

2026

The Ultimate Istanbul Handbook

ISTANBUL

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BRIT AND BERAT

The Ultimate Istanbul Handbook

A Welcome from Brit and Berat



The Introduction

Welcome to the ultimate guide to my home city! I'm Berat, and together with my American partner, Brit, we created Brit and Berat to help travelers like you navigate the beautiful complexity of Istanbul with total confidence.

As a Turkish American couple, we understand exactly what Americans are looking for: safety, comfort, and authentic experiences. We've curated this handbook to give you the "insider track" on everything from avoiding common taxi scams to finding the best street food in the city.

Beyond this guide, we provide a range of hands-on services, including private airport transfers, curated shopping trips, and guided historical tours of the Old City and the Asian side. We are here to ensure your journey is seamless and unforgettable.

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Pre Arrival Checklist: Everything to Do Before You Fly

This section ensures that you have all your legal, financial, and logistical affairs in order before your plane leaves the tarmac. Following this checklist will prevent the most common first-day headaches in Istanbul.

Document Readiness: Passport and Entry Requirements

Your passport is your golden ticket. For American citizens, the entry process has become significantly simpler recently; however, the validity of your documents is still strictly enforced.

The Details: Ensure your passport is valid for at least 6 months beyond your arrival date in Türkiye. If it expires sooner, you may be denied boarding at your US departure gate. As of early 2024, US citizens traveling for tourism no longer need to apply for an e-Visa for stays up to 90 days. You will receive a stamp at passport control.



Banking and Currency Strategy

To avoid having your cards blocked the moment you try to buy a Turkish coffee, you must communicate with your financial institutions.

The Details: Contact your bank and credit card companies to set a Travel Notice for Türkiye. Specifically, check which of your cards have No Foreign Transaction Fees to save 3% on every purchase. While cards are widely used in Istanbul, you should plan to carry some cash. Do not exchange money at your home bank or the US airport; you will get much better rates once you land in the city.

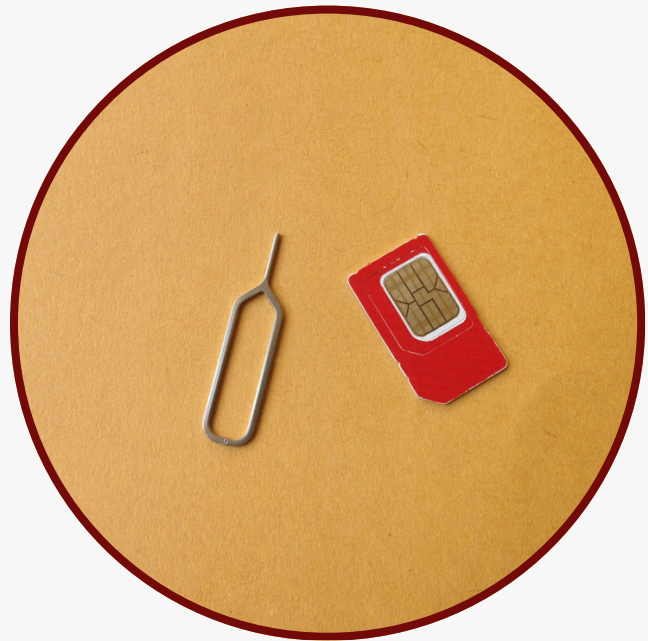
Turkey uses different outlets than the United States, and the voltage is higher.

The Details: You will need a Type C or Type F (European) plug adapter. Most modern electronics (iPhones, MacBooks, Cameras) are "Dual Voltage," meaning they only need a plug adapter. However, "Single Voltage" appliances like US hair dryers or flat irons will likely burn out or blow a fuse without a heavy-duty voltage converter.

Digital Connectivity ***eSim vs. Physical SIM***

Don't wait until you land at Istanbul Airport (IST) to figure out how to get online. The airport Wi-Fi is notoriously difficult to access without a local number.

The Details: Decide whether you will use an eSim (like Airalo or Holafly) or buy a Physical SIM upon arrival. An eSIM can be downloaded and activated the moment you land, providing instant access to maps and ride-sharing apps. If your phone is locked to a US carrier, check their international daily roaming rates (usually \$10-\$12/day).



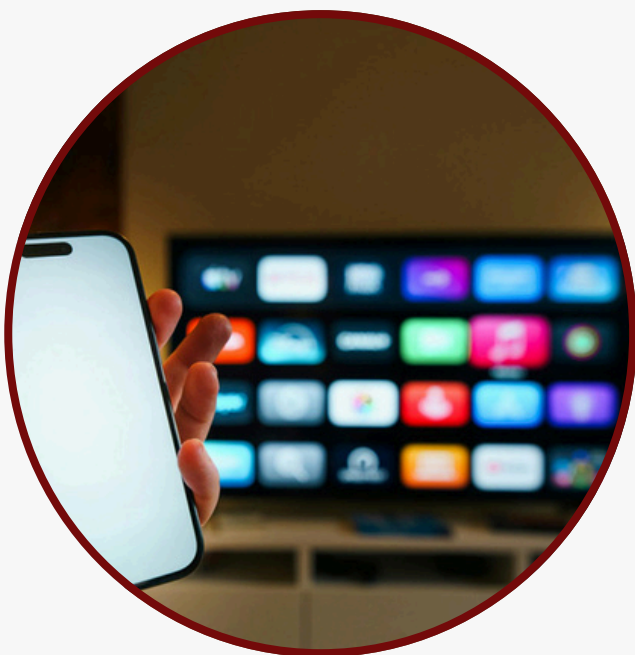
Downloading the ***"Istanbul Toolkit" Apps***

Four specific apps will make your life significantly easier. You should download and set up your profiles while still on high-speed internet in the US.

The Details: BiTaksi / Uber: Essential for calling reliable taxis with upfront pricing.

Google Maps: Download the "Offline Map" for Istanbul.

Google Translate: Download the "Turkish" language file for offline use.



Airport Transfers

The step by step guide

Istanbul Card

Where to find it (Biletmatik Machines):

At IST: Go to the -2 Floor (Transportation Floor).

At SAW: Follow the blue "Metro" signs to the station entrance.

In City: Available at all metro and tram stations.

Here is a concise list of where you can use your **İstanbulkart**:

Metro & Tram: All lines.

Buses: All IETT and Private Public Buses.

Marmaray: The transcontinental rail.

Metrobüs: Rapid transit line.

Ferries: Şehir Hatları and private boats (Dentur/Turyol).

Havaist: Istanbul Airport shuttles.

Funiculars & Cable Cars: (e.g., Tünel, Eyüp-Piyer Loti).

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Biletmatik
Machines



Istanbul Card

SCAM ALERT: If a stranger tries to "help" you at the machine, firmly say "No, thank you." These scammers swap your new card for an empty one. Only accept help from uniformed staff.

Tap "Language" and select the US Flag (English).

Select "Purchase Istanbulkart" (Cost: 165 TL).

Could you insert a 200 TL note? The machine charges 165 TL for the card and adds 35 TL as a travel credit.

THE NEW GATEWAY ISTANBUL AIRPORTS IST AND SAW



Navigating Istanbul Airport (IST)

Option A: The Metro (M11 - Fastest/No Traffic)

- Finding it: After exiting Customs, follow the large Red "U" signs (Ulaştırma). Walk across the long, glass-covered bridge (approx. 7–10 minutes).
- The Route: Take the M11 to the last stop, Gayrettepe.
- The Transfer: Follow signs for "M2 Taksim." You will walk through a tunnel to the M2 Green Line, which takes you to Taksim or Galata (Şişhane).

Option B: Havaist (Luxury Shuttle - Easiest with Bags)

- Finding it: Take the elevator/escalator down to Floor -2. Walk outside to the numbered platforms.
- The Bus: Look for HVIIST-16 (Taksim) or HVIIST-12 (Aksaray/Sultanahmet). Tap your card on the reader when boarding.

Navigating Sabiha Gökçen (SAW)

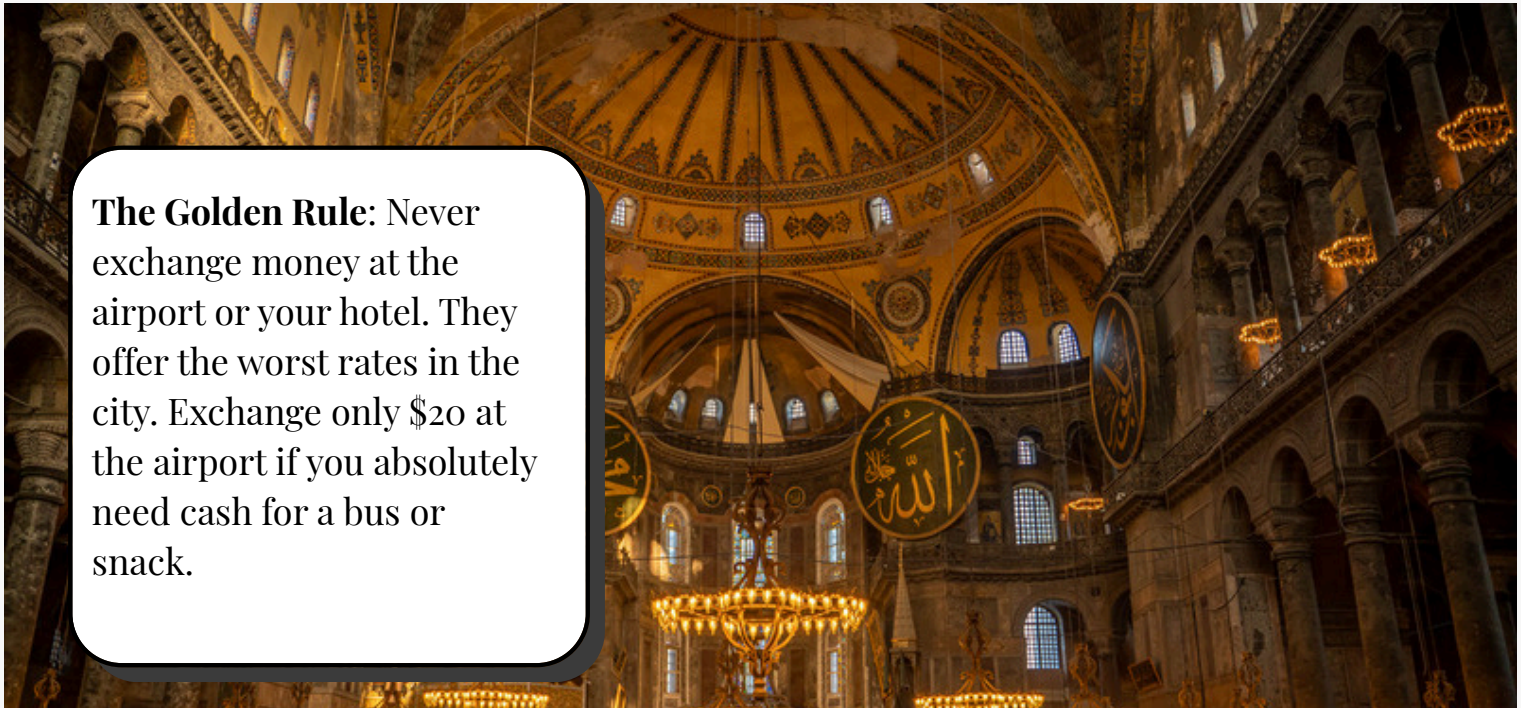
The "European Side" Route (Sultanahmet/Sirkeci)

- The Metro: Follow the Red/Blue "M" stickers on the floor to the M4 Line.
- The Transfer: Get off at Ayrılık Çeşmesi and follow signs for the Marmaray train.
- The Exit: Take the Marmaray to Sirkeci Station. Use the "Sirkeci Gar" exit to come out in the heart of the Old City.

Option B: Havabus (Shuttle)

- Finding it: Exit the terminal and find the white buses on the middle island.
- The Route: They go to Taksim or Kadıköy. You pay the conductor on the bus.

Mastering the Lira : Your Money Guide



The Golden Rule: Never exchange money at the airport or your hotel. They offer the worst rates in the city. Exchange only \$20 at the airport if you absolutely need cash for a bus or snack.

- **Where to Go:** Look for a "Döviz" (Exchange Office). The most competitive rates are found near the Grand Bazaar (Sirkeci/Eminönü) and along Istiklal Street (Taksim).
- **Check the Board:** ALIŞ (Buy): The rate they pay you for your dollars. (Higher is better for you).
 - SATIŞ (Sell): The rate they charge to sell you dollars.
- **Pro Tip:** Ensure your USD bills are crisp, clean, and new. Many offices will reject bills that have small tears or markings.

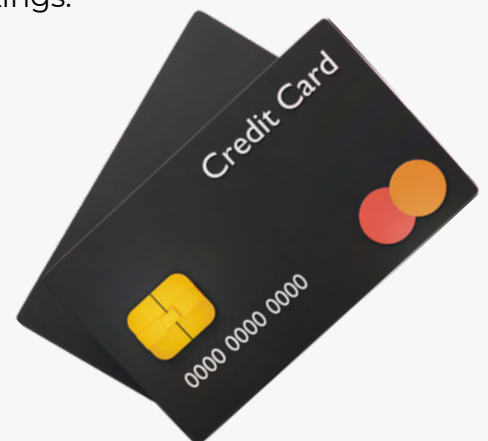
Cash vs. Credit Cards: How to Pay

- **Credit Cards:** Use them for hotels, upscale restaurants, and malls. Visa and Mastercard are accepted everywhere. American Express is less common keep a backup card ready.
- **When You Need Cash:** Taxis, street food (Simit, chestnuts), small souvenir shops, and tipping. Always keep at least 500–1000 TRY in small bills in your pocket.
- **The "Lira" Prompt:** When a card machine asks if you want to pay in USD or TRY, always choose TRY. If you choose USD, the machine applies its own high exchange rate (the DCC trap). Let your home bank handle the conversion.

The ATM Survival Guide: Choosing the Right Machine



- **The Bank of America Secret:** If you are a Bank of America customer, look for TEB (Türk Ekonomi Bankası) ATMs. Because TEB is a member of the Global ATM Alliance, you can often avoid the \$5 non-BofA ATM fee and the operator surcharge. This is the cheapest way for Americans to get cash!
- **Other Safe Bets:** If you aren't with BofA, stick to major banks: Ziraat Bankası, VakıfBank, Garanti BBVA, or İş Bankası. PTT (Post Office) ATMs are also very fee friendly for foreigners.
- Avoid **"Standalone"** ATMs: Don't use the independent ATMs (like Euronet) in the middle of a street or in small kiosks. They have much higher hidden fees (up to 10%) and higher security risks
- **The "DCC" Trap (CRITICAL):** During your withdrawal, the machine will ask: "Would you like us to lock in the exchange rate for you?" Always click NO / DECLINE. * If you accept, you get the ATM's inflated rate.
- If you decline, you still get your money, but at the official rate provided by your home bank (much cheaper).
- **Pro Tip:** Ensure your USD bills are crisp, clean, and new. Many offices will reject bills that have small tears or markings.





Choosing Your Base

Neighborhoods & Hotels

The Historical Heart of Istanbul

Overview *Sultanahmet* serves as the epicenter of Istanbul's imperial history. Ideally suited for first-time visitors, staying here places you within walking distance of the city's most significant Byzantine and Ottoman landmarks, including the Hagia Sophia and the Topkapi Palace.

Sultanahmet:

The Historical Soul

Atmosphere & Vibe

Grandeur: The area is defined by its monumental architecture and vast public squares.

Acoustics: Experience the unique "interplay" of calls to prayer between the Blue Mosque and Hagia Sophia.

Pace: Bustling with international travelers by day, becoming notably quiet and peaceful after sunset.

Navigating the Terrain The neighborhood is famous for its authentic, centuries old cobblestone streets. While visually stunning, the terrain requires consideration:

The Incline: Sultanahmet is built on a series of hills. Many streets feature significant slopes that lead down toward the coastline.

Footwear: Sturdy, rubber-soled walking shoes are essential for navigating the uneven stones and steep gradients.

The Reward: These elevations provide the neighborhood's famous "secret" vistas look for sudden views of the Sea of Marmara as you descend the side streets.



Galata & Karaköy: *The Creative Pulse*

Atmosphere & Vibe

Energy: A high octane labyrinth where street art meets centuries-old Genoese architecture.

Artistry: The neighborhood is a center for independent designers, jazz clubs, and contemporary galleries.

Transition: Watch the area shift from a bustling morning fish market to the city's most vibrant nightlife hub.

Choosing Your Base

Neighborhoods & Hotels

The Medieval Heart of Innovation

Overview Galata: Serves as Istanbul's artistic bridge. It is the ideal base for travelers who want to be at the center of the city's design and social revolution.

Navigating the Terrain: This district is famously vertical. The narrow, winding alleys are beautiful but physically demanding due to their steep nature.

The Incline: Galata is built on a sharp cliffside. Many "streets" are actually long stone staircases that connect the hilltop tower to the seaside.

Transport Insight: To save your stamina, use the Tünel the world's second-oldest subway to travel from Karaköy up to the start of Istiklal Street in seconds.

The Reward: Reaching the top of these slopes unveils Istanbul's best rooftop terrace culture, offering 360-degree views of the Golden Horn and the historical peninsula.



Choosing Your Base

Neighborhoods & Hotels

Beşiktaş & Nişantaşı:

Modern Prestige

Atmosphere & Vibe

Sophistication: The epicenter of Istanbul's high society, luxury fashion houses, and elite dining.

Elegance: A polished, cosmopolitan feel that mirrors the upscale districts of Paris or Milan.

Vitality: Beşiktaş offers a spirited, local "neighborhood" energy centered around its famous market.

The Center of Luxury Living

Overview: This area is where prestige meets daily local life. It is perfectly suited for those seeking high-end shopping and world-class culinary experiences.

Navigating the Terrain: Nişantaşı is one of the few flat, highly walkable areas in the city. However, descending toward the Beşiktaş coastline involves a very steep gradient.

The Walk: The sidewalks in Nişantaşı are wide and stroller-friendly. If you walk toward the Bosphorus, be prepared for a significant decline that requires comfortable footwear.

Local Insight: Don't miss the "Breakfast Street" in Beşiktaş for a dense, authentic cluster of eateries that define the city's morning culture.

The Reward: Staying here grants you easy access to the Dolmabahçe Palace and the shimmering Bosphorus waterfront, where the city's most grand 5-star hotels reside.



Choosing Your Base

Neighborhoods & Hotels

The Creative Spirit of Asia

Overview: Located on the Asian Side, Kadıköy is the heart of contemporary Turkish culture. It offers a refreshing, lived-in perspective of the city away from the main tourist hubs.

Travel Consideration: Because this area is on the Asian continent, be prepared to travel a lot to reach the primary historical landmarks on the European side. While the journey is beautiful, it adds significant commute time to your daily sightseeing.

The Connection: The neighborhood is best reached by the Karaköy-Kadıköy ferry. This 20-minute transcontinental crossing is the most scenic way to bridge the two sides of the city.

Navigating the Terrain: Unlike its European counterparts, this area is refreshingly flat and pedestrian-friendly. It is ideal for those who prefer long, level strolls over steep climbs.

The Reward: The Moda seaside provides a stunning view of the Sultanahmet skyline across the water, especially at sunset when the city glows from a distance.

Kadıköy & Moda:

The Authentic Shore

Atmosphere & Vibe

Soul: A relaxed, inclusive, and local atmosphere that prioritizes creativity over tourism.

Cool: Home to the city's best third-wave coffee shops, artisan bakeries, and vinyl stores.

Peace: Serene seaside parks in Moda offer a perfect escape from the European side's intensity..

Safety & Local Etiquette

FACTS FOR AMERICANS

Is Istanbul Safe?

Generally speaking, Istanbul is statistically safer than many major US cities (like Chicago, Los Angeles, or New Orleans) when it comes to violent crime. However, petty theft and scams in tourist hubs are the main concerns.



KEEP IN MIND...

Solo Travel: Istanbul is very welcoming to solo travelers. You will see people out and about until the early hours of the morning.

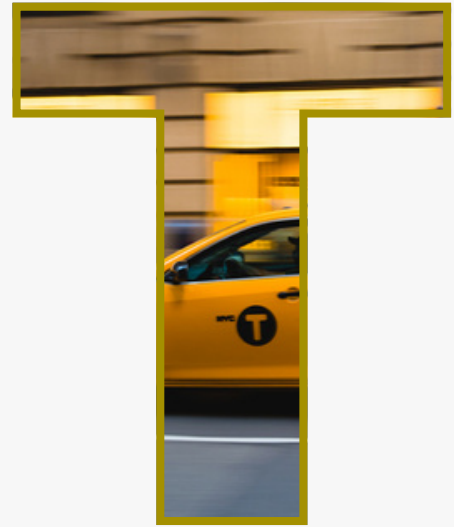
Neighborhood Safety: Areas like Sultanahmet, Galata, Nişantaşı, and Kadıköy are very safe. Just like in any mega-city, use "big city street smarts" in crowded areas like the Grand Bazaar or Istiklal Street to avoid pickpockets.

The "American" Factor: Turks are generally very fond of Americans and are extremely hospitable. You are not a target for political reasons; you are a guest.

The Taxi Survival Guide

4 Rules to Avoid Being Overcharged Taxis

Taxis are the 1 source of complaints in Istanbul. To travel like a pro and avoid the "tourist tax," follow these 4 rules:



Always Use an App

(BiTaksi or Uber): Even if you hail a taxi on the street, try to book through BiTaksi (the local favorite) or Uber. This creates a digital paper trail, tracks the route via GPS, and shows you the estimated fare beforehand.



Bridge & Highway Tolls: If you cross the Bosphorus bridges or use the Eurasia Tunnel, there is a toll (HGS). This will be added to your meter fare. Don't be surprised, but make sure they aren't adding "extra" invisible fees.

The "Taximeter" Mandate:

Ensure the driver turns on the taximeter (it's usually on the rear-view mirror or a small screen). If they say "Fixed price, my friend" or "The meter is broken," get out immediately. A fixed price is always higher than the meter.



Watch the Currency (The "Lira" Swap): A common trick is the driver swapping your 200 TL note for a 20 TL note and claiming you underpaid. Announce the bill clearly: "Here is 200 Lira," and keep it in sight until you get your change.



ARRIVE LIKE A VIP

Skip the taxi chaos and the stress.

Don't let your first experience in Istanbul be a taxi scam. Meet your private driver at the gate and enjoy a comfortable ride to your hotel in a luxury Mercedes Vito. Fixed rates, professional drivers, and zero stress.

[Click to Book Your Private Transfer](#)

[BOOK NOW](#)



Common Tourist Scams & How to Spot Them

The Shoe Brush Drop: A man walks past you and "accidentally" drops his brush. If you pick it up, he insists on a "free" shoe shine out of gratitude, then demands a high price halfway through. Ignore it and keep walking.



The "Let's Have a Drink" Scam: A friendly local (often well dressed) strikes up a conversation and invites you to a "great bar" he knows. You end up with a \$500–\$1,000 bill for two drinks and "hostesses." Never follow a stranger to a bar/club.



The "Broken" Carpet Story: Someone might approach you near the Blue Mosque, saying they work at your hotel or saw you there, then invite you to their "uncle's" carpet shop for tea. It's a high pressure sales tactic. It's okay to say "No, thank you" and move on.





Mosques are active places of worship, not just museums.

Mosque Etiquette: Respectful Visiting

What to Wear: Men should wear trousers no short shorts. Women must cover their heads a scarf/shawl is fine, shoulders, and knees.

The Shoes: You must remove your shoes before entering. Most mosques provide plastic bags or shoe racks.

Timing: Avoid visiting during prayer times 5 times a day. Friday afternoons are particularly busy due to congregational prayers.

Silence and Photos: Keep your voice low. Don't take photos of people while they are praying.

Emergency Contacts & Health Essentials

General Emergency: Dial 112
The all in one number for Police,
Ambulance, and Fire.

Tourist Police: There are
dedicated "Tourist Police"
offices in Sultanahmet and
Taksim who speak English.

High-End Healthcare: If you
need medical attention,
Istanbul has world class
private hospitals. The
American Hospital Amerikan
Hastanesi in Nişantaşı or
Acıbadem Hospitals are the
gold standard and have
English-speaking staff.

Pharmacy (Eczane): For
minor issues, go to an
"Eczane." Pharmacists in
Turkey are highly trained and
can provide many medications
without a prior doctor's visit.

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THE ISTANBUL 20

Section 1: The Imperial Icons

A curated list of must see landmarks for the 2026 traveler

1



Hagia Sophia

1,500 years of history.

2



The Blue Mosque:

20,000 Iznik tiles.

3



Topkapi Palace:

The home of Sultans.

4



Basilica Cistern:

The sunken palace.

5



Galata Tower:

360-degree city views.

THE ISTANBUL 20

Section 2: The Living Heart

1



Grand Bazaar

4,000 shops of wonders.

2



Spice Market

Scents of the East.

3



Suleymaniye Mosque

Sinan's true masterpiece.

4



Istiklal Avenue

The heartbeat of modern life.

5



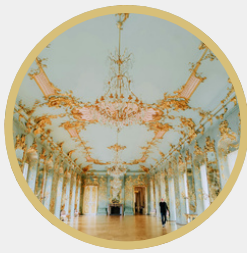
The Hippodrome

Ancient Egypt in Istanbul.

THE ISTANBUL 20

Section 3: Across the Water

1



Beylerbeyi Palace

Often called the Mini Dolmabahçe this was the summer residence of the Sultans on the Asian shore.

2



Kuzguncuk Neighborhood

A colorful, nostalgic village on the Asian side famous for its wooden houses and community gardens.

3



Maiden's Tower (Kız Kulesi)

The iconic lighthouse standing in the middle of the Bosphorus.

4



Bagdat Avenue

Istanbul's premiere high end shopping street, stretching for miles on the Asian side.

5



Dolmabahçe Palace

The massive, 19th century European style palace on the Bosphorus waterfront.

THE ISTANBUL 20

Section 4: Hidden Charms

1



Balat & Fener

The colorful historical quarters.

2



Ortaköy

The mosque on the water.

3



Pierre Loti Hill

Tea with a view.

4



Rumeli Fortress (Rumeli Hisarı)

The walls that conquered a city.

5



The Iron Church St. Stephen of the Bulgars

Located in Balat, this is the only church in the world made entirely of prefabricated cast iron.



OLD CITY DISCOVERY TOUR

Don't just see the landmarks discover the history that shaped civilizations. Our 5-hour guided experience is designed to give you a complete and stress-free introduction to the Old City.

We take care of everything from start to finish with our private hotel pickup and drop-off service. Your day begins comfortably as we meet you at your door and head to the historic Hippodrome. Together, we will explore the Egyptian Obelisk, the Serpentine Column, and the elegant German Fountain. We then enter the breathtaking Blue Mosque to admire its world-famous İznik tiles and sacred architecture. Our journey continues through the legendary Hagia Sophia and deep into the mysterious, glowing atmosphere of the Basilica Cistern. We handle the logistics and the crowds, ensuring your walk through history is seamless. We save the final hour of our journey for The Berat Experience a unique, personalized hour where Berat curates the discovery based entirely on your specific interests or special requests. After the tour, we ensure your safe and relaxing return to your hotel in our private vehicle.

Reserve Your Full Historical Experience

BOOK NOW





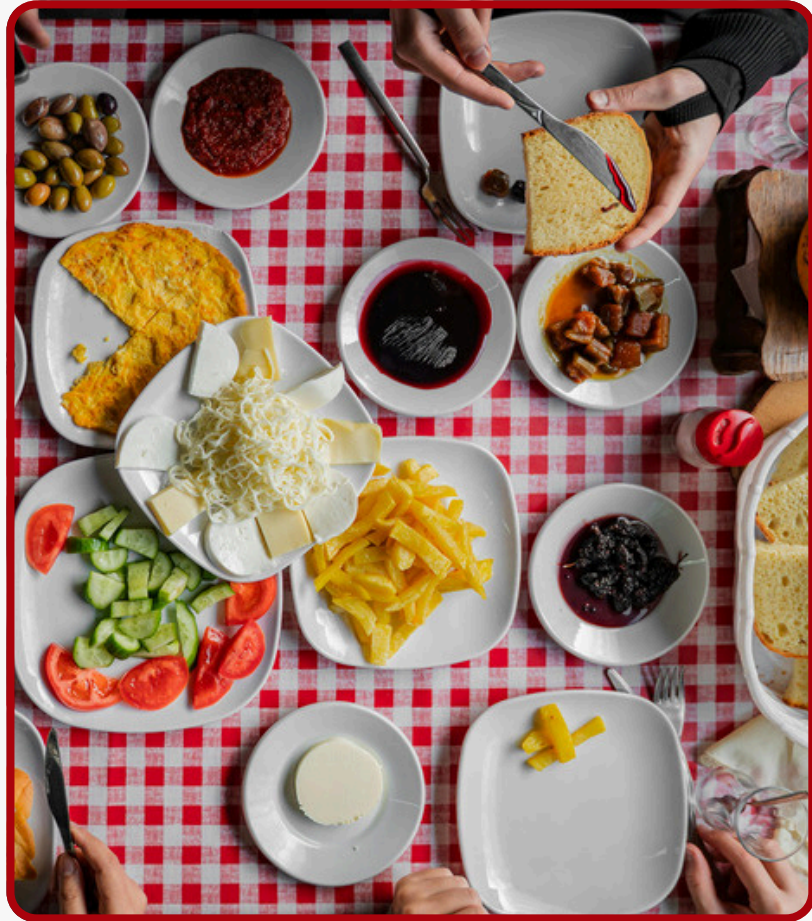
GASTRONOMY & DINING

Istanbul is a world class culinary capital. For an American traveler, the food scene offers everything from a \$1 street snack to a \$200 Michelin starred masterpiece. Here is your curated list of safe, authentic, and "must visit" spots.



The Turkish Breakfast Kahvaltı A MultiCourse Event

The Vibe: American travelers on Reddit and TripAdvisor often call this "the best meal in the world." It is a table filling ritual designed for long, social mornings.



The "**Serpme**" Experience: This translates to "spread." Expect dozens of small plates: honey with clotted cream (Kaymak), spicy tomato dip (Acuka), olives, and Sucuk (spicy sausage).



Van Kahvaltı Evi (Cihangir): A local favorite for authenticity. Famous for its regional spreads from Eastern Turkey.



Sütiş (Emirgan): Located right on the Bosphorus. It is incredibly clean and professional highly recommended for those who prioritize hygiene and a view.



Yiğit Sofram (Near Galata): Known for the best Menemen (Turkish scrambled eggs) in a cozy, homey environment.

Street Food Safari

Quick, Safe & Delicious



A Symphony on the sidewalk exploring the rich, smokey, and sesame crusted world of Turkish street culture.



Simit: The sesame crusted bread ring. Only buy from red carts with glass covers to ensure freshness.



Balık Ekmek (Fish Sandwich): Instead of the chaotic boats at Eminönü, walk across the Galata Bridge to the Karaköy side. Look for established stalls like **Balıkçı Emin** for a cleaner, gourmet version.




Döner Kebab: Look for meat that is hands tacked, not a processed "tube." **Dönerci Şahin Usta** near the Grand Bazaar is the gold standard for American foodies.



Midye Dolma (Stuffed Mussels): Avoid trays on the street in high heat. Go to a shop like **Midyeci Ahmet in Beşiktaş** for a sanitized, safe experience.

The "Iconic" Istanbul Legends

 **Balıkçı Sabahattin:** This is arguably the most famous family run seafood spot in the Old City. It's housed in a restored Ottoman mansion and has been run by the same family for generations.

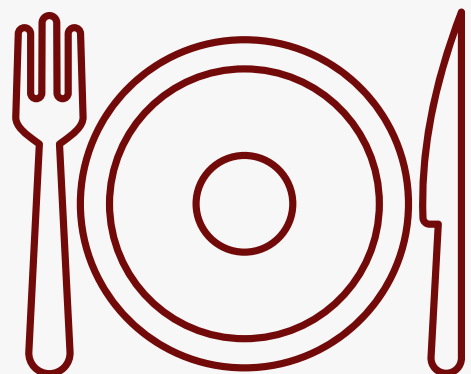


Must Try: The Lakerda (pickled bonito) and their seasonal grilled sea bass.



 **Develi (The Kebab Authority):** Legendary Gaziantep flavors and masterfully crafted kebabs since 1912. An Istanbul icon.

Must Try: Cevizli Kebap (Walnut Kebab) or the Simit Kebabi.





Tarihi Sultanahmet Köftecisi Selim Usta:

Located right next to the Hagia Sophia, this place has been serving the exact same recipe since 1920.

Must Try: The signature Izgara Köfte (grilled meatballs) with their secret spicy sauce and a side of Piyaz (bean salad).



Pandeli (Spice Bazaar)

Located up a flight of turquoise-tiled stairs at the entrance of the Spice Bazaar, Pandeli dates back to 1901. It has hosted everyone from Audrey Hepburn to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

Must Try: Hünkar Beğendi (Sultan's Delight). A royal Ottoman classic featuring tender lamb served on a rich, creamy bed of smoked eggplant purée.



The Michelin Guide

Istanbul is officially a Michelin designated city. For those seeking the absolute pinnacle of Turkish gastronomy, these are the tables you need to book well in advance.



TURK Fatih Tutak: 2 Michelin Stars
The only 2 star in the city. Modern, sophisticated, and requires booking 4 weeks out.

Must Try: The "Mother" Manti. A refined tribute to the Chef's mother, these delicate dumplings are widely considered the best in the country. Also, look for the Lamb Baklava or his famous Stuffed Mussels (Midye Dolma) reimaged in an edible shell.



Nicole: 1 Michelin Star Contemporary Turkish with a French twist and a stunning terrace in Beyoğlu.

Must Try: Traditional Dolmas. These aren't your average stuffed leaves; at Nicole, they are served with smoked yogurt and tender lamb, underlined by a rich grape jus reduction. The Charcoal-grilled Octopus is also a consist



ROOFTOPS & VIEWS SUNSET DINING



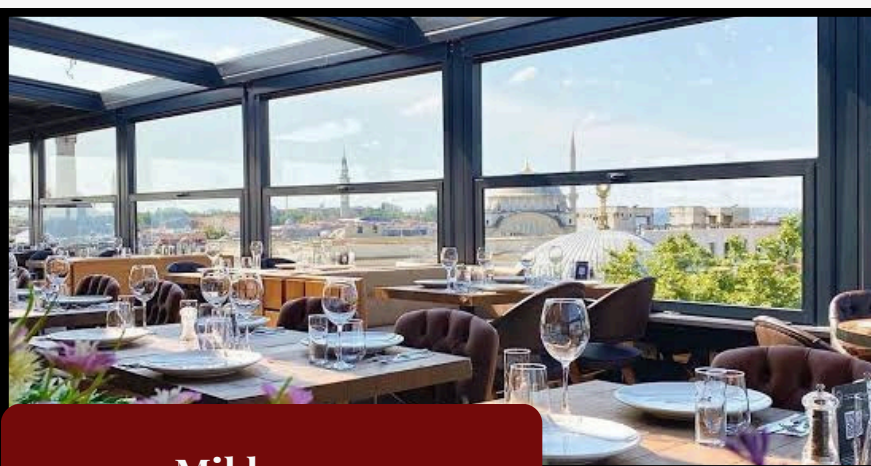
Seven Hills Restaurant

- Eye level with the Hagia Sophia. Best for lunch or a sunset "drink and appetizer" session for photos.



Loti Roof Lounge

- A 2026 favorite for a 360° view over the Bosphorus and Blue Mosque. Perfect for romantic dinners.



Mikla

- Perched atop the Marmara Pera Hotel. 360-degree views of the city. High end, trendy, and very "New York" vibe.



American Dining Tips

Water: Never drink tap water. Even at the finest restaurants, you will be served and charged for bottled water.

Ice: Most Turkish restaurants don't use much ice. If you want a true American style cold drink, ask for "Bol buzlu" with lots of ice.

Tipping: 10% is the standard in mid to high end restaurants. Check your bill for "Servis Ücreti" Service Charge. If it's already there, you don't need to tip extra.



SIGNATURE EXPERIENCES

Istanbul's finest Immersion

THE RITUAL

Historic Turkish Baths (Hamams)

A Hamam is more than just a bath; it is an Ottoman ritual of purification. To truly "feel" Istanbul, stepping into a 500-year-old spa is essential.



Reservations are mandatory

- Kılıç Ali Paşa Hamamı: The gold standard for hygiene and aesthetics, designed by Sinan. Highly popular with Americans.
- Cağaloğlu Hamamı: The most opulent and famous, featured in the "1,000 Places to See Before You Die" list.

HANDS ON WORKSHOPS

Instead of buying mass produced items, spend a few hours crafting a piece of Turkish history.



- Turkish Mosaic Lamp Making: Spend 2.5 hours designing your own Aladdin style lamp.
- The US Factor: They provide US compatible plugs and flight safe packaging for long haul travel.
- Ceramic & Tile Painting (Çini): Learn traditional Ottoman patterns and paint your own plate or bowl.

BOSPORUS CRUISES

The Bosphorus is the heart of the city. Whether by private yacht or public ferry, it is the ultimate Istanbul experience.

- Private Yacht Hire: The premium choice for a sunset cruise. See the waterfront mansions (Yalis) without the crowds.
- Public Ferries: The local experience. Use your IstanbulKart to board from Eminönü to Kadıköy.



- Pro-Tip: Sit on the back deck with a Turkish tea (Çay) and simit to toss to the seagulls. It is the most Istanbul moment you can have.



YOUR FRIENDS IN ISTANBUL

Hi, we are Brit and Berat! One of us is an American expat, the other is a born and raised local from Istanbul. We started this journey to help fellow Americans experience the real Istanbul the way a true friend would show you around. No tourist traps, no stress, just authentic memories tailored for you.

Let's make your Istanbul trip unforgettable.
From airport transfers to curated tours, we've
got you covered.



WhatsApp Us Directly



MEMORIES WE CREATED TOGETHER

Trusted by American travelers since day one. Every smile in these photos represents a story we've shared and a memory that will last a lifetime.

