket which may be used on buses, trams, suburban trains, metro, local ferries, etc. You buzz the AKBİL when you get on the bus or enter the tram/metro platform. The great part for travelers is that you can buy only one and buzz it as many times as there are passengers. You can buy or refill them at designated booths located at any major bus, tram, to metro station, as well as some other places such as newspaper stands close to bus stops. An AKBİL provides slightly discounted rates compared to regular single tickets, as well as discounts in transfers (when used multiple times within a limited period, roughly an hour and a half since the last time you used it). A deposit for the device itself is payable when you buy it (6 TL), which is refundable if you choose to return it later.

Buses and streetcars tend to be very crowded during rush hours,
especially on Mondays and Fridays. That can also create opportunities for pickpockets.

By bus


There are two types of public buses in Istanbul; those run by the private sector and those run by the city-owned **IETT**. You can differentiate these two types by their colors. Privately run buses are blue-green with yellow non-electronic destination signs while **IETT**-run buses come in many flavors including old red-blue ones, newer green ones and red double-deckers. The Akbil Transit Pass is valid universally while tickets that can be obtained in kiosks near bus stops for 1.40 TL are valid only on **IETT** buses and cash payment only on private buses, although if you get on an **IETT** bus the driver will normally accept cash (normally 1.50 TL but this is dependent entirely upon what the driver wishes to charge) and hand you his Akbil for you to use.

Recently installed Metrobüüs, long hybrid buses running on their special lanes separated from all other traffic and thus saving lots of time in Istanbul's usually congested roads, connect western suburb of Avcılar with Kadıköy in Asian Side via Bakırköy, Cevizlibağ which is just out of old city walls near Topkapı Gate, and Mecidiyeköy.

Most bus lines operate between 6AM and around midnight, usually with a reduced volume of services after 10PM. Some lines between major centres operate 24 hr, though, as is the Metrobüüs, with about an hour intervals. After midnight, buses cost two tickets pp rather than the usual one.

As a tourist, you are most likely to use the tram and the metro in the Sultanahmet and Taksim area since there are no bus lines operating in the area anymore.

By metro

Istanbul's first underground system dates back to 19th century, when the funicular subway "Tünel" was constructed to operate from Karaköy to Istiklal Street in 1875. The distance travelled was 573 metres. Recommended option to go up-hill from Galata Bridge (Beyoglu side) to the famous Istiklal Caddesi (main street).

In 1990's, a modern tram line was constructed in the European side of the city, and now it's being extended to the inner parts of the city, as well as to the Anatolian side with a sea-tunnel named "Marmaray" crossing below the Bosphorus.

Istanbul's metro consists of two lines, the northern line is currently just a short stub connecting Taksim to Maslak via Mecidiyeköy and
Levent in New Istanbul. There is also a funicular system connecting Taksim to Kabataş where you can get on ferries and cross to the Anatolian side, and also transfer to trams bound for old city. The separate southern line is most useful for visitors, connecting Aksaray (with its connections to the tram line) to Atatürk Airport, via the main coach station (Otogar).

Nowadays, most metro stations do not have a staffed ticket booth, so you will have to obtain your token from automatic token dispensers. Insert coins (except 1 or 5 kuruş) up to 1.50 TL and then press the button marked onay (Turkish for "approval", no English translations are given on the machines).

A token costs 1.50 TL (around €0.75) on any urban rail in Istanbul.

**By tram**

- [Istanbul Metro & Tram](http://istanbul-ulasim.com.tr/en/default.asp?menu_id=1&sayfa_id=2) . edit

A tram connects Zeytinburnu (connection to the metro line to the airport) to Kabataş (connection to the underground funicular to Taksim). The line is 14km long, has 24 stations and serves many popular tourist sites (e.g. in Sultanahmet) and ferries (e.g. Eminönü). An entire trip takes 42 minutes.

Although you may use the same tokens (1.50 TL) or AKBİL on the metro and tram, you must pay another fare each time you change lines.

The tram was put in service in 1992 on standard gauge track with modern cars, connecting Sirkeci with Topkapi. The line was extended on one end from Topkapi to Zeytinburnu in March 1994 and, on the other end from Sirkeci to Eminönü in April 1996. On January 30, 2005 it was extended from Sirkeci to Kabataş crossing Golden Horn after 44 years again. 55 vehicles built by ABB run on the line. The daily transport capacity is 155,000 passengers.

Hızlı Tramway stations are: Zeytinburnu, Mithatpaşa, Aşemsettin, Seyitnizam, Merkezefendi, Cevizlibağ, Topkapi, Pazartektepe, Çapa, Fındıkkızade, Haseki, Yusufpaşa, Aksaray, Lalali (Üniversite), Beyazıt (Kapalıçarşı), Çemberlitaş, Sultanahmet, Gülhane, Sirkeci, Eminönü (ferryboats), Karaköy, Tophane, Fındıklı, Kabataş.

Between Taksim and Kabatas, there is a modern underground funicular to connect this tram line to the Taksim metro. The tram is also connected to the southern metro line (for the Otogar and Atatürk Airport) at Aksaray station, though the metro and tram lines are a short walk from each other.

**Information for disabled travelers**

**Buses**
The process of replacing old buses with newer ones accessible for people using a wheelchair is ongoing. Many buses on central lines have a low floor and a built-in ramp (consult the driver to lean the bus down nearer to the ground, to open the ramp, and to assist into the bus, though any of these might unfortunately be impossible during peak hours in interval stops. Think of a sardine-packed bus unloading all of its passengers to lean down).

Unfortunately, no stops are announced on a display or by voice in the buses.

**Trams**

Trams are accessible for people using a wheelchair from the station platforms if you can manage to get into the station in the first place. Some of the stations are located in the middle of very wide avenues and the only access to them is via underground passages (tens of stairs) or overpasses (more stairs!). Otherwise, platforms in tram stations are low and equipped with gentle ramps right from the street (or sidewalk) level.

All stations are announced both on a display and by voice in the trams.

**Metro**

All stations and trains in the northern metro line are accessible for people using a wheelchair. Look around the station entrances for handicapped lifts/elevators. Only some of the stations in the southern metro line are equipped with such elevators (among the stations which have elevators are Aksaray—the main station of the city centre, Otogar—the main bus station, and Havalimanı (Airport) station), but whether there is an elevator or not, if you manage to get into the station (there is a good chance that you can do with a little assistance because the stations in the southern line aren’t located as deep as the stations of the northern line are; only about one floor’s height under the ground), all trains are accessible from the station platforms, though a little assistance more will be helpful for passing over the narrow gap between the train and the platform. You can ask the guys in grey/black uniforms (security guards, they can be seen in the entrances of the station platforms if not elsewhere) for assistance, it’s their duty.

All stations are announced by voice in the metro trains. In northern line it is also announced on a display, but not in the southern line. Instead, you should look at the signs in the stations, which are big and common enough.

**By boat**
Unique Istanbul liners (large conventional ferry boats), sea-buses (high speed catamarans), or mid-sized private ferries travel between the European and Asian sides of the city. The crossing takes about 20 minutes and costs 1.50 TL, and gives great views of the Bosphorus. Be aware that sometimes the ferry when arriving at a dock can bounce off the pier accidentally, even on calm days. This can cause people to fall over if they are standing up, so it is advisable to remain seated until the ferry has come to an absolute stop.

In Istanbul, liners from any given quay generally take only a certain route, and these quays are signposted ‘X Iskelesi’ ("X Landing stage/pier"). For instance, Eminönü alone has more than 5 landing stages (including the ones used by other ferries apart from liners), so if you should head for, say, Üsküdar, you should take the ferry which departs from ‘Üsküdar Iskelesi’. Replace ‘Üsküdar’ with the destination of your choice.

**Istanbul liners** [8] (http://ido.com.tr) travel on the following routes:

- Karaköy - Haydarpaşa - Kadıköy
- Kadıköy - Eminönü
- Üsküdar - Eminönü
- Üsküdar - Karaköy - Eminönü - Eyüp (The Golden Horn Route)
- Kadıköy - Besiktas
- Kabataş - Uskudar - Harem
- İstinye - Emirgan - Kanlica - Anadolu Hisarı - Kandilli - Bebek - Arnavutköy - Çengelköy (The Whole Bosphorus Route)
- Anadolu Kavağı - Rumeli Kavağı - Sariyer
- Eminönü - Kavaklar (Special Bosphorus Tour-Recommended For Tourists)
- Sirkeci - Adalar - Yalova - Cinarcık (The Princes' Islands Route)

Furthermore, the sea-buses (deniz otobüsü) follow the same (or more) routes, usually much faster than liners. Returning to Yenikapi from Kadikoy by sea-bus is a fast and convenient way to cross the Bosphorus; at Yenikapi there is a railway station with frequent trains to Sirkeci/Eminönü and the Yenikapi fish restaurant area is close by (or one stop on the train).

Four main **private ferry** routes for travelling between Asia and Europe sides are:

- Besiktas - Üsküdar
- Kabataş - Üsküdar (close to tram and funicular system in Kabataş)
- Eminönü - Üsküdar (close to tram in Eminönü)
- Eminönü - Kadiköy (close to tram in Eminönü)

Very useful are the fast ferryboats (travelling at 55 kilometers)
running from several points, such as the Yenikapi - Yalova one, that allows you (with a connecting bus in Yalova) to be in Bursa centre in less than three hours. Prices are marginally higher and the gain in time is considerable, though the view is not as nice.

All of the ferries, including private ones, can be paid for using the *AKBİL* system or the new Smart RFID Card that is in the process of introduction.

A new metro line extension crossing the Bosphorus in a tunnel is under construction. This will change the ferry provision and is perhaps a good reason to visit Istanbul before it is completed.

**By train**

Suburban/commuter trains (*banliyö treni*) using somewhat dilapidated stock and running on national rail network, connect suburbs along the European and Asian coast of the Sea of Marmara to main stations at Sirkeci and Haydarpaşa, respectively. These trains are one of the fastest connections between the old city and western suburbs, especially Bakırköy, although they, especially the line on European Side, are best avoided late at night.

**By taxi**

Taxis are an easy and cheap way to get around. As of October 2009, start off rate is 2.50 TL (€1.2) and then 1.4 TL (€0.67) for each km afterwards. A one-way travel from Taksim to Sultanahmet costs approximately 10-15 TL. Tipping is generally unnecessary. Occasionally, drivers will refuse to start the meter and try to negotiate a fixed prize (but most drivers will start taximeters at all times). You should avoid these cabs and simply take another one as you will almost certainly end paying too much. To be sure, before getting in, just ask "how much to go to ...?" (most of the drivers understand basic English) since the price they tell then is quite accurate. Tell them then to put the taximeter on. Drivers do normally work with the taximeter, so they will not be surprised at all when you ask them to put it on. The price at the end will be quite close to the one they tell you at the beginning. **There is now, as of October 2009, just one fare unit, it means, there is no extra fare at night.**

Taxis that wait near a bus station are usually a tourist trap. They start the meter but charge you 20 TL at least. Emphasize to the driver that you will pay for the meter price before getting in. Do not buy their quick-sell tricks. Always try to stop a taxi that is passing by on the road or find a legitimate taxi stop.

Insist on going to the destination that you want because some drivers are payed by commission for each time they have someone go to a certain site.

Beware riding a taxi other than the "yellow-colored" ones since the other-colored taxis are registered under different cities and have a
different rating system.

Be careful on what notes you hand them for payment; some drivers have tried to pretend that the 50 lira note that was handed was just a 5 lira note. Occasionally taxi drivers may actually also rip notes you give them, and tell you it is no good, in order to make you hand them a 50 lira note. So, make sure the notes are not ripped, and is actually the right one before you hand them over. Also, if you are not familiar with the city the taxi driver may drive a detour in order to charge you more.

Traffic can be very bad, it can take an hour for a few km through the old city. You might be better off taking the metro out of the old city and then a taxi from there.

**By shared taxi**

**Dolmuş** (Turkish: "full") is a shared taxi, travelling on a fixed route, which costs more than a city autobus but less than a normal taxi. They can carry up to 8 passengers. They are easy to recognize, because they also have the yellow painting as taxis and carry a **Dolmus** sign on its top. They will only start driving when all eight places are filled, which is also where the name derives from.

The main and most important routes for Dolmuses are:

- **Taksim - Eminönü** (Taksim stop, near the Ataturk Cultural Center, in Taksim square)
- **Taksim - Kadıköy**
- **Taksim - Bostancı**
- **Taksim - Aksaray** (Taksim stop, Tarlabası Avenue, close to Taksim square)
- **Kadıköy - Bostancı** (Bostancı stop, in front of the Bostancı ferry port)
- **Taksim - Tekvikiye** (Taksim stop, in front of Patisserie Gezi, in Taksim square)
- **Beşiktaş - Nisantasi** (Beşiktaş stop, in front of the Beşiktaş - Üsküdar ferry port)
- **Kadıköy - Üsküdar** (Üsküdar stop, Near the Üsküdar - Beşiktaş and Üsküdar - Kabataş ferry port)

If you want the driver to make a stop, you can say **İnecek var.** (EE-neh-djek war!) (**Someone's getting out.**) or **Müsait bir yerde.** (mU-sa-EEt bir yer-deh.) (**At a convenient spot.**).

**See**
With its long history at the center of empires, Istanbul offers a wealth of historic and religious places to take in. The bulk of these ancient monuments, dating back to Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman periods, including the Hagia Sophia, Topkapı Palace, Sultanahmet Mosque (Blue Mosque), and Basilica Cistern are located around Sultanahmet Square, while some others are dispersed throughout the peninsula of old city, such as Church of St Savior in Chora (Kariye Müzesi), entire inside of which is covered by mindblowing frescoes and mosaics. An impressive section of mostly intact Theodosian walls, which mark the full length of western boundary of the peninsula, is right next to this particular church.

North of the peninsula of old city, across the Golden Horn, is Galata, crowned by the Galata Tower. Istanbul Modern, with its exhibitions of contemporary Turkish art, is on the nearby waterfront of Karaköy. Another sight of religious significance close by is the Galata Whirling Dervish Hall of Sufi Mevlevi order, just north of the Tower. Further north is the İstiklal Avenue, Istanbul's prominent pedestrian street running from near Galata Tower to Taksim Square, the central square of whole city.

Heading west rather than north from the old city brings you deeper into the banks of the Golden Horn estuary. A neighbourhood perhaps well worth a visit here is Eyüp, to visit city’s holiest Islamic shrine and just to see what daily life in Ottoman Istanbul was like. On the opposite shores of the Horn, in Sütlüce is the Miniaturk, the first miniature park in the city, with models from around the former Ottoman Empire.

North of Taksim Square is New Istanbul, main business district of the city. If venturing out to this direction, don't forget to check out Military Museum, where Ottoman military music concerts (Mehter) are held every afternoon. Most of the skyscrapers of the city are located in the north of this district, around Levent and Maslak, with a totally different skyline from that of the old city. However southern reaches of the very same district has some fine neo-classical and Art Nouveau buildings from the turn of the 20th century, around the neighbourhoods of Osmanbey, Kurtuluş, and Nişantaşı. Just east from here, with a little drop in elevation as you approach the shore, is the banks of Bosphorus, that is lined by pleasant neighbourhoods full of waterfront mansions (yalı) and a number of waterside palaces where where you can admire what money could buy in times gone by.

Across the Bosphorus to east is Asian Side, centred around the historical districts of Kadıköy and Üsküdar, and perhaps best symbolized by Maiden's Tower, located at about the halfway...
between these districts, on an islet just off the shore. Bosphorus and Marmara coasts of this half of the city is characterized by quite picturesque neighbourhoods, overlooked by Çamlıca Hill, one of the highest hills of the city which has a view of much of the rest of the city as well, with a cafe and a pleasant park on its summit.

Southeast of the city, off the southern coast of Asian Side are the Princes’ Islands, an archipelago of nine car-free islands, characterized by stunning wooden mansions and pine groves.

Tulips

Long ignored for their bad connotation with the Tulip era of 1700s, a period of ostentation and costly parties conducted by state elite amidst large gardens full of tulips (and also when the first bulbs were introduced to the Netherlands from Istanbul, by the way), which was later accused of economic destruction and the eventual dissolution of Ottoman Empire, tulips have regained much of their former popularity in the last decade and now serve as some sort of symbol of both Istanbul and the whole Turkey. They bloom from late March to early May (best bet is early to mid April) and while they can be seen on many avenues of the city wherever there is enough space for planting at the sides and the central strip of the road, if you are after admiring and/or photographing large patches of tulips with relatively exotic varieties, head to Sultanahmet Park and Gülhane Park in Sultanahmet; Emirgan Park near the northern Bosphorus neighbourhood of Emirgan; or Çamlıca Hill in Asian Side.

Do

Hamams

A visit to a hamam (Turkish bath) is an essential part of any trip to Istanbul and is something you'll be sure to repeat before leaving. There are at least one historical hamam in each neighborhood of Istanbul. Take care in selecting a hamam, as they can vary greatly in cleanliness. Most places will offer a scrubbing and/or a massage. Just being in the Hamam (as a sauna), is enough for seeing and experiencing the place, but the scrubbing is a great experience. The massage is not necessarily better than those found in western countries.

Sultanahmet has many historical hamams. Some are very extravagant and cater mainly to tourists.

Nargile (Hooka/Water Pipe)

Once upon a time, the nargile, or Turkish water pipe, was the centre of Istanbul’s social and political life. Today some of the locals still consider it one of life’s great pleasures and is something interesting to try. Most of the places where you can smoke a nargile are in Yeniçeriler Caddesi, near the Kapalı Çarşısı (Grand Bazaar). Çorlulu Ali Paşa and Koca Sinan Paşa Türbesi are both in secluded internal
courts, just around the corner from some tomb yards, while Rumeli Kahvesi is actually inside the cemetery of an old medrese, though it’s not as spooky as you might think. In the south of Sultanahmet, near the sea, is Yeni Marmara (Çayiroğlu Sokak), where you can also sit in the terrace and enjoy the view. In Beyoğlu, at the Ortakahve (Büyükparmakkapi), there’s even the choice of a wide range of flavors. Another area with few big good looking places is the Rıhtım Caddesi, between Galata bridge and Istanbul Modern Museum.

**Walking tours**

Museums and such: Haghia Sophia, then on to the Topkapı museum (these two should take at least three to five hours), preferably along the road in the back of the Haghia Sophia, where there are some nicely restored houses. Then on to the Blue Mosque and the square with the obelisks on it (At Meydani). Along its side is the very good Museum of Islam Art. Descend slightly and find the small Haghia Sophia with its nice garden (it was under restoration, but you probably can get in). Then uphill to the Sokollu Mehmet mosque complex, top notch tiles inside.

Take a tram or walk to Eminönü (where the boats leave for trips to Asia or up the Bosphorus). Visit the New Mosque at the back, then the Egyptian Bazaar next to it, and going further in that direction, locate the Rüstem Pasha mosque with its excellent tiles. It's on a raised platform near an old clothes market, you may have to ask directions. Then take a cab or find a bus to Eyüp mosque complex, a mile or three up the Golden Horn. Visit this Eyüp complex at your leisure (the mosque is not particular, the court is, and the milling of believers, with many boys-to-be-circumcised amongst it; a Friday might be a good day to do this). Then, if you have the stamina, it might be nice to walk back too; maybe all the way (five miles or so), but taking a route along part of the city wall to first the famous Kariye Church with its mosaics, then on to Selimiye Mosque with its great view on the Golden Horn (and a fine mosque by itself), then the Fatih Mosque (passing through some very religious and lively neighborhoods), then on to the well-restored Sehzade mosque, and next to Süleymaniye (don't forget to enjoy the view from the Golden Horn side). If you have some energy left, you might go on to the University complex, and by then you are very close to the Beyazit mosque. A book market (it’s small) is behind this good, unexceptional (nice courtyard though) mosque.

Once again go to Eminönü, but this time take the boat (those large ferries) to Üsküdar. You will arrive before a fine mosque in front, another one four hundred meters off to the right, slightly inland behind a traffic roundabout, and a third, very small, at the sea front. See the market stretching inland, walk about and don't forget to walk along the shore, maybe eating a fish meal in one of the bobbing boats along it. This is a good visit for late afternoon, early evening, fleeing the city. You will be joined by thousands of people going home from "town" but the way back will be on a near-empty ferry. The frequency of ferries will go down in the evening, so make sure there is a connection back.
Go to the railroad station and find a Sirkeci-Halkali suburban train, and get out at (from memory, Yedikule station). You will be quite close to Yedikule, a nice fortress, and will have fine views of the city walls. The trains leave every 15 minutes or so, the ride is peculiar (the material is bad, but if you are in luck every second stop another salesman will enter and try selling his wares, it’s fun). The ride is takes anywhere from twenty minutes to half an hour. This is not a "must", but it can be great fun.

You will have missed the covered bazaar in all this. That is because you will get there anyhow. If you go to Beyazit and the book market you are almost at two of its many entrances. Try and find the Nuruosmaniye Mosque and its complex at the other side, it’s worth it. And after having explored the covered part, take a relaxing walk downhill, into the general direction of Eminönü, where it is "uncovered bazaar" all the way. Cross the Galata bridge to see some things on the Northern side (for instance take the "tünel" teleferik ride up much of the hill (entrance close to the opposite side of Galata bridge, ask around)), then continue to Taksim. Shops are of the international variety. Or if you want somebody to take you to all the places you want to see, you can hire a guide, that is a lot easier in this huge city.

**Theodosian Walls Walk**

From 408AD the original walls of Constantine were replaced in the reign of Theodosius. These walls then became the critical point of defence of the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire and their Ottoman successors. They are still almost completely intact, marking the western border of the peninsula of Old City, with some sections suffering from somewhat unsightly restoration done in early 1990s. The section around the Topkapı Gate (not to be confused with Topkapı Palace which is located in an altogether different place) can be easily accessed from Pazartekke tram station, which lies about 300 metres east of the walls. Some remoter sections may not be very safe and may require some caution.

A 7 km walk along and on these remaining portions of the city wall offers a window into antiquity and puts emphasis on Turkey’s terrible historic monument legacy. Download and print a scholarly historical and technical description of the walls before you visit Istanbul; this will certainly add to the pleasure. From Eminönü, take the Golden Horn ferry to Ayyvansaray. This ferry terminal is separate from the Bosphorus terminals adjacent and east of the Galata Bridge. Walk west through the Galata bridge underpass, then through the bus station to a pedestrian laneway which leads to the small terminal building. The fare is TL 1.50. Leave the ferry at Ayyvansaray and cross
the park to the wall on the other side of the main road. You have a choice of walking up the outer wall or the inner wall but access to the top of the battlements is usually on the inside naturally enough, so go up the small street across the road which then cuts back behind the wall and the towers. Here you can climb up onto this section of unrestored wall on crumbling brick and stone and continue on some hundreds of yards climbing as necessary. This path comes to an obvious end and one can short cut back to the street. Sometimes there are dwellings and commercial enterprises hard up against the wall, sometimes a bus depot, a rubbish dump or often just the road. These walls replaced the earlier walls of Constantine in 408AD after which they went through constant upgrade and repairs to earthquake damage. The different work done over the centuries was all of varying style and quality. Quite surprisingly there are a number of small streets still using the narrow gates. At Hoca Çakır Cd one comes across a restored section of the wall where the heights are accessed by stairs, some along the top of the wall of the steeper variety. This restoration from the 80s is in conflict with the original. The wall is then breached for the main road Fevzi Paşa Cd. Cross this and continue along the street at the back of the wall. Look for foot pads and breaks in the wall which allows access and a good look around. The wall is breached again for Adnan Menderes Blv (unofficially and widely known as Vatan Caddesi). Past here one see here quite clearly the double line of defence with outer moat. The next breach is for Turgut Özal Cd (unofficially and widely known as Millet Caddesi) which hosts the tram line heading back to Sultanahmet for those who have run out of steam. Walking now on the outside of the walls, various breaks in the outer wall allow access via broken stonework or later via modern sets of steps in disrepair. Between the walls is the disquieting evidence of the number of people sleeping rough in Istanbul. Persevere in staying between the walls because soon you will arrive at another impure restoration project at Mevlanakapı Cd gate. Note that entry to the gate towers has been closed at the gate, so entry is only from the walls. From here it is better to proceed on the outside of the walls because market gardens occupy the moat and the city side abuts buildings. These couple of kms will give a further perspective of the ravages of time and earthquake on the walls. Finally you will arrive at the Golden Gate and Yedikule Fortress which fronts the Marmara Sea and was Byzantium’s triumphal point of entry. This is in excellent condition not least because the Ottomans upgraded it and then used it right up to the 19th century. There is an entry fee and it boasts a loo. The high walls and towers are all accessible, and one tower still has internal wooden floors. So you have now surveyed the protective land walls which kept Byzantium and the Eastern Roman Empire safe for all those years after the fall of Rome, breached only by the 4th Crusaders and the Ottomans. What of their future? Given that recent restoration work is fairly suspect scholars may think it is better to leave them be. Now return to the city either in the Eminönü Bus (#80) from the village square outside the main gate, just wait there, or walk down Yedikule İstasyonu Cd about 300m to the railway line to Sirkeci, both heading for centres close to Sultanahmet.

**The Classic Bosphorus Cruise**
From the terminal immediately east of the Galata Bridge starts the large ferry cruising to Anadolu Kavagi at the northern entrance of Bosphorus to the Black Sea via various stops. The fare is TL 25. The departure time is early and is very popular, so arrive early and queue. The open decks are hugely popular, so unless you have an outside seat expect people to be standing all around you constricting the view. The ferry waits some hours in Anadolu Kavagi so as you alight you are confronted by a numerous restaurants and their spruikers. Firstly take the walk to the Yoros Kalesi, a strategic castle overlooking and controlling the entry to the Black Sea. This important fortification with a commanding view has been fought over for many years and was last in use in the 19th century. It has fallen into serious disrepair, but Christian engravings are still visible in the stonework. There are restaurants actually in the castle surrounds and naturally have spectacular views. There is plenty of time left to wander back to the village for lunch. It is late afternoon before arrival back at Eminonu, but a day well spent. A cheaper and faster Bosphorus cruise alternative is a TL 10 trip on a shorter cruise.

**Football**

Football (soccer) is the most popular sport in Turkey, and Turkish football fans are known for their passion. Many teams from other parts of Europe consider the atmosphere to be very intimidating when they have to play away matches in Turkey. The most intense rivalry in Turkish football is between Fenerbahçe[9] (http://fenerbahce.org) and Galatasaray[10] (http://galatasaray.org), and matches between both sides are always played in front of sell-out crowds, and getting tickets for such matches often require advanced booking way in advance. As the atmosphere is considered extremely hostile to the away teams, avoid wearing away team colours after the match, and avoid any signs of crowd trouble.

**Learn**

Many foreigners visiting or living in Istanbul decide to study Turkish formally in a language school. Some of the biggest and most respected Turkish language schools in Istanbul are:

- **Boğaziçi University** [14] (http://boun.edu.tr/index_eng.html). Runs a summer long intensive Turkish language course for all levels.

Both Boğaziçi University and Bilgi University [15] (http://bilgi.edu.tr/) have well established **Study Abroad** programs in English for foreigners.

**Ottoman Turkish**
If you already speak Turkish, **Ottoman Turkish** may also be interesting to learn. Ottoman Turkish was the form of Turkish spoken during the era of the Ottoman Empire, and is significantly different to the form of Turkish spoken today. Approximately 80% of Ottoman Turkish words were loanwords from other languages, mostly Arabic, Persian and French. After the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, language reforms were implemented, including the establishment of the *Türk Dil Kurumu* (Turkish Language Association), which is the official regulatory body of the Turkish language. This association, with a philosophy of linguistic purism, decided to cleanse the Turkish language of loanwords and replace them with more Turkic alternatives. As such, only about 14% of modern Turkish words are of foreign origin.

Ottoman Turkish is the key to learning about Turkey's Ottoman past. With Ottoman Turkish, not only can you read historical archives, but you can also read Ottoman literature and letters dated back to the Ottoman period. In Istanbul, you can learn Ottoman Turkish from the following places:

- **İşmek** +90 212 531 01 41 İskenderpaşa Mahallesi, Ahmediye Caddesi, Hacı Salih Efendi Sokak, 6 Fatih.
- **Tarih Vakfi** +90 212 522 02 02 Zindankapı Değirmen Sokak, 15 Eminönü [16] (http://tarihvakfi.org.tr/).

**Work**

There is always a high demand for qualified - and, to a lesser extent, unqualified - ESOL/EFL teachers in Istanbul. Many teachers work with private instructional companies. Others contract out on a freelance basis.

Istanbul is Turkey's financial capital. All big investment banks, commercial banks, large foreign retail and consumer companies have offices in Istanbul. The business district has been coming up with high-rise buildings and business centers in the last decade.

**Buy**

Connecting east and west, the will to control the major trading routes was the reason why Istanbul was founded in the first place, so shopping should definitely not be overlooked in your Istanbul experience.

The currency used in Istanbul is the Turkish Lira (TL) though the euro and US dollar are also accepted at places frequented by tourists (although certain tourist attractions such as the Hagia Sophia only accept liras). Currency exchanges (*döviz bürosu*) and banks are plentiful in Istanbul and offer extremely competitive exchange rates with no commission charged. If you are planning to visit Istanbul, bring hard foreign currency and...
exchange them after you arrive, preferably at a bank or a currency exchange. Exchange only what you need as you will find difficulty exchanging your leftover TL back to foreign currency after you leave the country. Alternatively, withdraw money from ATMs whenever you need cash.

Shops may be closed on Sundays. Most major shopping malls have security checkpoints you usually see in airports and museums prior to entry.

Istanbul's historical bazaars with an oriental ambiance, once sitting firmly on the western terminii of the Silk Road and spice routes, all dating back to Ottoman era, are all located in the the peninsula of Old City.

On the other hand, modern shopping malls (alışveriş merkezi, usually shortened to AVM), popping all around the city in the last three decades, are mostly to be found in New Istanbul and western suburbs, though they are by no means exclusively located in these districts.

If you are after top quality upmarket garments, then you may better head for Nişantaşı in European Side and Bağdat Avenue in Asian Side.

Here are some of what are popular to buy while in the city:

- **Turkish Delight**, or Lokum (as the locals call it). A good buy since you’re in Turkey. It is advisable to buy it fresh rather than in pre-packed boxes and to get a variety of flavors rather than the stereotypical rose-water or lemon flavors available abroad. Pistachio in particular is very good. The best place to buy lokum in Istanbul is from a store. Istiklal Caddesi in particular features a number of stores that sell Turkish sweets by the kilogram including lokum and helvah. There are quite a few shops selling delicious Turkish Delight in the Grand Bazaar, although I wouldn't recommend buying from them unless you have advanced haggling skills, or you don't mind being ripped off.

- **Turkish Tea** (çay, CHAI). The national drink of Turkey, brewed from leaves grown on the steep, verdant mountain slopes of Turkey’s eastern Black Sea coast. Traditionally, Turkish tea is brewed samovar-style, with a small pot of very strong tea sitting on a larger vessel of boiling water. Pour a small amount of strong tea into a little tulip-shaped glass and cut it to the desired strength with hot water. Turks usually add cube sugar (never milk, although you can often get milk if you ask.) Having fresh, hot tea always available everywhere is one of life's splendid little luxuries in Turkey. Elma Çay: apple tea, like hot apple juice (EHL-mah chah-yee) is the flavor of preference.

- **Rugs and kilims** can be a good buy while in the city. Most rug-specialized stores in the city, though, are aimed at tourist trade, so pick up basics of haggling to avoid being ripped off at these stores. They are mostly located around Sultanahmet.
- **Chalcedony.** A semi-precious gemstone named after the near-by town of Chalcedon, and is sold in many of Istanbul's multitude of jewellery shops.

- **Off the Beaten Path.** Places that offer the best at what they do but are not on any of the traditional tourist paths.
  - ArkeoPera, Yenicarsi Caddesi, 16/A Petek Han, Galatasaray, +90 212 2930378 [17] (http://arkeopera.com). Best antiquarian bookshop in Turkey, owner knows every Turkish excavation site first hand.
  - Gonul Paksoy, 6/A Atiye Sokak, Tesvikiye, +90 212 2360209. Peerless one-of-a-kind dresses made for royalty from refined, antique Ottoman-era cloth.
  - Iznik Foundation, 7 Oksuz Cocuk Sokak, Kurucesme, +90 212 2873243 [18] (http://iznik.com). Offers neo-Iznik pottery after recreating original formulas from original Iznik kilns, which functioned between 1450 and 1650.
  - Sedef Mum, 50 Irmak Caddesi, Dolapdere, +90 212 2535793. Artisans of the time honored art of candle making, intricately sculpted and aromatic wares make very portable gifts.

**Eat**

For individual restaurant listings, check district articles.

**Snacks**

- **Döner.** Always a good option for having fast and cheap food. The entrance to Istiklal Street contains dozens of small doner restaurants and they serve almost 24 hours. In Besiktas neighborhood, Karadeniz is a non-touristy, small place but local favorite for not using minced meat but full chunks of beef (the place is near fish market in Besiktas). It costs slightly more (8 liras per portion) but it is probably one of the best in the entire country. Also, in the Sultanahmet area, "Sedef" is a small buffet-type restaurant which has quality Turkish fast-food. "Doner Durum with yellow cheese" is delicious, don't miss.

- **Balık-Ekmek.** Balık-Ekmek (literally "fish and bread") is a fish sandwich served in small boats and little buffets in Eminonu. It is also increasingly popular in buffets in Kadıköy coast. A regular sandwich consists of one small fried fish, slices of tomatoes and onion. However, the taste is beyond expectations for such a basic menu. The price is around 4 TL. Again, it's a local favorite.
**Hamsi.** In Autumn and Winter the Black Sea Anchovy migrate through the Bosphorus, the local fishermen coming out in force to take advantage. All fish restaurants have them on the menu in season. It seems the classic serving is a handful of deep fried fish with raw onion and bread. Eat the fish whole, it's a winner. Look for the small restaurants behind the fish merchants on the Karaköy side of the Galata Bridge, western side. Expect to pay TL6.

**Patso.** Patso is a type of sandwich consisting of hot dog and french fries. It's usually served in small buffets along the Uskudar coast and a sandwich costs 1.50 TL. The cheap price can raise eyebrows but these buffets are open 24/7 and they serve around 1000 sandwiches per day. Even though the profit margin is low, they make a fortune, so they don't lower the quality too much (except hamburgers, don't touch those in Uskudar, but definitely try the spicy hamburgers in Taksim).

One thing not to be missed is the local ice cream sold at the street stands, called Dondurma. While flavors are relatively standard for the region, the ice cream usually incorporates orchid root extract, which gives it an incredibly chewy and stringy texture, also lending itself to be used for marketing and attracting attention while the sellers do tricks to try to sell the ice cream. Try it!

**Kumpir** is a snack which can easily be a full meal. It is originated from Albania but is quite unique to Istanbul in its present form. It consists of a baked potato with various fillings such as grated cheese, mayonnaise, ketchup, pickles, sweetcorn, sausage slices, carrots, mushrooms, and Russian salad among others, any of which can optionally be added to or omitted from the mix. While kumpir can be had at many cafes throughout the city, it is best had from one of the cafes in Ortaköy, which have a long tradition of preparing kumpir and offer really filling and tasty ones. About 7-8 TL each.

**Roasted chestnuts**("kestane Kebap, as locals call it) are sold from carts around the city, and is a very nice snack to have when the weather is cold, as it keeps your hands warm. 3 Lr for 100 gr.

**Boiled and roasted corn on the cob** is sold from carts around the city, and is a fantastic snack to walk around. Price varies from cart to cart and area of the city (between 1 and 1.5 Lr).

Don't miss "Simit" a warm bread sold from carts around the city, and is a fantastic snack to walk around. The texture and taste is a bit like a sesame bagel. Price varies from cart to cart and area of the city (between .75 and 1 Lr).

Also, be sure to try **Ayran**, a local drink based on yoghurt, although sour and much thinner. It isn't always on the menu or displayed, but it's there, so ask for it.
Freshly squeezed juice and juice blends are sold from stands and small shops all around the city, and are a refreshing treat (especially in the warmer months). The combinations range from a simple orange juice to the more rare options like pomengranate or kiwi. Price varies from shop to shop, area of the city and complexity of your order (between 2 and 4 Lr).

Drink

- Beyoğlu is notoriously known for its night life; it’s full of cafés and bars with live music. People from all classes and ethnicities can be found here.
- Nişantaşı is the place for young entrepreneurs and artists, the prices are higher than Taksim.
- Kadıköy also has a nightlife scene, serving mostly locals of this part of the city. If you are not staying on that side of the city, it may not worth the trouble to make an inter-continental trip just to have a drink, but drop by if you are around and thirsty. Most of the locals in Kadıköy go to Taxim mostly.
- Nightclubs - While there are night clubs all over the city, two of the hottest clubs of Istanbul are in Ortaköy.

Sleep

In general, it is possible to find some kind of accommodation in any district of Istanbul. Here is a quick list of the districts where they are concentrated most:

- Harbiye is a popular place to stay, as in the main center of the new city on the European side, and contains a variety of international standard apartments, hotels, and moderate hotels for budget travelers. Nişantaşı and Taksim are 5 minutes from Harbiye so you can stay in Harbiye and benefit from all activities in Nişantaşı and Taksim.

- Taksim is the main center of the new city on the European side. Locals and tourists go to Taksim for shopping and entertainment, as well as moderate hotels for budget travelers. There are also two hostels in this area.

- Sultanahmet the main center for the old city on the European side. It has a selection of quality, reasonably priced hotels, many with terraces overlooking the Golden Horn, or with views of the Marmara Sea and the Blue Mosque. Most hostel-type accommodation frequented by independent travellers are located in this district, although it is possible to find a few upmarket hotels.

- Quite pricey hotels can be found in western suburbs, especially around the airport, as well as on/overlooking the banks of Bosphorus.
With the closure of relatively central Ataköy caravan park, the place where you can tow your caravan nearest to the city is now located in Selimpaşa, a far outer western suburb of the city, though it is still a good 40 km away from central parts of the city.

Contact

Telephone codes

Istanbul is the only city/province in Turkey which has more than one telephone code: 212 for European side, 216 for Asian side and Princes’ Islands. When calling from one continent to the other, the usual dialing format used for intercity calls should be used, as if it’s an intercity call: 0+area code (212 or 216)+7-digit telephone number. It may appear as an intercity call, but it will be treated as a local call in respect to payment. When making an intercontinental call, if you forget to dial the code, your call will not be automatically routed to the other continent number, it is likely that you will be connected to the “wrong” number which is in the same continent with you, because much of the number sets are used on both continents (albeit with different codes of course). When dialing a number that is on the continent you are already standing on, only 7-digit number is enough. Don’t forget to dial the code first no matter which continent you are in if you are calling a landline number from a cell phone (even if it’s a number that is in the same continent with you), though.

Internet

Cafés with free wireless internet (wi fi):

- Several of the nargile places in Tophane
- Several cafes in Cihangir, including Kahvedan, Meyva, Komşufırın and Kahve Altı
- Many cafés and restaurants along Istiklal Caddesi in Beyoğlu
- Both the large American fast food restaurant chains
- There is one upstairs by the restaurants facing the side of Aya Sofia and behind the entrance to the Basilica in Sultanahmet.
- Starbucks has quite a few shops around, and (at least) those at the touristic zones, has a free wireless connection.

In the recent years, the number of cafés and shopping centers with wi fi Internet access has increased dramatically, most of them still being free. Most internet cafés have high speed ADSL connections, and they are very inexpensive compared to Europe (about 0.50-1.50 Euros per hour).

- Most hostels of the Sultanahmet area has wi fi Internet access at thier lobby, often in the rooms too.
- Most of Taksim hotels of the Sultanahmet area has wi fi Internet access at their lobby, often in the rooms too.

Stay safe
As with most European cities, but especially in crowded areas of Istanbul, watch your pockets and travel documents as pickpockets have devised all sorts of strategies to obtain them from you. Do not rely too much on the 'safe' feeling you get from the omnipresence of policemen. Istanbul is home to three of the biggest clubs in Turkey and arguably European football: Beşiktaş, Fenerbahçe, and Galatasaray. It is advisable not to wear colours associating yourself with any of the clubs—black&white, blue&yellow, and red&yellow respectively, particularly on the days of matches between the sides due to the fearsome rivalry they share.

**Scams**

**Hotel bookings**

Hotel reception staff may actively offer to organise tours and restaurant reservations for you, and accept payment for the event. Avoid this service, as they usually charge an extremely large "commission" for the service.

**Taksim bar/club scams**

Tourists must be aware of high-drink prices scams encountered in so-called night-clubs mostly located in Aksaray, Beyazit and Taksim areas. These clubs usually charge overpriced bills, based on a replica of the original menu, or simply on the menu that had been standing upside down on the table.

Also be aware of friendly behaving groups of young men or male-female couples striking up a conversation in the street and inviting you to a "good nightclub they know". This has frequently been reported as a prelude to such a scam. The person(s) in on the scam may offer to take you to dinner first, in order to lower your suspicions. Another way they will try to lure you in is by talking to you in Turkish, and when you mumble back in your language they will be surprised you're not Turkish and immediately will feel the urge to repay you for their accident with a beer.

In either of these scams, if you refuse to pay the high prices or try to call the police (dial #155) to file a complaint, the club managers may use physical intimidation to bring the impasse to a close.

A recently encountered variant of this involved an invitation in Taksim to two male tourists (separately, within an hour of one another) to buy them beer (as they were "guests"). At the club, two attractive ladies, also with beers, joined them. When the time came for the bill, the person inviting the tourist denied having said he would pay for the drinks, and a bill was presented for 1500 Lira; when the tourists in question expressed an inability to pay such a high amount, burly "security" personnel emerged, who the manager explained would accompany the tourist to an ATM machine (presumably to clean out their bank account). In one of the above examples, the tourist escaped by shouting for the police once on the street; in the other, a much lower amount was accepted from the tourist.
Another recent incident occurred at a bar/club named SIA, located near the intersection of Acara and Istiklal Streets. 3 tourists were approached by 2 men, asking them to go for "drinks together". The tourists were led by the men into the club named SIA (these three letters appear in silver beside the club's entrance), and ordered drinks. Later, some ladies working for the club joined the group and ordered drinks, which the club put on the tabs of the 3 tourists. Overall, they were cheated of over 600 Lira. The original bill was much higher, and the tourists suffered verbal and physical intimidation when they did not have enough money to pay up. Finally the people at the club gave up and let them go. Travelers should avoid the above-mentioned club, for their own safety.

All these point to these scams in Taksim becoming more serious, and the possible involvement of organized crime. Be careful. If you find yourself in a situation for any reason, do whatever they want you to do, pay the bill, buy the things they are forcing you to buy, etc. Try to get out of situation as soon as possible, go to a safe place and call the police (dial #155).

That said, sometimes there is a chance to run, such as a case in August, 2009, when a man was able to escape. His sudden leave may have caught the waiters off guard; in all hastiness they forget to put someone at the door, thus leaving an opening.

In August 2010, after reading this and being aware one man still ventured out alone. He was greeted very nicely at the bar, and received a beer. After sitting with a beer, the door man brought a woman to him, and asked to buy her a drink. He refused several times, and asked for his bill. The price was 30 TL for one beer, the avg price is 8 TL. Be very aware of this scam in the city. The man brought the manager outside and explained how he knew, and said if he bought a drink for a woman it would be 150 TL per drink. The name of the bar was "Rolans Restaurant - cafe & bar." Please avoid at all cost.

Lira/Euro Scams

A frequent scam, often in smaller hotels (but it can also happen in a variety of other contexts), is to quote prices in Lira and then later, when payment is due, claim the price was given in Euros. Hotels which reject payment early in a stay and prefer you to "pay when you leave" should raise suspicions. Hotels which operate this scam often offer excellent service and accommodation at a reasonable price and know most guests will conclude as much and pay without complaint - thus (ironically) this can be a sign of a good hotel.

Another scam is coin-related and happens just as you're walking into the streets. A Turkish guy holds you and asks where you are from. If you mention a Euro-country, the guy wants you to change a €50 note from you into two-Euro coins he is showing. He is holding the coins stack-wise in his hands. For the trouble, he says he will offer you '30 two-Euro coins, making €60 in total'. Do not agree with this exchange of money, as the first coin is indeed a two-Euro coin, but (many of)
the rest of the coins will probably be 1 Lira coins (looking very similar), worth only 1/3 of the value of €2 (in August 2007).

Many bars in the Taksim area give you counterfeit bills. They are usually well-made and hard to identify as fakes in the dark. One way to verify its authenticity is to check its size against another bill. Another is to hold the bill up to a strong light, face side up, and check for an outline of the same face which is on the bill. The value of the bill (20, 50, etc) should appear next to the outline, light and translucent. If either if these two security features are missing, try to have the bill changed or speak to the police.

**Shoebrush**

Some people will walk around Taksim with a shoeshine kit, and the brush will fall off. This is a scam to cause some Western tourist with a conscience to pick it up and return it to the owner, who will then express gratitude and offer to shine your shoes for free. While doing that, he will talk about how he is from another city and how he has a sick child. At the end, the shiner will demand a much higher price for the "free" services provided than is the actual market norm.

If you actively decide that you would like your shoes shined, then expect to pay not more than 5 lira for both.

**Taxi drivers**

Taxis are plentiful in Istanbul and inexpensive by Western European and American standards. They can be picked up at taxi hubs throughout the city or on the streets. Empty cabs on the streets will honk at pedestrians to see if they would like a ride, or cabs can be hailed by pedestrians by making eye contact with the driver and waving. Few taxi drivers speak languages other than Turkish, but do a fair job at deciphering mispronounced location names given by foreign riders. It is advisable to have the name of the destination written down and try to have a map beforehand to show the driver, to avoid any misunderstanding and also potential scams. Though taxis are plentiful, be aware that taxis are harder to find during peak traffic hours and traffic jams and when it is raining and snowing. They are also less frequent during nights, depending on the area and are hard to find after midnight.

Try to avoid using taxis for short distances (5-10 minutes of walk) if possible. Some taxi drivers can be annoyed with this, especially if you called the cab from a taxi hub instead of hailing it from the street. If you want taxis for short distances, just hail them from the street, do not go to the taxi hub.

Few taxis have seatbelts, and some drivers may seem to be reckless. If you wish for the driver to slow down, say "yavash lütfen" (slow please). Your request may or may not be honored.

Unfortunately, as in any major city, tourists are more vulnerable to taxi scams than locals. Be aware that taxi drivers use cars affiliated
with a particular hub, and that the name and phone number of the hub, as well as the license plate number, are written on the side of each car. Noting or photographing this information may be useful if you run into problems. In general, riding in taxis affiliated with major hotels (Hilton, Marriott, Ritz, etc.) is safe, and it is not necessary to stay in these hotels to use a taxis leaving from their hubs.

Others may take unnecessarily long routes to increase the amount due (although sometimes alternate routes are also taken to avoid Istanbul traffic, which can be very bad). Some scams involve the payment transaction; for example, if the rider pays 50 TL when only 20 TL are needed, the driver may quickly switch it with a 5 TL note and insist that the rest of the 20 TL is still due or may switch the real bill for a fake one and insist that different money be given.

Methods to avoid taxi scams: 1. **SIT IN THE FRONT PASSENGER SEAT.** Watch the meter. Watch the driver's actions (beeping the horn, pumping the brakes, etc) and note what the taximeter does. While it is rare, some drivers will wire parts of their controls to increase the fare upon activation. If you're with your significant other, do it anyway. Save the cuddling for after the ride.

2. **Ask "How much to go to...?" (basic English is understood), before getting in the taxi.** Price will be quite accurate to the one in the taximeter at the end of the ride. If the price sounds ok for you, get in the cab and tell them to put the Taximeter on. Since 2009, the rate they are applying is same during night and day. Also you can use this useful and up-to-date cab fare estimation tool for Istanbul: [19] (http://taksiyle.com/en/)

3. **Know the route.** If you have a chance, find a map and demand that the driver take your chosen route to the destination. Often times they will drive the long way or pretend not to know where you're going in order to get more money out of you. If the driver claims not to know the route to a major landmark or gathering place, refuse his services as he is likely lying.

4. **Choose an elderly driver.** Elderly taxi drivers are less likely to cheat passengers.

5. Let taxi driver see money on your hands and show values and take commitment on it. This is 50 Lira. OK? Take this 50 Lira and give 30 Lira back OK?. This guarantees your money value. Otherwise, your 50 Lira can be 5 Lira immediately on his hands.

**Stalking**

Men intent on stalking foreign women will, obviously, be present in tourist locations. Such men may presume that foreigners have a lot of money or liberal values and may approach foreign women in a flirtatious or forward manner looking for sex or for money (either by theft or selling over-priced goods). If you are being harassed, use common sense and go to where other people are; often this is the nearest store. Creating a public scene will deter many stalkers, and these phrases may be useful in such cases:
- "Ayıp!" - "Rude!"
- "Bırak beni!" "Leave me alone!"
- "Dur!" - "Stop it!"
- "Gider misin?!" - "Will you go?!"

Or to really ruin him:
- "Beni takip etme?!" - "Can you please stop stalking me?!"
- "Polisi arıyorum- "I am calling the cops!"

Occasionally try not to use Turkish as the stalker will like it more, just scream and run and find a safer place with crowd and police.

**Race, Ethnicity and Religion**

Some service providers (hotels, shop keepers, taxis, luxury night clubs's entrances) today have a negative attitude towards black people, that will be because—rather than xenophobia—they might think you do not have enough money to spend, due to the fact that most of the black people who settled in Istanbul have a poor economical background.

**Tourism Police**

Istanbul PD has a "Tourism Police" department where travelers may report passport loss and theft or any other criminal activity by which they are victimized. They have an office in Sultanahmet and can reportedly speak English, German, French, and Arabic.

- **Tourism Police** (*Turizm Polisi*), Yerebatan Caddesi 6, Sultanahmet (*in the yellow wooden building between Hagia Sophia and the entrance of Basilica Cistern, few meters away from each*), ☎ +90 212 527 45 03 (fax: +90 212 512 76 76).

**Stay healthy**

Similar to many European countries tap water is mostly drinkable, but it may not be safe depending on where you drink it. Although the tap water itself is clean, many local water tanks are not maintained properly, and one should try to avoid tap water if possible. Locals widely prefer bottled water and the same applies for the restaurants.

Food and drinks are mostly of international standards. Some Turkish foods are known to use a variety of spices which may affect international tourists who may not be accustomed to such ingredients, although most of it is edible for any tongue.

Use common sense when buying certain foods, particularly from street vendors. Delicacies such as "Firin Sutlac" (a kind of rice pudding) can go bad rapidly on a hot day, as can the oysters occasionally for sale on the streets.

**Cope**
Keep in mind that Istanbul's less-than-scrupulous hotel and restaurant owners are as market savvy as they come—they actually read the popular travel guides to Istanbul and when they get listed or favorably reviewed, they raise prices through the roof and skimp on costs. For mid-range and cheap hotels/restaurants, you may actually have a better time if you avoid places listed in your guide. Trust your nose.

Consulates

- **Argentina**, Tepecik Yolu 58, Etiler, +90 212 257-70-50. [edit]
- **Australia**, Asker Ocağı Caddesi 15, Elmadag, +90 212 243-13-33. [edit]
- **France**, İstiklal Caddesi 4, Beyoğlu-Taksim, +90 212 334-87-30, [23] (http://consulfrance-istanbul.org/). [edit]
- **Germany**, İnönü Caddesi 10, Gümüşsuyu-Taksim, +90 212 334-61-00, [24] (http://istanbul.diplo.de/). [edit]
- **Iran**, Ankara Caddesi 1, Çağaloğlu, +90 212 513-82-30. [edit]
- **Netherlands**, İstiklal Caddesi 197, Beyoğlu, +90 212 393-21-21, [26] (http://nl.org.tr/). [edit]
- **Pakistan**, Cengiz Topal Cad. Gülsen Sok. No: 5, Beyaz Ev 3. Etiler, +90 212 358-45-06. [edit]
- **Russia**, İstiklal Caddesi 443, Beyoğlu, +90 212 292-51-01. [edit]
- **United Kingdom**, Meşrutiyet Caddesi 34, Tepebaşi-Beyoğlu, +90 212 334-64-00. [edit]

Get out

- **Kilyos** — Located by the Black-sea shore on the European side, Kilyos is a half-hour drive from Taksim under normal
circumstances. The village has more than a dozen private and public beaches, some of which require membership to enter. Though there are ways to get to Kilyos with buses and dolmus, the best way is to use a private car, since the journey will take longer than usual during summer. **Note**, that the sea is rough, and high waves and currents make it difficult and somewhat dangerous to swim for people who are not expert and cautious. Drownings occur every year.

- **Atatürk Arboretum** (living tree museum) is the place for nature lovers. It’s about one hour bus ride away from central parts of the city, near Bahcekoy in the north of the city, near the Black Sea coast (*buses: 42T from Taksim and Besiktas, 42M from 4. Levent metro station; entrance of the arboretum is a 15-min walk away from the last stop of aforementioned lines*). It’s located in an oak forest and includes many non-native tree species (some of which go increasingly photogenic with crimson/golden/purple leaves as winter approaches), and a pond complete with ducks. There is also a wooden observation tower on one of the hilltops, offering a view of the surrounding forests and a spectacular sight of Bosporus which is seen as a turquoise lake from that point. That same tower can also be used for bird watching during autumn, as these hills are on one of the major routes of migratory birds on their way from Europe to Africa. During weekdays arboretum is open to public for a token fee (about 2 TL, which is not always collected), however weekends are exclusively for members. Remember, no eating, no picnicking, and no smoking.

- **Anadolu Kavığı**— While officially the northernmost district of the city, Anadolu Kavığı (also known simply as Kavak) on the Asian bank of Bosporus is in reality a separate town, accessible only by a windy and narrow road through the forest, by infrequent public buses, or by ferries (the best way to go there). Ferries depart from Eminönü (once or twice a day, from the pier named Boğaz İskelesi) and Sariyer (much more frequently), which is the northernmost district on European side (to get to Sariyer, you should take public bus #40 from Taksim). While in Anadolu Kavığı, climb up to the citadel on the hill (follow the signs starting from the square near the quay, it takes about 20 minutes on foot, free admission). The citadel is named **Yoros** and it’s
unclear who built it, maybe Byzantines or the Genoese perhaps, but it's pretty obvious that it was built to protect the northern entrance of Bosporus. The castle offers a perfect view of the entrance of Bosporus and the Black Sea beyond, as if not much has changed since Jason and the Argonauts sailed through here in pursuit of Golden Fleece. When you turn your back to Black Sea on the other hand, you'll have a distant view of business district of the city, full of skyscrapers. When you're done in the castle, return back to town centre, and before boarding the ship that will take you back to the city, have a waffle and a hot coffee in one of the cafés near the shore if it's winter. (note: Citadel and surrounding areas get really crowded at weekends during summer months, which makes falling into mythical dreams a little difficult).

**Polonezköy** — A village in the Asian side of Istanbul, about 20 km away from central parts of the city. It was founded by Polish settlers in 19th century.

**Şile** — Located by the Black-Sea shore on the Anatolian side, Şile is a 45 minutes drive to Taksim. Though, it will take ca. 1.5-2 hours to get there if you take the bus from Üsküdar. It is a village growing rapidly, famous for its fish and special cotton fabric Şile Bezi (cloth of Şile). Similar to Kilyos, Şile also has its own private and public beaches. **Note**, that the dangerous sand type of the sea, and currents make it difficult and somewhat dangerous to swim for people who are not expert and cautious. Drownings occur every year. From Şile, you can get to **Ağva** by bus or car. By car, it will take 20-30’ and by bus ca. 1 hour. Ağva is a tourist-attracting, small holiday village. It has less make-up for tourist. You can observe the local life. Its beach became due to the increase of visitors dirty recently. But if you ask locals, you can find wonderful, hidden beaches (such as "Kilimli"). Every year, more international tourists buy/build houses in Ağva.

**The Princes' Islands** — A group of islands off the southern coast of the Asian Side of Istanbul. "Büyükada", the biggest and most famous of them all, has fairly frequent ferry connections to Eminönü and Kabatas (on the European side) and Bostanci and Kadikoy (on the Asian side) (depending on the time of year - check out the IDO and Mavi Marmara ferry services. Out of season it might be necessary to travel via Bostanci using the Mavi Marmara ferries). At Büyükada you can rent bikes and find some very secluded spots perfect for a picnic, highly recommended for when you're tired of being in a huge city with millions of people.
Silivri — It's a place of choice for people to relax & take a break from their hectic lives. Silivri is a 45 minutes drive to Levent. The best way to commute is to use a private car, since the journey will take longer than usual during summer. The summer is a popular time when people move into their summer homes in Silivri and enjoy beach activities. In fact, many new and spectacular villages have also been built there.

Edirne in the west/northwest is a two-hour car drive or bus ride away (train is also an option but it takes much longer). The city served as the capital city of Ottoman Empire before the capital was moved to Istanbul, thus is full of history. Visiting this city can be a long day trip if you have a car at your disposal, or if you can get up very early and catch, say, 7 o’clock in the morning bus. It’s better to stay overnight to see all the sights though.

Bursa to the south/southeast, about the exact opposite direction of Edirne, can be another long day-trip, possibly combined with a de-tour to Iznik on the way. Bursa is another former Ottoman capital with many earlier historical sights, as well as Uludağ National Park just south of the city.

Istanbul to New Delhi over land, a.k.a. "The Hippie Trail" — over land route deep into South Asia.

Istanbul to Cairo over land — over land route deep into Middle East.

Possible hitchhiking spots

Istanbul is geographically huge, spanning two continents, so it is hard to hit the road with your thumb up immediately, although not entirely impossible. Here are a few ideas for spots (accessible by public transport) where to raise your thumb up when leaving the city.

If you intend to head west (towards Europe) by hitchhiking, take public bus #448 (Yenibosna Metro-Mimarsinan) which departs from the bus stops located next to the ‘Yenibosna’ station of southern metro line. #448 takes you to the highway leading to west, to a highway on-ramp out of city, near Mimarsinan town. Don’t get off the bus until it leaves the highway by turning right in the on ramp junction. (fare: TL 1.50/person, though you’ll have to buy multi-use cards (at least 5 uses for TL 7.50), which makes a bad investment assuming that you are leaving the city. You can pay directly to the driver inside the bus the single-use fare, though)

If you intend to head east or south by hitchhiking, however, it may be best to get to the neighbouring city of İzmit first. The cheapest train ticket costs 3.75 TL (3.00 TL if you have a valid student ID, this is the rate for Doğu Express, which departs 08:35 every morning) from Istanbul’s Haydarpasa station to İzmit currently. Near the train station in İzmit is a major highway
junction, take east for Adapazari/Ankara/Central Anatolia/Black Sea Turkey, south for Yalova/Bursa. If you are eager for more southern locations such as Antalya, take eastward road to Adapazari first, then hit the southward road there (which eventually reaches Antalya after hundreds of kilometers). Another option to leave the city is to take the not-so-cheap fast ferries to Yalova, if you don’t object to pay much for public transport.

- There are also public buses from Kadiköy, Istanbul’s main centre on Asia, to Tuzla (#130 and #130A; fare: TL 1.50/person), which is the easternmost district of the city. If you take one of these buses, get off as soon as the bus leaves the highway (colloquially known as E-5, pronounced “ay besh” in Turkish, 4-lane one-way, you can easily recognize what is this highway and what is not). Where you will get off is as far as you can get on that highway with a public bus, though most of the cars passing there will be too fast to be able to stop right beside you.

**Routes through Istanbul**

| Edirne ← Corlu ← Junction | W | E | İzmit → Ankara |

*This is a guide article. It has a variety of good, quality information including hotels, restaurants, attractions, arrival and departure info. Plunge forward and help us make it a star!*


Category: Guide articles

- This page was last edited at 11:10, on 4 September 2010 by Wikitravel user Vidimian. Based on work by Claus Hansen, Peter Fitzgerald and Jim DeLaHunt, Anonymous user(s) of Wikitravel and others.
- Text is available under Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0, images are available under various licenses, see each image for details.