

TURKISH TRAILS: NAVIGATING ISTANBUL GUIDE



INTRODUCTION

Istanbul, straddling Europe and Asia, is a vibrant metropolis with a rich history that dates back to ancient Byzantium and Constantinople. It's a city where East meets West, offering a unique blend of cultures, traditions, and architecture.

Neighborhood Guide

- **Sultanahmet:** Historical heart, close to major attractions.
- **Beyoğlu:** Trendy area with nightlife and shopping.
- **Kadıköy:** Vibrant, less touristy, on the Asian side.

Dining and Nightlife

RESTAURANTS

- **Fish:**
 - [Balıkçı Sabahattin](#): Fresh seafood dishes in a historic setting.
 - [Uskumru Restaurant](#): A charming spot with stunning Bosphorus views.
 - [Sur Balık](#): Renowned for its delicious seafood and scenic location.
 - [Bebek Balıkçı](#): Enjoy seafood with a view in the elegant Bebek neighborhood.
- **Traditional and Kebab:**
 - [Hamdi Restaurant](#): Enjoy traditional Turkish kebab with a view of the Golden Horn.
 - [Dönerci Serkan Usta](#): Savor delicious döner kebab at this popular spot.
 - [Çiya Sofrası](#): Traditional Anatolian cuisine.

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- **Italian:**
 - [Paper Moon](#) in Etiler.
 - [Da Mario](#): Offers delicious Italian dishes in a cozy atmosphere.
 - [Pinoli Kitchen](#): Another great choice for authentic Italian cuisine.
 - [Luna Rossa](#): Delight in Italian classics in a charming atmosphere.
- **Asian Cuisine:**
 - [Nobu Istanbul](#): Renowned for its fusion of traditional Japanese dishes with Peruvian ingredients.
 - [Zuma Istanbul](#): Offers a contemporary take on traditional Japanese izakaya-style dining.
 - [Inari Omakase](#): Known for its exquisite Japanese dishes and omakase experience.
 - [Banyan Ortaköy](#): Offers an Asian fusion experience with stunning views of the Bosphorus.
- **Best Cafes:**
 - [Petra Coffee](#): Renowned for its specialty coffee and chic ambiance.
 - [Bebek Baylan](#): Historic patisserie in Bebek, famous for its delicious desserts and stylish atmosphere.
 - [Karaköy Güllüoğlu](#): Famous for baklava.
- **Vegan Options:**
 - [Dose Istanbul](#): A popular spot for vegan and healthy dishes.
 - [Healin Nişantaşı](#): Offers a variety of vegan options in a stylish setting.
- **Michelin Guide Restaurants:**
 - [Mikla](#): An acclaimed venue with stunning views.
 - [Gallada Istanbul](#): A gourmet dining experience in a modern setting.
 - [Fatih Tutak Restaurant](#): Culinary journey by Michelin-starred chef Fatih Tutak.

BREAKFAST SPOTS

- [Sütiş Emirgan](#): Enjoy a traditional Turkish breakfast with beautiful Bosphorus views.
- [Beyaz Fırın Etiler](#): A great place for breakfast pastries and a variety of breakfast dishes.
- [Bebek Koru Kahvesi](#): Enjoy breakfast in a serene setting surrounded by greenery.
- [Nezih Kebap & Yuvalama](#): Known for its delightful breakfast offerings and traditional Turkish dishes.

DRINKS

- [Lucca](#): A trendy spot in Bebek known for its lively atmosphere and excellent cocktails.
- [Bebek Otel Bar by The Stay](#): Offers stunning views and a sophisticated ambiance for drinks.
- [Ulus 29](#): A stylish venue with breathtaking Bosphorus views and an extensive drinks menu.
- [Sunset Grill & Bar](#): Known for its stunning views, elegant atmosphere, and excellent cocktails.
- [Arkestra](#): A vibrant spot known for its unique cocktails and chic atmosphere.

Shopping

SHOPPING DISTRICTS

- **Grand Bazaar**: Explore one of the world's oldest and largest covered markets for unique souvenirs and traditional Turkish goods.
- **Spice Bazaar**: For spices, sweets, and local products.
- **İstiklal Avenue**: Modern shopping street with boutiques and international brands.

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WHERE TO SHOP

- Grand Bazaar: Explore one of the world's oldest and largest covered markets for unique souvenirs and traditional Turkish goods.
- Nişantaşı: Known as Istanbul's upscale shopping district, Nişantaşı offers designer boutiques and luxury brands.
- [İstinye Park](#): A modern shopping mall with a mix of international and local stores.
- [Zorlu Center](#): Experience luxury shopping at [Zorlu Center](#), featuring high-end fashion brands and gourmet dining options.



Things To Do and Places to Visit

HISTORICAL PLACES

- [Hagia Sophia](#): Visit this iconic landmark, once a church, then a mosque, and now a museum showcasing impressive Byzantine architecture.
- [Topkapi Palace](#): Explore the former residence of Ottoman sultans, featuring stunning courtyards, pavilions, and a vast collection of artifacts.
- [Blue Mosque](#): Admire the intricate blue tiles and grandeur of this historic mosque, a symbol of Istanbul's rich cultural heritage.
- [Basilica Cistern](#): Discover the ancient underground water reservoir with its mesmerizing Medusa heads and atmospheric lighting.
- [Galata Tower](#): Climb to the top of this medieval stone tower for a panoramic view of Istanbul's historic peninsula and skyline.

MODERN MUSEUMS

- [Istanbul Modern](#): Explore contemporary Turkish and international art.
- [Arter](#): A modern art museum showcasing contemporary works in various media.
- [Sabancı Museum](#): Located in a historic mansion, featuring a collection of fine art and temporary exhibitions.
- [Rahmi M. Koç Museum](#): Industrial museum with unique exhibits.

ASIAN SIDE

- Kadıköy: Discover the vibrant Kadıköy district on the Asian side, known for its lively markets, diverse dining scene, and waterfront promenade.

HIDDEN GEMS

- Balat: Wander through the colorful streets of Balat, known for its charming historic houses, vibrant street art, and eclectic atmosphere.
- [Chora Mosque](#): Beautiful mosaics and frescoes. Chora Church, which was used as a palace church and a chapel in important religious ceremonies, continued to function as a church for awhile. In 1511, it was converted into a Mosque.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

- Explore the backstreets of Sultanahmet for hidden cafés and shops.
- Take a Bosphorus cruise for stunning views.
- Visit a traditional Turkish bath (hammam) for a unique experience.

DAY TRIPS AND EXCURSIONS

- Princes' Islands: Relaxing islands with no cars allowed.
- Bursa: Historical city and thermal spas.
- Sapanca Lake: Beautiful lake ideal for nature lovers.

Practical Information

CURRENCY AND MONEY

- Currency: Turkish Lira (TRY) however some places to accept payments in USD and EUR.
- ATMs: Widely available, credit cards accepted in most places.

COMMUNICATION

- SIM Cards: Available at the airport arrivals and city kiosks.
- Internet Access: Free Wi-Fi in many cafés, hotels, and public areas.
- Emergency Numbers: Police: 155, Fire: 110, Ambulance: 112

TRAVEL ESSENTIALS

- Electricity: 220V, European plug (Type C/F).
- Time Zone: GMT+3
- Packing Tips: Light layers, a jacket or sweater for evenings, and modest clothing for visiting mosques.

Maps and Navigation

CITY MAPS

- Detailed maps available at tourist information centers and hotels.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT MAPS

- Metro, tram, and bus maps available at stations and online.

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WALKING ROUTES

- **Sultanahmet to Galata:** Scenic walk through historic areas.
- **Istiklal Avenue:** From Taksim Square to Galata Tower.
- **Bosphorus:** Walk along the waterfront, taking in the stunning views and the iconic bridges connecting Europe and Asia.

Cultural Tips

LOCAL CUSTOMS AND ETIQUETTE

- **Greetings:** A handshake or cheek kisses among friends.
- **Tipping:** Generally 10% to 15% in restaurants and hotels.

LANGUAGE BASICS

- **Hello:** Merhaba
- **Thank you:** Teşekkür ederim / Teşekkürler
- **Please:** Lütfen
- **Yes:** Evet
- **No:** Hayır

Other

- **Traffic Hours:** Traffic in Istanbul can be heavy, especially during rush hours (8:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.). Plan your travels accordingly and consider using public transportation to avoid congestion.
- **Nearest Pharmacy:** The nearest pharmacy to Ritz Carlton Istanbul is Istanbul Eczanesi Gümüşsuyu.
- **Hairdresser:** For a top-notch hairdressing experience, consider visiting [Emre Ayaksız](#) in Nişantaşı. Guests of the IADC can enjoy a 10% discount with the code **CMS/IADC**. Upon request and on an exceptional basis, a hairdresser can come to the hotel. Please note that this service is based on a separate budget. If you would like the hairdresser to come to the hotel, we recommend scheduling your appointment at least one day in advance.
- **Green Travel Tips:**
 - **Eat Local:** Support local restaurants and markets that source ingredients sustainably and locally.
 - **Reduce Plastic Use:** Carry a reusable water bottle, shopping bag, and utensils to minimize single-use plastic waste.
 - **Be Energy Conscious:** Turn off lights, air conditioning, and electronics when not in use, and take shorter showers to conserve water.

Contact for Support

If you need any consultation:

Contact Person: Aslı Üçkuzular – CMS Türkiye

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Enjoy your time in Istanbul and savor the city's rich culture, cuisine, and hospitality!