ArrivalGuides
A SMARTVEL COMPANY

Istanbul

Photo: Viacheslav Lopatin/shutterstock

Berke/shutterstock

It’s easy to lose yourself in Istanbul's grandiose history, but modern Istanbul is a simmering metropolis, well worth a visit in its own right. The shopping is world-class and the nightlife pulsates around not one but several districts. Even though Istanbul is no longer the capital, it’s still the country’s business and cultural centre, still the city where new trends are created.

Seqoya/shutterstock

Luciano Mortula/shutterstock

Featured

Istanbul Aquarium
This is a well organised aquarium with species from all over the world and i...

Istanbul Museum of Modern Art
This is the first private museum to organise modern and

Boat Trips
Boats travel along the shores of the Bosphorus from Eminönü, they chug quiet...

Rahmi M. Koc Museum
The first museum in Turkey dedicated to the history of transport. The collec...

Dolmabahçe Palace
Dolmabahçe Palace is a white stone behemoth located in the Beşiktaş district...

Top 5

Aya Sofya (Hagia Sophia)
Aya Sofya is a remarkable mixture of Christianity and Islam, a church with m...

Galata Tower
The Galata Tower is a medieval stone tower in the Galata/Karaköy quarter of ...

Topkapi Palace
The palace of the sultans with its many courtyards and gates brings on a nos...

Sultanahmet (The Blue Mosque)
Built at the beginning of the 16th century during the rule of

Grand Bazaar
The Grand Bazaar attracts many people, far too many if you come at rush hour...

THE CITY

TTstudio/shutterstock

Constantinople, the centre of the Byzantine Empire which lasted over a thousand years, later became Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire for almost 500 years. The city is a mixture of Europe and Asia, a unique urban composition. A stroll around Sultanahmet, inside the city walls, among mosques, museums and the Great Bazaar is a trip through both history and daily life.

Modern Istanbul is on the other side of the Galata Bridge in Beyoğlu. The city is at its busiest from the Karaköy ferry terminal, through the always happening and youthful Cihangir, along the main tourist shopping İstiklal street and all the way to the famous Taksim square.

Istanbul’s Asian side has avoided much of the international tourism and has retained a more humdrum character. Moda district is brimming with cafes and bars frequented by local hipsters, while a bit more traditional Üsküdar caters to visiting families.

Waterways play a central role in the life of the city and boat traffic on the Bosphorus, the Golden Horn and the Sea of Marmara is running like clockwork. Along the banks you can find small cafes where you can enjoy a glass of tea and magnificent views over the town.

DO & SEE

RossHelen/shutterstock

Istanbul is a vibrant city whose grandiose history is utterly fascinating. Take a stroll around the city and admire the amazing mosques, museums and the Great Bazaar, or even visit an authentic Turkish bath.

Aya Sofya (Hagia Sophia)

Aya Sofya is a remarkable mixture of Christianity and Islam, a church with minarets and a mosque with pictures of the Virgin Mary that, unfortunately, are now covered up. The building is one of the wonders of world architecture. Its 32-metre main dome has stood firm since Aya Sofya's completion in 537 CE. That's almost one and a half thousand years ago.

Originally constructed as a Christian church, the temple has since been a mosque, then a museum, and now once again acts as a mosque.

Photo: Boris Stroujko/shutterstock
Address: Sultan Ahmet, Ayasofya Meydanı No 1, Fatih, İstanbul
Phone: +90 212 522 17 50
Internet: www.muze.gen.tr/muze-detay/ayasofya
Email: contact@muze.gen.tr
More Info: Visitors are asked to comply with the modesty dress code when visiting this historic mosque: knees and

shoulders covered, women must wear headscarves.

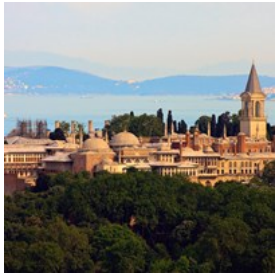
Galata Tower

The Galata Tower is a medieval stone tower in the Galata/Karaköy quarter of Istanbul, just to the north of the Golden Horn's junction with the Bosphorus. The top floor of the tower is located at a height of 52 metres and houses an observation deck. It is unlikely that you will find a better lookout spot in all of the city; it's simply stunning.

The tower is one of the most iconic buildings in Istanbul and is a very popular destination. It's a good idea to come early in the morning to avoid the crowds.

Photo: thehakanarslan/shutterstock
Address: Bereketzade, Beyoğlu, İstanbul
Public Transport: Downhill from Şişhane subway station and uphill from Karaköy ferry terminal.
Phone: +90 212 249 03 44
Internet: www.muze.gen.tr/muze-detay/galatakulesi

Topkapi Palace



The palace of the sultans with its many courtyards and gates brings on a nostalgia for forgone times. There are several special museums in the area; highlights include the Treasure Chamber, where the famous dagger and Spoonmaker's diamond are true stars of the collection, and the harem, where the sultan’s wives and children lived. None of these are included in the ticket price to the palace.

Photo: Bertl123/Shutterstock.com
Address: Cankurtaran Mah. Babı Hümayun Caddesi No 1, Fatih, İstanbul
Phone: +90 212 512 04 80
Internet: www.muze.gen.tr/muze-detay/topkapi
Email: topkapisarayi@millisaraylar.gov.tr

Sultanahmet (The Blue Mosque)

Built at the beginning of the 16th century during the rule of Sultan Ahmet I, this grandiose mosque seamlessly combines Ottoman and Byzantine architectural styles. The building is known for its six minarets and was given its nickname for the 20,000 blue tiles adorning the interior. These tiles were made in Iznik, an area that was famous during the Ottoman Empire for its expert production of ceramic tiles.

Photo: AlexAnton/shutterstock
Address: Binbirdirek, At Meydanı Caddesi No 10, Fatih, İstanbul
Tickets: Entrance is free for everyone
More Info: Visitors are asked to comply with the modesty dress code when visiting this historic mosque: knees and shoulders covered, women must wear headscarves.

Grand Bazaar

The Grand Bazaar attracts many people, far too many if you come at rush hour. It’s a good idea to arrive early in the morning and enjoy a cup of tea in one of the cafes whilst the bazaar comes to life. There are thousands of stalls, selling virtually everything, carpets, gold, cloth, spices and more. The bazaar is a world of its own and it’s easy and fun to get lost in the teeming alleyways.

Photo: Finn stock/shutterstock
Address: Beyazıt, İstanbul
Phone: +90 212 519 12 48

Internet: www.kapalicarsi.com.tr

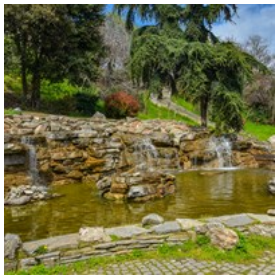
Turkish Baths

It is said that if you have never tried a Turkish bath then you have never been truly clean. Move through several hot rooms and finally arrive at the massage table for a real going over. Men and women bathe separately, exceptions are made at certain times for tourists.

Çemberlitaş Hamam, situated near the Bazaar, is the oldest hamam in town and was reputedly built by the master architect Mimar Sinan in 1584.

Photo: Sabino Parente/Shutterstock.com
Address: Molla Fenari, Vezirhan Caddesi No 8, Fatih, İstanbul
Phone: +90 212 522 79 74
Internet: www.cemberlitashamami.com/cemberlitas-bath-historical-turkish-bath

Maçka Park



Maçka Democracy Park is about 10 minutes away from Taksim square and has paths for jogging, walking and dog walking. The northern part of the park is popular with young people who come there to sit around on the lawn, talk with friends over a couple of drinks and escape the heat of the city blocks. The park's location, close to a university campus, means it's always full of hip students.

Don't miss the opportunity to fly high above the park in a cute 2-cabin cable car. You'll need your public transit card for that.

Photo: Sergey Malomuzh/shutterstock
Address: Harbiye, Maçka Caddesi, Şişli, İstanbul

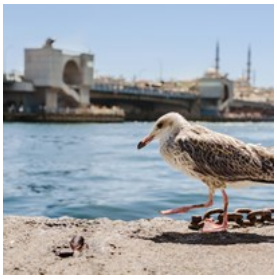
Boat Trips

Boats travel along the shores of the Bosphorus from Eminönü, they chug quietly under the bridges that connect Europe and Asia. One hour away is Anadolukavağı, a little Asian fishing village with lots of pleasant restaurants.

You can travel to the largest of the Prince Islands with a Seabus, departing from Kabataş below the Dolmabahçe Palace. Ferry terminals in Eminönü and Karaköy on either side of the Galata bridge are good starting points for exploring Istanbul by ferry.

Photo: Chuyko Sergey/shutterstock
Address: Eminonu, Istanbul
Internet: www.sehirhatlari.istanbul/en
Email: info@sehirhatlari.istanbul

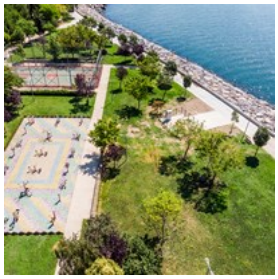
Eminönü Pier



Eminönü Pier is located right next to the famed Galata bridge, where you can find plenty of restaurants and locals fishing at all times of the day. It's a perfect spot to take in Istanbul's busy atmosphere, or start your day of exploring the city by boat. Ferries depart regularly and take you up the Golden Horn, along the Bosphorus or across the water to the Asian side.

Photo: aliaksei kruhlenia/shutterstock
Address: Eminönü Pier, Istanbul

Moda Coastal Park



Moda district of Kadiköy has a certain bohemian and alternative vibe. Once the sun begins to set, locals and visitors of the area head down towards the Marmara sea. People stroll up and down the footpaths, jog, bike, pet cats, have picnics, whatever floats your boat on this grassy stretch of parkland. Vendors frequently pass by selling sunflower seeds, snacks, water, and beer.

Photo: Alp Aksoy/shutterstock
Address: Küçükmoda Burnu Sokak, Kadıköy, İstanbul

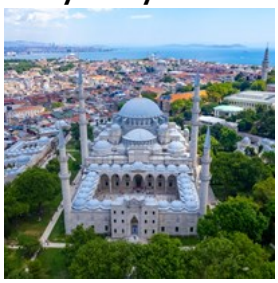
Arter

Arter is a non-profit centre that displays modern art in a gorgeous modern building with a fabulous façade, in stark contrast with comparatively dilapidated old buildings in the area. A must for fans of contemporary art.

Every single visitor is impressed by the bookstore. The art centre also has a lovely cafe with a terrace.

Photo: Sorapop Udomsri/shutterstock
Address: Yenişehir, Irmak Caddesi No 13, Beyoğlu, İstanbul
Phone: +90 212 708 58 00
Internet: www.arter.org.tr
Email: info@arter.org.tr
More Info: If you decide to get to Arter on foot, you'll have to walk through some of the less developed streets. You won't see many tourists here, even though it's definitely worth seeing this unpolished side of Istanbul.

Süleymaniye



Süleymaniye is the largest mosque dating from 1557 and also contains the mausoleum of sultan Süleyman and his wife Roxelane. The master architect Mimar Sinan built many of Istanbul's mosques during the 1500s and is buried next to the mosque.

This is one of the best-known sights of Istanbul, and from its location on the Third Hill, it commands an extensive view of the city around the Golden Horn. If you have seen a photo of Istanbul taken from a ferry, most likely Süleymaniye is right in the middle of the composition.

Photo: BuramBuramKareler/shutterstock
Address: Süleymaniye, Prof. Sıddık Sami Onar Caddesi No 1, Fatih, İstanbul
Public Transport: Close to Vezneciler Subway or Eminönü ferry terminal
Phone: +90 212 458 00 00

SALT Beyoğlu

SALT Beyoğlu is a six-story building on the central shopping İstiklal street. In this historic building you'll find selected artworks and small-scale exhibitions that are ever changing to reflect the fast-paced rhythm of the modern world. Check this art space's Walk-in Cinema, a platform for screenings, talks, workshops, and performances.

While you're in the area, also check out SALT Galata, an equally wonderful sister project of SALT Beyoğlu with a cafe and a library with free

Wi-Fi.

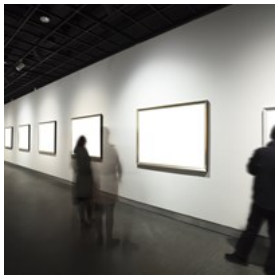
Photo: SeventyFour/shutterstock
Address: İstiklal Caddesi No 136, Beyoğlu, İstanbul
Public Transport: Şişhane subway station
Phone: +90 212 377 42 00
Internet: www.saltonline.org/en/41/salt-beyoglu
More Info: Pro tip: step away from the busy streets and rise to SALT's rooftop winter garden, a silent oasis of peace and tranquility.

Sakip Sabanci Museum

A private mansion with a nice garden turned into a museum, a place where you can admire works from Turkish artists created between 1850 and 1950. There are also excellent collections of calligraphy, religious and state documents, classical Turkish furniture as well as paintings of the Ottoman era. The museum is beautifully located on a hilltop, overlooking the Bosphorus.

Photo: Carmensbrain/shutterstock
Address: Sakıp Sabancı Caddesi 42, Istanbul
Phone: +90 212 277 22 00
Internet: www.sakipsabancimuzesi.org/en
Email: ssminfo@sabanciuniv.edu
More Info: Best combined with a visit to Emirgan Park, especially during Istanbul Tulip festival in early April

Istanbul Museum of Modern Art



This is the first private museum to organise modern and contemporary art exhibitions in the city. It was founded in 2004 and is located in an old warehouse by the harbour. Istanbul Modern Museum offers two main exhibition halls; the museum’s permanent collection is displayed on the upper floor and the temporary exhibition hall and photography gallery on the lower floor.

Photo: zhu difeng/Shutterstock.com
Address: Kılıç Ali Paşa Mahallesi, Tophane Iskele Caddesi No 1/1, Beyoğlu, Istanbul
Phone: +90 212 334 73 00
Internet: www.istanbulmodern.org/en
Email: info@istanbulmodern.org
More Info: The museum used to be located close to the waterfront, but had moved while the area is under redevelopment

Hodjapasha Cultural Centre

For the best local authentic events, head over to this cultural centre, housed in an old historical Turkish bath over 500 years old. It has two sections, first is an exhibition and foyer area, the other section is the performance area. This is a great place to enjoy belly dancing, whirling dervishes and other traditional dance performances with live music.

Photo: Kiselev Andrey Valerevich/Shutterstock.com
Address: Ankara Caddesi, Hocapaşa Hamamı Sokak No 3, Fatih, İstanbul
Phone: +90 212 511 46 26
Internet: www.hodjapasha.com
Email: info@hodjapasha.com

Emirgan Park

Emirgan Park is one of the oldest and largest parks in Istanbul. There are several playgrounds for children, trails for hiking and picnic tables. Every April there is a Tulip Festival, a period when the park is surrounded by blossomed tulips.

Photo: Roxana Bashyrova/shutterstock

Address: Reşitpaşa, Emirgan Sokak, Sarıyer, İstanbul
Phone: +90 212 277 5782
Internet: www.tesislerimiz.ibb.istanbul/ibb-sosyal-tesislerinde-lale-zamani

Istanbul Aquarium

This is a well organised aquarium with species from all over the world and is a great family attraction as well as a popular tourist sight. It offers approximately 1.500 species, 15.000 land and sea creatures in total. When you are feeling hungry or thirsty you will find a café inside.

Photo: Ruslan Malysh/shutterstock
Address: Şenlikköy, Yeşilköy Halkalı Caddesi No 93, Florya, İstanbul
Phone: +90 212 574 21 35
Internet: www.istanbulakvaryum.com/en
Email: iletisim@istanbulakvaryum.com

Rahmi M. Koc Museum

The first museum in Turkey dedicated to the history of transport. The collection contains full size ships, aircrafts, trains and cars. This is a great place to explore and learn something new for both children and adults.

Photo: Kittyfly/shutterstock
Address: Piri Paşa, Rahmi M. Koç Caddesi No 3, Beyoğlu, İstanbul
Phone: +90 212 369 66 00
Internet: www.rmk-museum.org.tr/istanbul
Email: info@rmk-museum.org.tr

Dolmabahçe Palace

Dolmabahçe Palace is a white stone behemoth located in the Beşiktaş district and overlooks the Bosphorus. It used to serve as the main administrative centre of the Ottoman Empire from 1856 to 1887 and from 1909 to 1922. Some visitors compare it with Versailles and Hermitage.

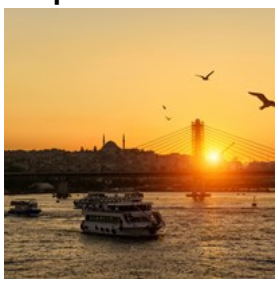
Photo: Darkdiamond67/shutterstock
Address: Vişnezade, Dolmabahçe Caddesi, Beşiktaş, İstanbul
Phone: +90 212 236 90 00
Internet: www.millisaraylar.gov.tr/Lokasyon/3/Dolmabahce-Sarayi
More Info: The palace is popular! Make sure to go early on the day to avoid the crowds and the heat

Chora Monastery (Kariye Mosque)

The Monastery was founded in the 5th century and contains beautiful frescos and mosaics dating from 1000–1300, representing Virgin Mary and the life of Jesus. This medieval Greek Orthodox church is used as a mosque today.

Photo: RauL C7/shutterstock
Address: Derviş Ali, Kariye Cami Sokak No 18, Fatih, İstanbul
Phone: +90 212 512 23 20
Internet: www.muze.gen.tr/muze-detay/kariye
Email: istanbul@diyanet.gov.tr

Bosphorus Sunset Cruise



The Bosphorus Sunset Cruise offers a scenic and relaxing two-hour afternoon journey along one of Istanbul's most iconic waterways. The semi-private cruise is excellent value for money, with a small group setting and attentive, professional crew. Snacks, water and coffee are included in the price.

Photo: Viacheslav Lopatin/shutterstock
Address: Aksaray, Çakırağa Cami Sokak, Molla Gürani, Yusufpaşa Çk. 1/A, Fatih, İstanbul
Phone: +90 552 463 84 98
Internet: www.bosphorussunset.com
Email: info@acetestravel.com

DINING

badahos/shutterstock

A meal often begins with meze, a number of small dishes such as aubergine purée, börek, various salads and cheese. Filling vegetables such as tomatoes, paprika, aubergines and courgette with rice and minced meat is typically called dolmasi in Turkish. There are special restaurants that only serve kebab, köfte, meatballs or Köfteci. Simpler restaurants are called Lokanta.

Pandeli

This is a lunch restaurant on the first floor of the Spice Bazaar, decorated with blue Iznik tiles. They serve traditional Turkish food with some Greek dishes.

Photo: Utku Demirsoy/shutterstock
Address: Mısırçarşı İçi 1, D2, Fatih, İstanbul
Phone: +90 212 527 39 09
Internet: www.pandeli.com.tr
Email: info@pandeli.com.tr

Yakup 2

Yakup 2 is situated on a side street to Istiklâl Cad. The owner, Yakup Arslan, serves traditional meze to bohemian regulars and cultural celebrities.

Photo: Utku Demirsoy/shutterstock
Address: Asmalı Mescit Caddesi 21/B, Istanbul
Phone: +90 212 249 29 25
Internet: www.yakup2.com.tr

Galatasaray Fish Market & Çicek Pasaji

Halfway through the market runs the Nevizade, a lane with a string of good value Meyhanes (traditional taverns). The flower thoroughfare next to the market is a reconstructed restaurant street, but it's a little more expensive.

Photo: Linda Hughes Photography/shutterstock
Address: Istiklâl Caddesi, Istanbul
More Info: Nevizade, Beyoglu

Meşale Restaurant & Cafe

A local hotspot with great service and a vibrant atmosphere, stop by for some tea and shisha. The café serves cocktails, but nothing with alcohol, although smoking hookah is frequent. Excellent place to see the whirling dervishes and listen to live music.

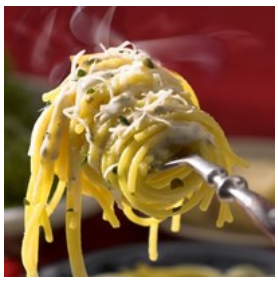
Photo: Tomophafan/Shutterstock.com
Address: Sultan Ahmet, Arasta Çarşısı, Kabasakal Cd. No 45, Istanbul
Phone: +90 212 518 95 62
Internet: www.mesalecafe.net
Email: info@mesalecafe.com

Four Seasons

The luxurious Four Seasons hotel is a converted prison from around the year 1800 near the Topkapi Palace. The restaurant is in a round outbuilding on what was once the prison yard, and here you can eat like a prince.

Photo: Andrey Bayda/Shutterstock.com
Address: Tevfikhane Sokak 1, Sultanahmet, Istanbul
Phone: +90 212 402 30 00
Internet: www.fourseasons.com/istanbul/dining
Email: contactus.bosphorus@fourseasons.com

Ozi Pizza & Pasta



This Italian restaurant opened its doors in 2004 and serves pizza and pasta. Ozi Pizza & Pasta is a small charming restaurant with a friendly owner. On the menu you will find tasty pizza dishes like barbeque lamb, seafood and Margarita.

Photo: fotohavran eu/Shutterstock.com
Address: Binbirdirek, Su Terazisi Sokak. No 9, Fatih, İstanbul
Phone: +90 212 516 44 47
More Info: Across from Fernan Sultan Hotel

Barbeku House

Barbeku House is a hidden gem, located just minutes from the Blue Mosque. This is the place where you can enjoy quality Turkish food at affordable prices in a warm and cosy atmosphere. You can also expect excellent service from the welcoming staff.

Photo: Alexander Raths/Shutterstock.com
Address: Yerebatan Caddesi, Hotel Han 19, Istanbul
Phone: +90 212 511 03 61

House of Medusa

The restaurant is named after the goddess Medusa and is located in an old building that used to be a mansion before it was restored into a restaurant. This charming restaurant provides a lovely courtyard where you can sample delicious Turkish specialties.

Photo: Lesya Dolyuk/Shutterstock.com
Address: Alemdar Mh., Yerebatan Caddesi 19, Fatih, İstanbul
Phone: +90 212 511 41 16
Internet: www.medusarestaurant.com
Email: info@medusarestaurant.com

Eleos

Eleos is a warm and welcoming Greek restaurant which can be hard to find but it will be well worth the effort. The small menu changes daily, depending on the catch of the day. With your fresh food enjoy a glass of excellent wine, the house wine comes highly recommended.

Photo: Bernd Juergens/Shutterstock.com
Address: Yeşilbahçe Sokak 9, Bakırköy, Istanbul
Phone: +90 212 573 68 28
Internet: www.eleosrestaurant.com

Topaz

For fine dining, head over to this award-winning restaurant that boasts a breathtaking view of the Bosphorus. At this restaurant you can enjoy exquisite gourmet cooking in a Mediterranean and Ottoman style.

Photo: fornStudio/shutterstock
Address: Ömer Avni Mahalle İnönü Caddesi No 42, Gümüşsuyu Taksim, Istanbul
Phone: +90 531 329 41 11
Internet: www.topazistanbul.com/index_eng.asp
Email: info@ranameyhane.com

Beyti Restaurant

Beyti Restaurant is a unique Turkish meat restaurant and admired not only in the country but all over the world. The dish called 'Beyti Kebap' is highly recommended.

Photo: Bozhena Melnyk/Shutterstock.com
Address: Orman Sokak No 6-8, Florya-Bakırköy, İstanbul
Phone: +90 212 663 29 90
Internet: www.beyti.com
Email: rezervasyon@beyti.com

Moda in Kadiköy

Widely regarded as Kadıköy's premier dining district, Moda buzzes with a mix of cafés, bars and restaurants. This lively neighbourhood is a go-to destination if you're looking for quality food and drink.

The area's diverse culinary scene ranges from traditional Turkish restaurants to contemporary international eateries. You can also relax in one of the many çay houses with sweet treats like künefe. Many of the establishments here stay busy until late.

Photo: ahmet ceyhan/shutterstock
Address: Moda, Kadıköy, İstanbul

CAFES

Leyla Ismet/shutterstock

Coffee has played an important role in Turkish lifestyle and culture so there is no wonder that Istanbul offers many old and new cafés. Why not try a cup of traditional Turkish coffee or tea which is served in a tiny gracious cup.

Patisserie De Pera

Time has stood still here since 1892 and you almost expect Mata Hari to sit down at the next table to enjoy one of the delicious pastries. Patisserie De Pera is located inside Pera Palace Hotel.

Photo: aliasemma/Shutterstock.com
Address: Meşrutiyet Caddesi 52, Tepebaşı Beyoğlu, Istanbul
Phone: +90 212 377 40 00
Internet: www.perapalace.com/en/restaurants/patisserie-de-pera
Email: info@perapalace.com
More Info: Pera Palace Hotel

Pierre Loti

This café is rightfully renowned for its fantastic view over the Golden Horn, a great place to enjoy a cup of traditional Turkish Tea on the terrace garden. It is extremely popular with Turkish families and tourists.

Photo: New Africa/shutterstock
Address: Piyerloti Caddesi 1, Sultanahmet, Cemberlitas, Istanbul
Phone: +90 212 518 57 00
Internet: www.pierrelotihotel.com
Email: info@pierrelotihotel.com
More Info: Located at the Pierre Loti Hotel

Meşale Restaurant & Cafe

A local hotspot with great service and a vibrant atmosphere, stop by for some tea and shisha. The café serves cocktails, but nothing with alcohol, although smoking hookah is frequent. Excellent place to see the whirling dervishes and listen to live music.

Photo: Tomophafan/Shutterstock.com
Address: Sultan Ahmet, Arasta Çarşısı, Kabasakal Caddesi No 45, Istanbul
Phone: +90 212 518 95 62
Internet: www.mesalecafe.net
Email: info@mesalecafe.com

Mangerie

This is the perfect place to go for breakfast or brunch. Mangerie offers a nice ambience with a magnificent view of the water and street below. The staff also prepares fresh juices and cocktails.

Photo: Ekaterina Pokrovsky/Shutterstock.com
Address: Bebek Mh., Cevdet Paşa Caddesi 69, Istanbul
Phone: +90 212 263 51 99
Internet: www.mangeriebebek.com
Email: info@mangeriebebek.com

Fazil Bey

The Fazil Bey Café opened in 1923 and since then it has always roasted its own beans to serve its own spin on Turkish coffee, plus local cookies and pastries. Other options include Chai tea and ginger lemonade, which can be enjoyed in the outdoor seating area.

Photo: Fh Photo/Shutterstock.com
Address: Caferağa, Serasker Caddesi 1/A, Kadıköy, Istanbul
Phone: +90 216 450 28 70

Beta Tea House

Discover a wide variety of delicious teas at Beta Tea House, where the atmosphere and aromatic setting create a true oasis in the heart of the city. The space is well-organised and pleasantly located, offering a escape for tea lovers.

Prices are very reasonable given the quality of the products, and the service is quick, friendly, and helpful. If you're in the mood for something different, their Turkish coffee is less thick than usual, but just as flavourful.

Photo: RauL C7/shutterstock
Address: Rüstem Paşa, Tahmis Sokak, Fatih, İstanbul
Phone: +90 212 830 35 90
Internet: www.betateashop.com/en
Email: digital@beta.com.tr

Moda in Kadiköy

Widely regarded as Kadıköy's premier dining district, Moda buzzes with a mix of cafés, bars and restaurants. This lively neighbourhood is a go-to destination if you're looking for quality food and drink.

The area's diverse culinary scene ranges from traditional Turkish restaurants to contemporary international eateries. You can also relax in one of the many çay houses with sweet treats like künefe. Many of the establishments here stay busy until late.

Photo: ahmet ceyhan/shutterstock
Address: Moda, Kadıköy, İstanbul

BARS & NIGHTLIFE

Tatiana Popova/shutterstock

Istanbul’s nightlife is diverse, with something for nearly every preference and pace. While the historic areas of Sultanahmet and the Old City tend to quiet down after dark, other districts come to life in the evening.

Taksim and nearby Beyoğlu are among the most accessible areas for nightlife, offering a broad range of bars, pubs, rooftop venues and music spots. From small, laid-back establishments to larger venues with DJs or live music, this part of the city has a constant buzz. Istiklal Street, in particular, is a central artery for those looking to explore on foot.

For a more upmarket or contemporary experience, head further north to neighbourhoods like Etiler, Levent and Ortaköy. These areas are known for their stylish bars, high-end lounges, and Bosphorus-side clubs. Many locals and visitors alike come here for a more polished night out, with venues often featuring scenic views and modern interiors.

While alcohol is widely available in Istanbul, note that some bars may be quieter during religious holidays or Ramadan. In general, the city balances traditional culture with a growing modern nightlife scene, offering options from relaxed shisha lounges to lively nightclubs.

Orient Express Bar

A nostalgic must-see where kings, spies, writers and film stars have all had a drink. Don't forget to see Agatha Christie's room 411, which is now a museum.

Photo: thanosquest/Shutterstock.com
Address: Hüdavendigar Caddesi 24, Hocapaşa, Istanbul
Phone: +90 212 520 71 60
Internet: www.orientexpresshotel.com
Email: info@orientexpresshotel.com

Hodjapasha

Hodjapasha is a culture centre located in a former Turkish bath. These days you can come here in the evening for inspiring music and dance shows. Here you can see solo oriental dances as well as group performances and dances from different regions of Anatolia.

Photo: Terence Toh Chin Eng/shutterstock
Address: Ankara Caddesi, Hocapaşa Hamam Sokak 3, Istanbul
Phone: +90 212 511 46 26
Internet: www.hodjapasha.com/en
Email: info@hodjapasha.com

Galata Tower Shows

On the upper floors of this nine-story tower is a nightclub which hosts Turkish shows like belly dancing. The medieval stone tower is located just to the north of the Golden Horn and is an important landmark in Istanbul.

Photo: givaga/shutterstock
Address: Bereketzade Mahalle, Galata Kulesi, Beyoğlu, Istanbul
Phone: +90 212 293 81 80

360 Istanbul

360 is one of the hippest places in town. Make a memorable evening out of it and go for an amazing dinner at the restaurant, followed by a drink in the chic bar and ending it at the hottest club in town.

Photo: Pressmaster/Shutterstock.com
Address: Istiklal Caddesi, Mısır Apartment 8th Floor 163, Beyoglu, Istanbul
Phone: +90 533 691 03 60
Internet: www.360istanbul.com/eng/index.html
Email: 360Istanbul@360Istanbul.com

Litera Restaurant & Lounge-Club

You can find Litera Bar at the top of one of the tall Ottoman buildings with an amazing view over the Sea of Marmara and the Bosphorus. Drinks tend to be on the pricey side; however, quality and bartenders' professionalism make it worth it.

Photo: 3523studio/shutterstock
Address: Tomtom Mahalle, Yeni Çarşı Caddesi 32, Istanbul
Phone: +90 532 598 99 98
Internet: www.literarestaurant.com
Email: litera@literarestaurant.com

Smyrna Cafe

Smyrna Café offers a laid-back atmosphere that feels like a typical café during the day, but in the evening it transforms into a casual night spot open

until late. It's an ideal place to unwind, sit back, and enjoy a refreshing drink in a relaxed setting.

Photo: tomertu/shutterstock
Address: Emniyetevleri Mahalle, Akarsu Caddesi. 29, Kağıthane, Istanbul
Phone: +90 212 244 24 66
Internet: www.smyrnacihangir.com
Email: info@smyrnacihangir.com

The Stairs in Cihangir

These public steps climbing a small hill in front of Noh Radio bar have become one of Istanbul's most popular evening gathering places. This is not a venue, but rather a staircase that regularly attracts students and young crowds, both locals and internationals, for informal street-side socialising, particularly on Friday and Saturday nights.

Photo: siamionau pavel/shutterstock
Address: Firuzağa, Hayriye Caddesi No 18, Beyoğlu, İstanbul

SHOPPING

Wojtek Chmielewski/shutterstock

Istanbul has become a major shopping destination for several categories of travellers. Some tourists are looking for outdoor markets, bazaars, carpet and kilim workshops, copper working shops, antique and handicraft stalls, and the city definitely delivers on this promise. Another cohort of visitors is coming to Istanbul for luxury brands and exclusive antique shops.

No matter your preferences, you can be sure that your shopping needs and desires will be met. Istanbul is big enough to support multiple shopping districts with boutiques, small shops, covered bazaars and enormous shopping malls.

İstiklal Caddesi

İstiklal Caddesi is a fashionable old street in the Pera district, now called Beyoğlu. Walking down İstiklal is something every visitor does at least once because of its strategic location connecting Taksim square to Galata tower.

In terms of shopping, you'll find many famous brands here, as well as smaller niche shops selling fashion items and other things to take home to remind you of your trip.

Photo: muratart/shutterstock
Address: İstiklal Caddesi, Istanbul

Çukurcuma

Çukurcuma, the hillside neighbourhood just east of Istiklal Caddesi, attracts both serious antique collectors and lovers of thrifty antique shopping. Vintage clothing, textiles, and old books are presented amongst 19th-century Baroque furniture and floral-painted ceramics. You will definitely find something to spice up your home decor in an authentic, non-mass-market way.

Photo: rabany sebastien/shutterstock

Address: Çukurcuma, Istanbul
More Info: Put on some comfy shoes to navigate the steep cobblestone streets

İstanbul Cevahir

A large and modern shopping mall spread across six floors, with lifts and escalators providing easy access throughout. The first four levels are filled with a wide range of popular international brands such as Zara, Nike, and many others. The entire fifth floor is dedicated to dining, featuring over 50 fast food outlets and restaurants offering plenty of choice for all tastes.

Conveniently located above the M2 metro line, you can enter the mall directly from the underground station by simply taking the escalators up. The building itself is quite impressive and serves as both a shopping and dining destination.

Photo: FS11/shutterstock
Address: 19 Mayıs, Büyükdere Caddesi No 22, Şişli, İstanbul
Phone: +90 212 368 69 00
Internet: www.istanbulcevahir.com/en
Email: info@istanbulcevahir.com

Mall of Istanbul

Arguably the best mall in the area, this shopping centre stands out for its impressive design, wide variety of retail outlets, and extensive dining options. It is one of the largest and most striking malls in Istanbul, home to well-known international and local brands.

In addition to shopping and food, the mall offers a children's play area, making it a family-friendly destination. There is also free parking available and a steady flow of taxis waiting just outside, ensuring easy access for visitors.

Photo: La Famiglia/shutterstock
Address: Ziya Gökalp, Süleyman Demirel Boulevard No 7, Başakşehir, İstanbul
Phone: +90 212 801 10 00
Internet: www.mallofistanbul.com.tr/en

Egyptian Spice Bazaar

The Spice Bazaar is at the base of the Galata Bridge in Eminönü, and is also called the Egyptian Bazaar because of the imported spices originally from Egypt. Besides the vast array of spices, in the lanes of this indoor market you can buy cheese, honey, sausages, dried fruits, tea and all sorts of edible delights, and knick knacks, including clothes and gorgeous fabrics.

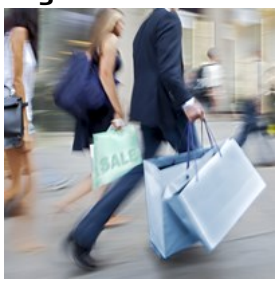
Photo: xamnesiacx84/shutterstock
Address: Rüstem Paşa, Fatih, İstanbul
Phone: +90 212 513 65 97
Email: info@misircarsisi.org.tr

Avrupa Pasajı

Avrupa Pasajı or Passage d'Europe is a historic shopping arcade with antique shops and a great array of textile, ceramics and lamps on display. Its arched glass roof is quite a sight.

Photo: Mephobia.Food/shutterstock
Address: Hüseyinağa, Meşrutiyet Caddesi No 8, Beyoğlu, İstanbul

Bagdat Caddesi



A good shopping district is the long Bagdat Caddesi on the Asian side. There are many trendy brand name shops here and prices are sometimes lower than in town because not many tourists find this area.

Photo: blurAZ/Shutterstock.com
Address: Bagdat Caddesi, Istanbul
Public Transport: The most practical way to get to Bagdat Street is via Marmaray train

Grand Bazaar

The Grand Bazaar attracts many people, far too many if you come at rush hour. It's a good idea to arrive early in the morning and enjoy a cup of tea in one of the cafes whilst the bazaar comes to life. There are thousands of stalls, selling virtually everything, carpets, gold, cloth, spices and more. The bazaar is a world of its own and it's easy and fun to get lost in the teeming alleyways.

Photo: Finn stock/shutterstock
Address: Beyazıt, İstanbul
Phone: +90 212 519 12 48
Internet: www.kapalicarsi.com.tr

TOURIST INFORMATION

Alexandra Lande/Shutterstock.com

Istanbul Airport (IST)

The new Istanbul Airport on the European side of the city is the main international airport serving Istanbul. The airport is a major hub for Turkish Airlines. By total passenger traffic, it is the busiest airport in Europe and 13th-busiest airport in the world. It is about 40 kilometres away from Taksim and 52 kilometres from both Sultanahmet, historical centre on the European side of Istanbul, and Kadıköy, city centre on the Asian side. The Istanbul Airport currently operates a single terminal for domestic and international flights.

Free WiFi is available at Istanbul Airport for one hour. You can register with your phone number or by using your passport at WiFi kiosks.

The most popular mode of transportation to the airport from the city centre is by HAVAİST buses. They have stations throughout the city, including next to Taksim Square. You can buy your ticket online, at least 6 hours in advance, or pay by card when you board. The new M11 metro line, launched in January 2023, also

connects Istanbul Airport to the city.

Istanbul city taxis are readily available 24 hours a day outside the arrival and departure areas of the airport. A trip to Istanbul city centre by taxi takes approximately 40 minutes. Alternatively, Uber operates in Istanbul.

Photo: muratart/shutterstock
Address: İstanbul Havalimanı, Arnavutköy, Istanbul
Phone: +90 444 1 442
Internet: www.istairport.com/en/?locale=en
Email: ist@igairport.aero

Sabiha Gökçen International Airport (SAW)

Sabiha Gökçen serves as Pegasus Airlines' main base, this airport offers more budget-friendly flights than Turkish Airlines. Despite being smaller than Istanbul's primary airport, Sabiha Gökçen maintains significant importance with connections across Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia and more.

The M4 metro line provides direct access to Kadıköy on Istanbul's Asian side, where travellers can transfer to Turkish Railways or ferries continuing to the city centre.

Facilities include various cafes and restaurants, free Wi-Fi, charging stations, and shops selling travel essentials and mobile accessories.

Photo: George Khelashvili/shutterstock
Address: Sanayi, Pendik, İstanbul
Phone: +90 216 588 88 88
Internet: www.sabihagokcen.aero/metro-en

Public Transport

There is one public and one private bus network, IETT and Halk Otobus, respectively. The underground, Tünel, runs from Karaköy till Istiklâl Cad in Beyoglu and takes a few minutes. There is also a museum tram up toward Taksim Square.

Another tram route goes from Kabatas via Galata bridge and the Spice Bazaar to the south-western suburbs. The Metro goes from Taksim north to Levent and from Aksaray to Otogar in Esenler, where buses depart for other parts of Turkey, Europe and to the airport.

Dolmuses are minibuses or large taxis that depart when they are full, and stop where you want them to. They are the cheapest form of transport.

Ferries between Europe and Asia leave from Eminönü, Karaköy and Besiktas to Üsküdar, Kadiköy and Harem.

Akbil is a type of payment card that you can top up with various sums and use on buses, boats and trams. It can be bought at major junctions.

Photo: Ben M_O/shutterstock
Internet: www.iett.istanbul/en
Email: iett@iett.gov.tr

Taxi

Taxis are yellow in the inner city and lilac in the suburbs. There are numerous taxi companies. Different hotels work with different companies and can book your transport to the airport. It’s best

to hail a taxi on the street, or go to a taxi rank and ask for a business card.

Alternatively, Uber and a local app called BiTaksi are available in Istanbul involving regular vehicles and yellow taxis.

Photo: IgorZh/shutterstock

Post

The Grand Post Office is in Hobyar, near the Istanbul Railway Museum. Other PTT-offices are on Taksim Square and Istiklâl Cad. Open from 9 am to 5 pm, Monday through Saturday and closed on Sundays.

Photo: Cyhel/shutterstock
Address: Hobyar, Büyük Postane Caddesi No 25, Fatih, İstanbul
Phone: +90 2 444 1 788
Internet: www.ptt.gov.tr
Email: info@ptt.gov.tr

Pharmacy

Pharmacies are called 'Eczane' in Turkish. Istanbul offers many options both working regular hours or 24/7. In Istanbul, there isn't a dominant pharmacy chain; they are owned by individual pharmacists.

Photo: EliteExposure/shutterstock

Electricity

The standard voltage in Turkey is 220V with a frequency of 50Hz. The standard power plugs are Type C and Type F.

Photo: Rawpixel com/shutterstock

Telephone

Country number +90
Area code: 212 and 216

Photo: ProStockStudio/shutterstock

Population
Approximately 16.2 million Greater Istanbul (2025)

Currency
Turkish Lira, TL1 = 100 kuruş

Opening hours
The official opening hours for shops are 9am–6pm. However, many traders and shops stay open until midnight. Most hotels will have at least one 24 hour restaurant.

Internet
www.istanbul.com

Newspapers
Daily News (English): www.hurriyetdailynews.com
Daily Sabah (English): www.dailysabah.com
Turkish Minute (English): www.turkishminute.com

Emergency numbers
112

Tourist information
www.visit.istanbul/en

Kara Deniz
Marmara Denizi
Istanbul
Kemer-burgaz
Kocaeli
Gebze
Darica
Yalova
Cinarcik
Orhangazi
Gemlik
Iznik
Iznik Gölü
Mudanya
Bursa
Uludag
Inegöl
Karacabey
Bandirma
Manyas
Kus Gölü
Uluabat Gölü
Mustafakemalpasa
Orhaneli
Susurluk
Balikesir
Kepsut
Erdek
Gönen
Osmaneli
Yenisehir
Bilecik
Pazaryeri
Domanic
Karamürsel
Hereke
Körfez
Gölcük
Ucunciftlik
Köseköy
Akmese
Kandira
Lokmanli
Bozburun
Kocakaymaz
Kefken
Öteköy
Agva
Kabakoz
Karacaköy
Kizilca
Sile
Domali
Bozhane
Cumhuriyet
Polonez
Yesilvadi
Ömerli
Ömerli Baraji
Alemdar
Samandira
Büyükada
Dil
Bayramoglu
Eskihisa
Balcik
Mollafeneri
Tepeören
Karayakuplu
Akcaova
Hediyeli
Teke
Ihsaniye
Yeniköy
Topcula
Ciftlikköy
Kadiköy
Termal
Yalakdere
Yukarimahalle
Bayindir
Armutlu
Fistikli
Karacaali
Kapakli
Boyalica
Cakirca
Sehvarmaz
Mekece
Cicekli
Nicea
Sölöz
Gürle
Umurbey
Kursunlu
Gündogdu
Hamidiye
Bayirköy
Demirisik
Burcun
Zeytinbagi
Dascylium
Esence
Apamea
Balabancik
Demirtas
Yunuseli
Görükle
Gürsu
Serme
Taspinar
Harmanli
Apollonia
Hasanaga
Kayapa
Ertugrul
Cali
Aksu
Söylemis
Bogazköy
Hamzabey
Akhisar
Ciftlikköy
Uladag
Sogukpinar
Dagakca
Yürücekler
Barakli
Keles
Oylat
Tahtaköprü
Mezit
Muratdere
Safa
Dodurga
Kursunlu
Nazifpasa
Pelitözu
Vezirhan
Köprühisar
Kocasu
Simav Cayi
Orhaneli Cayi
Mustafa Kemel Pasa Cayi
Kadircesme
Sögütalan
Haciali
Karaorman
Baliklidere
Sultancayiri
Durak
Kavacik
Tepeköy
Karaman
Gökceyazi
Kinik
Büyükorhan
Civilicam
Kepsut
Ibirler
Samli
Kadiköy
Danisment
Ilica
Koyuneri
Sebepliköy
Hacivelioba
Tütüncü
Salur
Akcaova
Daskyleion
Ergili
Aksakal
Yenisaribey
Hara
Bakirköv
Sultaniye
Tophisar
Bugdayli
Edincik
Kyzikos
Plakia
Yeniköy Plaji
Bayramdere
Gümüspinar
Cerkezköy
Büyükcavuslu
Seymen
Sultanköy
Herakleia
Marmara Ereglisi
Silivri
Catalca
Büyükcek-mece
Gürpinar
Yakuplu
Avcilar
Esenyurt
Halkali
Yesilköy
Kumburgaz
Celaliye
Selimpasa
Ovayenice
Gökceli
Kabakca
Canakca
Yassiören
Kisirmandira
Hadimköy
Habibler
Arnavutköy
Bentler
Bahcekoy
Kilyos
Kumköy
Rumelifenen
Cayagzi
Agacli
Durusu
Yeniköy
Karaburun
Duru Gölü
Karamandere
Ormanli
Karacaköy
Binkilic
Safaalan
Yaliköy
Aydinlar
010
020
016
569
571
567
100
110
130
150
575
595
200
565
573
230
605
650
0
30 km

A
B
C
D
1
2
3
4
Halic (Golden Horn)
Istanbul Bogazi (Bosphorus)
Marmara Denizi (Sea of Marmara)
KUCUKPAZAR
SÜLEYMANIYE
BEYAZIT
CAGALOGLU
EMINÖNÜ
KARAKÖY
TOPHANE
SIRKECI
AHIRKAPI
SULTANAHMET
KUMKAPI
CATLADIKAPI
Divan Edebiyati Museum
Sirkeci Train Station
Topkapi Palace
Gulhane Park
Sarayburnu Park
Ataturk Monument
Aya Sofya
Hagia Eirene Museum
Istanbul Archaeological
Tanzimat Museum
Cinili Kosk Museum
Turkish & Islamic Art
Sultanahmet Blue Mosque
Great Palace Mosaic Museum
Cankurtaran
Grand Bazaar
Egyption Bazaar
Süleymaniye Mosque
Karakoy Square
Ataturk Koprusu
Galata Koprusu
Kennedy Cad
Meclisi Mebusan Cad
Divan Yolu Cad
Florya - Sirkeci Sahil Yolu
0
250 m

Aga Cesmesi A3 A4
Ahir Kapi C4
Akbiyik C4
Aksakal B4
Alemdar Caddesi C3
Alisan A4
Ankara Caddesi B3 C2
Asir Efendi Caddesi B3
Asma Kandil A3
At Meydani C4
Ataturk Koprusu A1
Atlama Tasi Caddesi A2
Aynacilar B3
Babatigit A4
Babi Ali Caddesi B3
Babi Humayun Caddesi C3 C4
Bakircilar Caddesi A3
Bali Pasa Yok A4
Batumlu A4
Besim Omer A3
Bogaz Kesen Caddesi C1
Bozdogan Kemeri A3
Buyuk Hendek B1
Buyuk Postane Caddesi B2 B3
Caferiye C3
Cakmakcilar Yokusu A3 B3
Cankurtaran C4
Carkcilar B3
Catal Cesme B3 C3
Cemal Nadir B3
Cifte Gelinler Caddesi A4
Cinci Meydan B4
Comertler B4
Daltaban Yokusu A3 A4
Darulfunun Caddesi A3
Defterdar Yokusu C1
Divan Yolu Caddesi B3 B4
Dizdariye Cesmesi B4
Dokmeciler Hamai A2
Ebusuud Caddesi B3 C3
Emin Sinan Hamami A4 B4
Fenerli Kapi B4 C4
Fetva Kokusu A2
Florya - Sirkeci Sahil Yolu B4
Fuat Pasa Caddesi A3
Futuhat B1
Galata Koprusu B2
Galata Kulesi B1
Galata Mumhane C1
Galip Dede B1
Gedik Pasa Cami A4 B4
Gedikpasa Caddesi A4
Gulhane Parki Yolu C3
Gumruk C1
Haci Kadin Caddesi A2
Hamidiye Caddesi B2 B3
Hayriye Hanim A2
Hisar Dibi B4
Hoca Hani B3
Hoca Tahsin C1
Hukumet Konagi B3 C3
Ilk Beldiye B1
Imran Oktem B4
Isik (Sultanahmet) B4
Ismetiye Caddesi A3 B3
Istasyon Arkasi C3
K. Hamam A4
Kabba Sakal Caddesi C4
Kadirga Hamami A4 B4
Kadirga Limani Caddesi A4 B4
Kaleci B4
Kalpakcilarbasi A3 B3
Karakoy Square B1 C1
Kart Cinaqr B1
Kasnakclar A2
Kemankes Caddesi C1
Kennedy Caddesi A4 C2 C4 D3 D4
Kible Cesme Caddesi A2
Kiliccilar B3
Klodfarer B4
Komurcu Caoraz A4
Koprucu B3
Kucuk Ayasofya Caddesi B4 C4
Kucuk Haydar A4
Kumbaraci Yokusu C1
Kumkapi Kurban A4
Kumluk A4
Kutlugun C4
Kutucular A2 B2
Kutucular Caddesi A2 B2
Kuyusu A4
Leblebici A2
Luleci Hendek C1
Macuncu B3
Mahmutpasa B3
Meclisi Mebusan Caddesi C1 D1
Mengene B3
Mesrutiyet Caddesi B1
Meydani B4 C4
Mimar Mehmet Aga C4
Mimar Sinan A2
Mithat Pasa A4
Molla Tasi A4
Mollafenari B3
Murat C3
Nakilbent B4
Namahrem A2
Necati Bey Caddesi C1
Nobethane C3
Nuruosmaniye B3
Okcu Musa Caddesi B1
Orhaniye C3
Oyuncu C4
Persmbe Pazari B1
Peykhane B4
Piyer Loti Caddesi B4
Prof. Cemil Bilsel Caddesi A2
Prof. Siddik Sami Onar Caddesi A2 A3
Prof. Umit Yasar Doganay A3
Ragip Gumuspala Caddesi A2
Refik Saydam Caddesi B1
Resadiye B2
S. Beyazit A2
S. Mektebi C1 D1
Sabuncu Han B2 B3
Sadirvan C4
Sair Laleli Cesme B1
Sair Ziya Pasa B1
Sansa A4
Sarapnel A4
Sari Beyazit A2
Serdari Ekrem B1 C1
Seref Ef B3
Sishane B1
Siyavus Pasa A2 A3
Soguk Cesme C3
Su Terazisi B4
Suleymaniye Caddesi A3
Sultan Mektebi B3
Tahmis Caddesi B2
Tahtakale B2
Tarakcilar B3
Tatar Beyi Dibek B1 C1
Tavasi Cesme A4
Tavsanta A3 A4
Tavuk Pazari B3
Telli Odalr A4

Tersane Caddesi B1
Terzihane B4
Tigcilar A3 B3
Tiyatro Caddesi A4
Tophane Iskelesi C1
Torun C4
Tulumbaci Sitki C1
Turanli A3 A4
Turkeli Caddesi A4
Turkocagi B3
Ucler B4
Universite Caddesi A3
Unkapani A2
Utangac C4
Uzun Carsi Caddesi A2 B2
Vasif Cinar Caddesi B3
Vezirhani B3
Vezneciler Caddesi A3
Voyvoda Caddesi B1
Yaglikcilar Caddesi A3
Yahya Pasa A4
Yalcin B2
Yali Kosku B2
Yanik B1
Yeni Cami Caddesi B2
Yeniceriler Caddesi A3
Yogurtcuoglu A2 A3
Yokusu B4
Yukusu A4
Zeynep Sultan C3 C4
Zincirlihan B1