



ISTANBUL GUIDEBOOK

WRITTEN BY HASAN KINAY

Earthissimo



INTRODUCTION TO ISTANBUL

Istanbul, Istanbul, Istanbul. What a relationship I've had with this diverse city. It's funny how one place in the world can hold so many memories of someone's life, and I'm glad that place for me is Istanbul. The people, the architecture, and the food—oh, the food. Everywhere you look, you'll find something that makes you hungry. The city breathes through its neighborhoods, each with its own distinct architecture and way of life. Because the city wasn't built all at once, you'll always see the influence of different communities who shaped each area. The coolest thing is that every neighborhood offers something unique to do. Don't worry, your experience guy, Hasan, will share it all.

When you think of Istanbul, think of where the East meets the West. Even if you've lived in Turkey for over ten years, if someone asks you what Turkish people look like, you won't have a definitive answer. Turkey is a country of immigration, a place where people from the East and the West come together and build a home over time. Whenever I summarize the land of Turkey to people, I say, "Think of Turkey as the United States of the world from the 3rd century to the 18th century." This land was the capital of trade and immigration, a melting pot for people from all around the world.

As an entrepreneur in the travel and hospitality industry, I've helped many different businesses and my community to create and host experiences in diverse fields, from food, arts to beauty and sports. If there's one thing I've learned, it's that we love people here. You'll always see people outside enjoying their tea, coffee, and cigarettes, of course. Despite the diversity and the many influences from different cultures, people here are still hungry for a good conversation, a smile, and a cup of tea. In Turkey, I've always said our culture revolves around consuming together. To share a conversation or any experience, there must be something on the table—tea, coffee, or just a little appetizer. It's not about consuming at all; it's about having something together to build trust and connection. So if you are ready to taste Istanbul scroll down to see what you will get from this book.



WHAT YOU'LL DISCOVER IN THIS GUIDE

DISCOVERING THE NEIGHBORHOODS & MAPS FOR ATTRACTIONS (pages 3-9)

Explore the vibrant neighborhoods of Istanbul with detailed maps highlighting all major attractions so you don't need to look for any attractions one by one anymore.

TURKISH CUISINE & MAPS FOR EACH FOOD & RESTAURANT (pages 10-27)

Get ready to learn about all the Turkish food you need to try in Istanbul. This section includes recipes, stories of the food from our childhood, and dietary suitability. Just click on the foods to see my favorite restaurant for each specific dish. Plus, I've gathered unique map pins for the restaurants so you don't need anything else while looking for a good place to eat.

LOCAL EXPERIENCES TO DO (pages 28-35)

Discover unique local experiences in Istanbul, from cooking classes to traditional arts and crafts workshops. The coolest thing: Hasan has also designed unique experiences for you to do without booking or buying anything.

HELPFUL TIPS & FAQ (pages 36-38)

Find answers to the most common questions travelers ask about Istanbul. These are the questions you can't easily find answers to elsewhere.



FATIH DISTRICT

The Fatih District is located on the European side of Istanbul, on the southern peninsula. In this district, you'll find the historic center and most of the main tourist attractions.

Sultanahmet

Sultanahmet is one of the must visit when you are in Istanbul. It's full of famous places like the Hagia Sophia, the Blue Mosque, the Basilica Cistern, the Spice Market, the Grand Bazaar, and Topkapi Palace. You can walk to all these spots, and there are tons of cafes, restaurants, and shops around. It's easy to get to other parts of the city from here too. But it can be really crowded and touristy. The restaurant and shop owners can be pushy, and everything costs more. There's not much local vibe, and the nightlife is pretty quiet, which some people might like or not.

Sirkeci & Eminönü

Sirkeci is in the northern part of the Old City. It's not as crowded as Sultanahmet, but you can still walk to many of the main attractions in Sultanahmet. It's close to a metro line, the ferry terminal, and Galata Bridge. From here, you can easily get to Karaköy, Galata, Taksim, and other places along the Bosphorus Strait. Being near the metro and ferry makes it easy to explore beyond the historic district once you've seen all the main sights. Definitely try "Balık Ekmek" while you are in here.

Balat

Balat is known as Istanbul's most colorful neighborhood and people. You will find amazing local vibe in here its also a part that your author Hasan is grew up and giving his food and community experience. It's full of narrow, cobblestoned streets and brightly painted houses. It has a local neighborhood feel with lots of cool cafes, shops, and restaurants. Definitely, must visit in Istanbul if you are interested in local life.



BEYOGLU DISTRICT

The Beyoğlu district is a great place to stay, offering a perfect blend of nightlife and traditions. The area boasts unique architecture and a wide variety of delicious food, which I love.

Karaköy

Karaköy is a small, relatively flat area at the bottom of the hill under Galata. It offers incredible views across the Golden Horn waterway and is close to Galata Bridge, making it well-connected to the southern peninsula and Sultanahmet. Whether you take the metro or a ferry, it's easy to get almost anywhere in the city from Karaköy. This vibrant area is full of shops, restaurants, and bars, offering more nightlife than Fatih.

Galata

Galata is a charming and trendy neighborhood with plenty of shops, restaurants, cafes, and nightlife. Located on top of a hill, the area features winding and hilly streets, which can be challenging if you have mobility issues. The elevation provides some hotels and rooftop bars with panoramic views. It's also home to the Galata Tower, a top tourist attraction. Galata is within walking distance of Istiklal Street to the north and Galata Bridge to the south, but staying here requires some effort to get to the historical sites in Sultanahmet Square. Both Galata and Karaköy are close to the main cruise ship terminal, so they can get extra crowded with tourists from time to time.

Taksim

Taksim is located on a more modern and commercial side of Istanbul. Istiklal Street, a long pedestrian street great for shopping, connects Galata to Taksim. Taksim is a good choice for those who want major brand-name hotels and more luxury hotel options. The nightlife scene here is very lively. While it is a bit far from most major tourist attractions, a major metro station in Taksim Square can take you where you want to go. You'll experience slightly less hassle from restaurants and shops compared to Sultanahmet. However, some areas off the main roads and square can get a bit seedy.



BEŞİKTAŞ DISTRICT

Growing up in Istanbul, Beşiktaş was always buzzing with energy. The center is packed with cafes, bars, and restaurants, and the Fish Market is a must-visit. It's super easy to get around from here, whether you're hopping on a bus, a ferry, or just walking. This area is a mix of the old and new, perfect for anyone who loves a lively city vibe. Plus, the food in the area is top-notch.

Arnavutköy

Arnavutköy is like a hidden gem along the Bosphorus. The wooden Ottoman houses and quiet streets give it a peaceful, almost village-like feel. It's famous for seafood and offers stunning views. It's a great spot for a calm, scenic day out, yet it's not too far from the city center.

Bebek

Bebek is where you go to see and be seen. It's one of the poshest areas in Istanbul, right on the Bosphorus. Trendy cafes, upscale restaurants, and stylish boutiques line the streets. The views are incredible, and the vibe is luxurious. It's a bit further from the historic sites, but totally worth it for the scenery and atmosphere.

Ortaköy

Ortaköy is always buzzing with life. The mosque here is stunning, and the market is full of unique finds. It's a great spot for grabbing kumpir or waffles by the water. With the Bosphorus Bridge in the background, the views are amazing. It's lively, eclectic, and a true slice of Istanbul's vibrant culture.

Nişantaşı

I summarize this part as the Champs-Élysées of Istanbul. You will find all the luxury brand shops there, with a great atmosphere of luxury and modern cafes and bars. Plus, the architecture is very cool as well.



USKUDAR DISTRICT

Üsküdar was always a place with a unique charm. It's the neighbourhood located in Asian side of Istanbul. The center is bustling with local life, perfect for traditional activities like visiting a hamam or exploring the lively markets. The food is good, and people are honest. It's easy to get around with ferry connections to the European side, and the vibe here is a mix of tradition and modernity. Everything feels less touristy, making it great for sightseeing and soaking up authentic Istanbul vibes.

Kuzguncuk

Kuzguncuk feels like a village within the city. It's known for its colorful houses, quiet streets, and friendly atmosphere. The neighborhood is full of cozy cafes and artisan shops, making it a great spot for a relaxing day out. The strong sense of community and the beautiful Bosphorus views make Kuzguncuk a special place.

Beylerbeyi

Beylerbeyi is all about its stunning waterfront and the beautiful Beylerbeyi Palace. Growing up, visiting this area felt like stepping into a different era. It's quieter than other neighborhoods, with charming cafes and seafood restaurants right by the water. The views of the Bosphorus Bridge are amazing, especially at sunset.

Çengelköy

Çengelköy is famous for its historic charm and lovely waterfront. It's a great place for a leisurely stroll, with plenty of cafes and spots to enjoy tea by the Bosphorus. The area is also known for its delicious food, especially the iconic Çengelköy böreği (savory filo pastry).



KADIKOY DISTRICT

Kadıköy is a lively part of the city located in Asian Side. It's where you'll find a mix of young people, hipster vibes, and Turkish culture. The center is bustling with activity, perfect for enjoying street food and traditional dishes. Kadıköy is known for its vibrant atmosphere, with plenty of bars, cafes, and diverse entertainment options, making it a hub for the younger crowd.

Moda

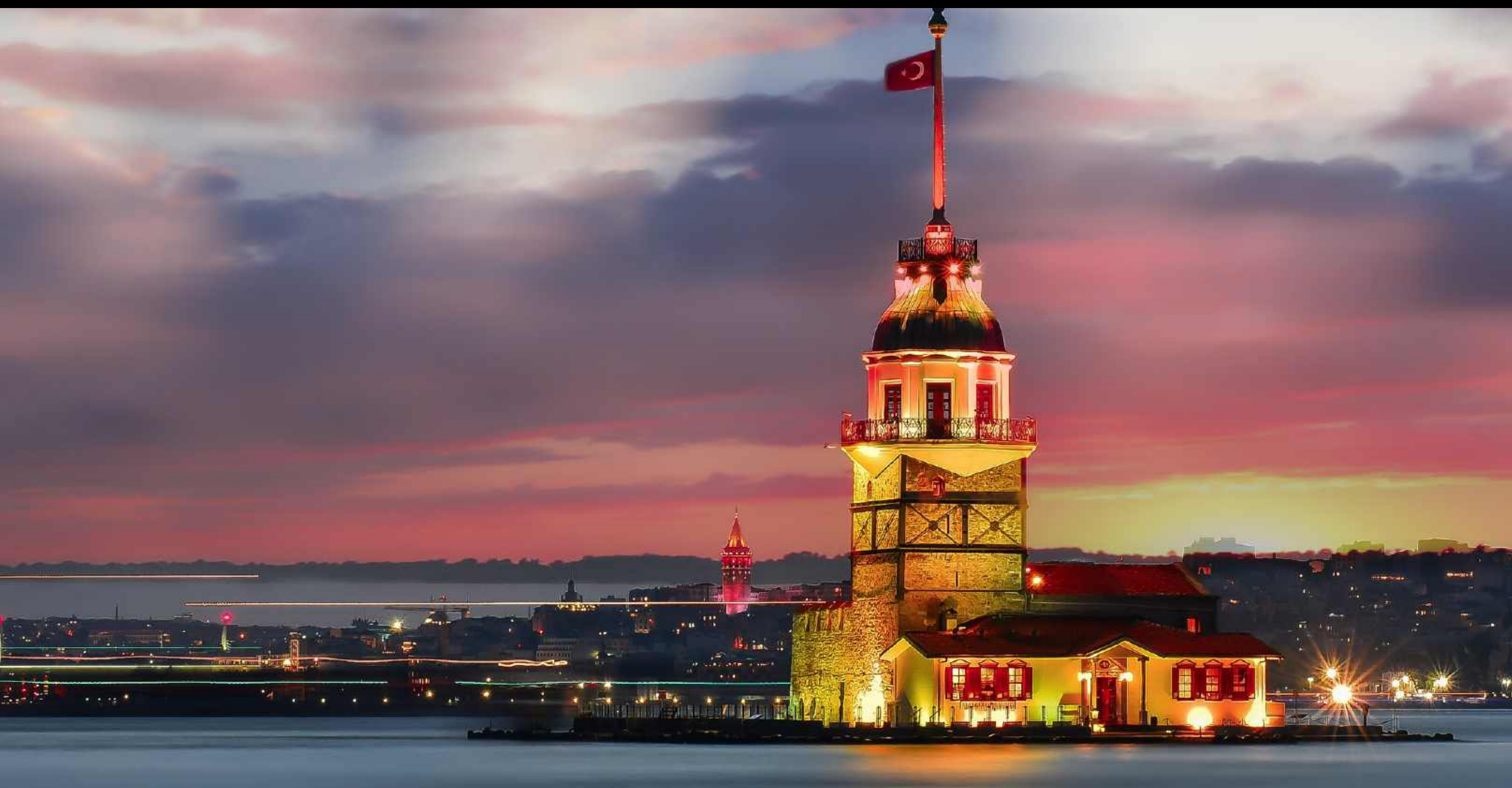
Moda feels like a cozy village within Istanbul. Its streets are lined with colorful houses and charming cafes, creating a relaxed and inviting atmosphere. This neighborhood offers beautiful views of the Sea of Marmara, perfect for a leisurely day out.

Caddebostan

Caddebostan is loved for its seaside charm and great shopping opportunities. It boasts parks, sandy beaches, and a lively promenade ideal for picnics and cycling. The area is also a hotspot for cafes and restaurants offering both Turkish and international cuisine. With its family-friendly vibe and vibrant shopping scene, Caddebostan is a favorite spot for locals to unwind.



TOP SITES & ATTRACTIONS IN ISTANBUL



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FOOD OF ISTANBUL

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See Hasan's Favourite
restaurants for each dish



suitable for vegans



suitable for
vegeterians



MANTI

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Manti is Turkish dumplings, a special dish my grandma insists on for Sunday breakfast. She prepares it so we can eat four plates and do nothing else. The dough is simple, made with water, flour, and salt, stuffed with minced beef. The sauce is made with yogurt, garlic, and a spice mix of butter, paprika, pepper, or tomato paste.



DONER KEBAP

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Döner kebab is a popular lunch dish in Istanbul, but I love having it for breakfast too. I used to beg my mother for döner kebab so often! It's made from marinated lamb meat and fat, cooked on a large skewer over a wood fire for a smoky flavor. The word 'Döner' means 'to turn' in Turkish, and it rotates horizontally around the wood fire. It's served hot in pita bread with tomatoes, peppers, and pickles, or simply on a plate.



BOREK

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Börek is a dish that we sharing with our neighbouring countries through balkans, Its the type of dish that mom sends you to bakery to buy before breakfast then you dip in this delicassy into everything on the table. Its made out from filo pastry usually stuffed with minced beef and raisins but you will find other stuffings as well patato, cheese, spinach.



ÇİĞ KÖFTE

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Çiğ köfte is one of my favorite things to eat in Istanbul. This delicious appetizer became our go-to snack after school. It's a paste made from a cereal grain called bulgur (cracked wheat). Inside the paste, you'll find pomegranate molasses, walnuts, olive oil, tomatoes, pepper, onions, garlic, and tomato and pepper paste, along with a variety of spices. Originally, it's made with raw beef, but most often, it's served with bulgur.



PİDE

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Imagine a simpler version of pizza, but shaped horizontally instead of in a circle, and stuffed with cheese, beef, and vegetables. It's one of my favorite things to eat for lunch or dinner. Don't forget to drink Ayran with it!



ISKENDER KEBAP

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This dish will spike up your cholesterol, but trust me, it's worth it. It's served on a hot plate with cubed roasted pita bread at the bottom, topped with döner kebab. Then, hot butter and tomato sauce are poured over it. It's one of the most delicious things to eat in Istanbul. Definitely check it out!



LAHMACUN

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I think after döner kebab, lahmacun is my favorite dish. Imagine a crispy flatbread covered with a savory meat paste—actually, don't imagine, come and eat it! The dough is made with wheat flour, water, and salt, and the paste includes minced beef, garlic, tomato, parsley, and onions



KOKOREÇ

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All over the world, people eat döner kebab when they get drunk, but in Turkey, after a good night, kokoreç is the go-to food. Kokoreç is made from lamb intestines, rolled on a stick, and cooked over a cool fire. Once the outside is seared, it's chopped up with tomatoes and peppers, then grilled with spices like oregano and paprika. Finally, it's put into hot bread. What can I say? Enjoy!



YAPRAK SARMA



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Sarma means 'to roll' in Turkish. After a bazaar visit with mom, we would sit at the table and roll these babies together. It's made with vine leaves stuffed with an uncooked risotto mix that includes herbs and spices. Then it's boiled with water, orange juice, and lemon juice. It's an amazing appetizer to try.



DOLMA



[CLICK HERE](#)



Dolma means 'to stuff' in Turkish. It's simple: you choose any type of vegetable, hollow it out, and stuff it with an uncooked risotto mix. My favorite dolma is made with dried peppers, eggplants, or zucchini. Don't worry, I'll give you an amazing option for where to try all kinds.



TANTUNI

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Tantuni is a beloved street food in Istanbul, made with thinly sliced beef or lamb stir-fried with onions, tomatoes, and green peppers. Seasoned with spices like cumin, paprika, and chili flakes, it's served hot in a thin flatbread or wrap (dürüm), often accompanied by parsley, lemon juice, and optional pickles or yogurt.



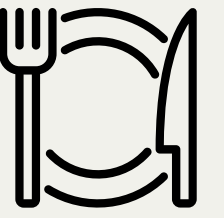
MENEMEN



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Menemen is an essential part of our breakfast. It's basically the Turkish version of shakshuka, but scrambled. It's definitely a must-try in Istanbul, and guess what? I know where to try the best version.



ADANA KEBAP

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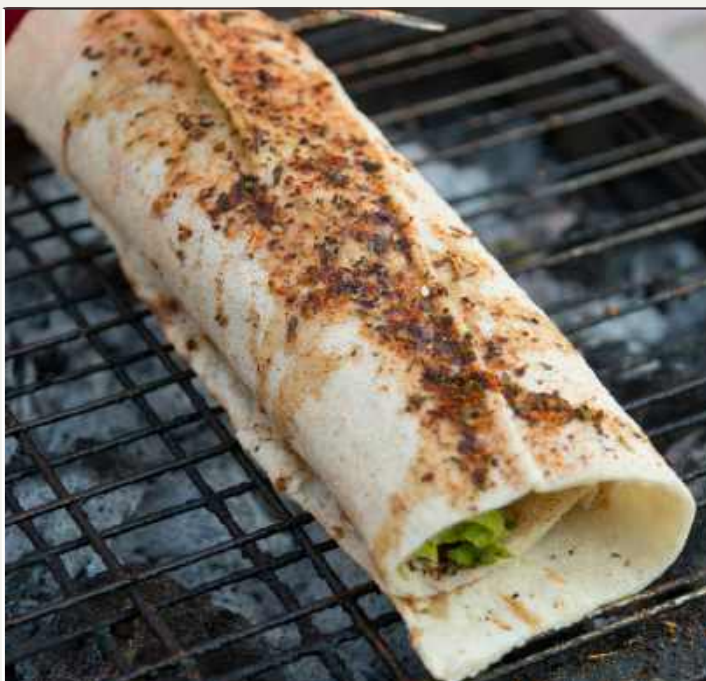
Adana kebab its basically minced beef or lamb spiced it out with paprika added some chopped tomato and pepper. then covered on the skewer lastly its cooked on the cool and wood fire. I'm sure you will try and see this everywhere.



BALIK EKMEK

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This is one of the classical food of istanbul the dish is very simple its grilled macarel fish added onions and salad lastly, you put all the goodness into the bread and guys our bread is amazing.



BALIK DURUM

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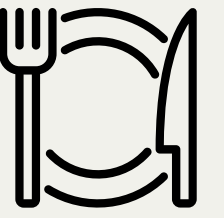
This is the dish invented maybe in last 6-7 years instead the white bread we use wheat flour made tortilla called lavaş. Outside of the wrap cover with molasses, oil and spices and cooked on the grill inside is grilled mackarel fish, roasted veggies, salad, more pomegranate mollases and spices



LAKERDA

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Lakerda is made from pickled bonito, a type of fish in the mackerel family. The preparation involves curing slices of the fish in brine, which gives it a distinctively salty and rich flavor. It is often served as an appetizer or meze in our traditional restaurants.



SİMİT

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Simit is one of the classic of our breakfast. If you are in Istanbul take your simit run to the one ferry take a tea from the ferry and just watch the view while having your little breakfast. Its a classic bread though covered with molasses and sesame seeds.



KUMPIR

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Its one of the most common street food istanbul do I like it? so so I would say. After patato is baked you mash it with butter and cheese lastly you put the stuffings you like



MİDYE DOLMA

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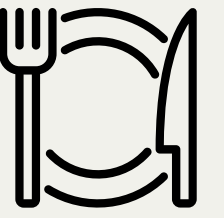
Stuffed mussels are one of the essentials of turkish cuisine I must say if you are in the beach or if its a match day. You would run for stuffed mussels when you are drunk as well. Mussels are steamed stuffed and steamed again.



İÇLİ KÖFTE

[CLICK HERE](#)

İçli köfte is stuffed bulghur balls. Stuffing includes cooked minced beef or lamb, walnuts, onion and spices. They usually serve this as an appetizer. but its good anyway.



TAVUK PİLAV

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Here is your street food in Turkey if you are a gym rat dish is very simple rice with chickpeas served with boiled shredded chicken. Its a plain food but like I guess you can't always eat spicy right? maybe you can aha



POĞAÇA

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Poğaç is a popular Turkish breakfast item. These savory pastries come in various shapes and sizes, filled with ingredients like cheese, potatoes, spinach, or olives, and flavored with herbs such as dill or parsley.



MEZES

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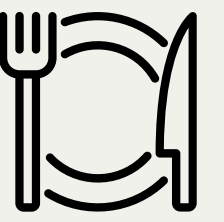
Mezes are essential to Turkish cuisine. They alone can define a cuisine, offering a wide variety from roasted vegetable mixes with yogurt and olive oil to cured fishes and more.



BÜRYAN

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Büryan is one of my favorite Turkish dishes known for its rich flavors and special cooking method. It features tender lamb or goat meat seasoned with spices like cumin and garlic, slow-cooked in a tandoor oven until juicy and smoky.



These lentil balls are packed with garlic, pepper, parsley, tomato and pepper paste, and all sorts of delicious spices. Wrapped in lettuce and drizzled with lemon juice, they are incredibly tasty.



MERCIMEK KÖFTESİ

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Mücver is an appetizer made by blending cabbage, carrots, and herbs, then mixing in flour and eggs. You can either fry it or bake it, depending on your preference. Personally, I prefer the baked ones



MÜCVER

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İmam Bayıldı is a traditional dish you can try in Istanbul. It's known as the 'fainting imam,' and it's a delicious Turkish dish made from roasted eggplants stuffed with a savory mixture of onions, garlic, tomatoes, and green peppers. Seasoned with herbs like parsley and dill, it's cooked slowly until tender and flavorful.



IMAM BAYILDI

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Karniyarik is a household dish loved by the people of Istanbul. Translating to 'split belly' in Turkish, it consists of roasted eggplants that are slit and stuffed with a delicious mixture of ground meat (often lamb or beef), onions, garlic, tomatoes, and green peppers. Seasoned with traditional Turkish spices and herbs like parsley and mint, it's baked until the flavors meld together beautifully.

KARNIYARIK

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GÖZLEME

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Gözleme is a beloved dish in Istanbul. filling thin dough with cheese, spinach, or meat. Cooked until crispy, it's served hot with yogurt or ayran.



ŞIRDAN

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Şırdan is a traditional Turkish dish where sheep intestines are stuffed with seasoned rice, herbs, and spices. Once filled, they are cooked until tender and served hot, prized for their savory flavors. Great dish to eat at night!



KURU FASULYE

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Kuru fasulye is a classic Turkish dish that's a real comfort food for me. It's made with white beans cooked in a rich tomato-based sauce, simmered until tender with onions, tomatoes, garlic, and a blend of spices. It's best enjoyed hot, usually with rice or bread.



KISIR

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It's a flavorful salad made with fine bulgur wheat, mixed with chopped tomatoes, onions, parsley, and a variety of herbs and spices like mint and red pepper flakes. The salad is dressed with olive oil and pomegranate molasses, giving it a tangy and refreshing taste. Kısır is perfect as a side dish or a light meal on its own, enjoyed especially during gatherings and picnics



MERCIMEK ÇORBASI

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Mercimek çorbası is a staple in Turkish cuisine that I absolutely love. It's a hearty lentil soup made with red lentils, onions, carrots, and tomatoes, seasoned with a blend of spices like cumin and paprika. In traditional restaurants, mercimek çorbası is prepared simply with water and lentils, highlighting the natural flavors of the ingredients.



KELLE PAÇA

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Kelle paça is a traditional Turkish dish that holds a special place in my heart—a classic that grandpa would take me to enjoy as a child. It's a hearty soup made from boiled sheep's head and feet, simmered for hours until the meat becomes tender and the broth rich and flavorful. The dish is seasoned with garlic, lemon, and vinegar. It's a gelatin bomb, guys!



EZOĞELİN

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Ezogelin is a traditional Turkish soup that always brings back fond memories. It's a hearty mix of red lentils, bulgur, and rice, seasoned with tomatoes, onions, and a blend of spices like red pepper flakes, mint, and paprika. The soup is simmered until all the ingredients meld into a rich, flavorful broth. It's comforting, nutritious, and perfect for warming up on a chilly day



TARHANA

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Tarhana is a traditional Turkish soup that's like the world's first instant soup mix. Made from a fermented mixture of yogurt, vegetables, and grains that's dried and crumbled into a powder, it transforms into a rich, tangy soup when cooked. If you have a working mom, this is the soup you drink quite often. It's comforting, flavorful, and always brings back memories of family meals.



BAKLAVA

CLICK HERE



TURKISH DELIGHTS

CLICK HERE



KATMER

CLICK HERE



KAZANDIBİ

CLICK HERE

Baklava is a sweet treat that always makes me the happiest. In my opinion, it's by far the king of desserts in Turkey. Made from layers of thin, flaky pastry filled with chopped nuts and sweetened with syrup or honey, the result is a rich, sticky dessert that's crunchy and sweet. It's a classic favorite at family gatherings and celebrations

Turkish delights are a delightful treat that I always look forward to especially the new versions. They come in various flavors and colors, coated with powdered sugar or nuts, offering a chewy and sweet experience. These candies have a soft, jelly-like texture and are often flavored with ingredients like rosewater, citrus, or nuts. They're a traditional Turkish delicacy enjoyed as a sweet treat or gift for special occasions.

Katmer is a delightful Turkish pastry that I absolutely love. It's made from thin layers of dough that are folded and rolled out repeatedly to create a flaky texture. Typically filled with clotted cream (kaymak) and sprinkled with chopped pistachios, sugar, and sometimes cinnamon, it's then baked until golden and crispy. It goes perfect with a cup of Turkish tea or coffee.

Kazandibi is a burnt chicken pudding that's my special treat after a good hamam session. It's a creamy, caramelized dessert made from milk, sugar, rice flour, and shredded chicken, with a golden-brown crust that forms during cooking. Don't forget to ask for ice cream on top of it. If you're not a fan of the burnt taste, you can try “Tavukgöğsü,” which is the non-burnt version of kazandibi.



TULUMBA

[CLICK HERE](#)

Tulumba is a Turkish dessert that you can think of as the Turkish version of churros. These deep-fried doughnuts are soaked in sweet syrup, making them irresistibly sweet and sticky. They're often shaped like small tubes or fingers, giving them a distinctive appearance. Tulumba is a popular treat at celebrations and special occasions, enjoyed for its crunchy exterior and soft, syrupy interior.



İRMİK HELVASI

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İrmik helvası is a traditional Turkish dessert that holds a special place in my heart, especially when enjoyed with ice cream. It's a sweet semolina pudding made from semolina flour (irmik), butter, sugar, and sometimes pine nuts or almonds. The semolina is toasted in butter until golden brown, then simmered in a sugar syrup until thickened. Flavored with cinnamon or vanilla, İrmik helvası is served warm or at room temperature.



KÜNEFE

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Künefe is a must try dessert that consists of a crispy layer of shredded phyllo dough (kadayıf) that encases a gooey, stretchy layer of cheese, typically unsalted white cheese. The dessert is soaked in sweet syrup, often flavored with rose or orange blossom water, and topped with crushed pistachios or walnuts for added texture and flavor. Künefe is usually served warm, straight out of the oven, making it a delightful treat that combines crunchy, cheesy, and sweet flavors in every bite.



EKMEK KADAYIFI

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Ekmek kadayıfı is a traditional Turkish dessert with a rich history, originating from the practice of using leftover bread to create a sweet treat. This dessert is irresistible to anyone in Turkey. It starts with a cake-like base made from yeast, molasses, and other delicious ingredients. The baked cake is then soaked in a sugar syrup and served with clotted cream, providing a delightful contrast of textures and flavors.



SÜTLAÇ

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Sütlaç is our version of rice pudding—a treat that brings pure joy when found in the fridge. Made from rice, milk, sugar, and often flavored with vanilla or cinnamon, the rice is simmered in milk until creamy, sweetened, and baked until golden-brown on top.



TURKISH ICE CREAM

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Turkish ice cream, known as "dondurma," is a dessert renowned for its chewy texture and resistance to melting. Many of you may already be familiar with it from watching videos of ice cream vendors and their entertaining tricks. It's made with milk, sugar, and often salep (a flour made from orchid tubers) or mastic resin, which give it its characteristic elasticity.



LOKMA

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Lokma is a dessert that's basically small, round doughnuts. They're fried to golden perfection, so they're crispy on the outside but super soft inside. After frying, they're soaked in this sweet syrup—sometimes with flavors like lemon or cinnamon. It's the kind of dessert you see a lot during holidays and family get-togethers. Everyone loves digging into these warm, syrupy bites.



HALKA TATLISI



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Halka tatlısı is a Turkish dessert that translates to "ring dessert" in English. It's essentially a sweet, ring-shaped pastry that's deep-fried until crispy and golden. After frying, it's traditionally soaked in a light sugar syrup, sometimes flavored with lemon or rose water, to add sweetness and moisture. The texture is crispy on the outside and soft on the inside, making it a delightful treat to enjoy with tea or coffee.



MILKY BAKLAVA

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This dessert is a must-watch, as you can easily consume countless pieces. This variation of baklava maintains its layers of filo dough and nuts but is served with a creamy, often milk-based sauce that adds richness and a different texture compared to traditional baklava. It's sometimes dusted with cocoa or other flavorful powders on top for an extra delicious touch.



KEŞKÜL

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Keşkül is an almond-based milk pudding, usually served in a bowl and eaten with a spoon. It's often garnished with coconut shavings or pistachio nuts, giving it a rich texture and flavor



GÜLLAÇ

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This is the dessert that gets you excited about Ramadan. It is usually served only during Ramadan. Güllaç consists of very thin layers of starch sheets softened in sweetened milk, layered with ground nuts (usually walnuts), and flavored with rose water. It's often garnished with pomegranate seeds or ground pistachios, adding a cool color to this white dessert.



MUHALLEBİ

[CLICK HERE](#)

Muhallebi is essentially a Turkish pudding, known for its creamy texture and delightful flavor. It's made from milk, sugar, and thickening agents like rice flour or cornstarch.



TURKISH TEA

Yes, in this country we love tea. Turkey is the biggest consumer of the tea in the world. It is typically brewed using a special double teapot called a "çaydanlık." The bottom pot holds boiling water, while the top pot holds loose black tea leaves and a small amount of water, which brews into a strong tea concentrate. It's well integrated with Turkish hospitality. You will find a good tea everywhere in the city.



TURKISH COFFEE

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In Turkey, we're heavy consumers of caffeine, and in Istanbul, you'll see this closely. Coffee is mostly enjoyed with friends and good conversation. Turkish coffee, or "Türk kahvesi," is a traditional brew made by mixing finely ground coffee with water and sugar in a "cezve." It's heated until foamy and poured into small cups without filtering. Served with water and often Turkish delight, the grounds settle at the bottom and are sometimes used for fortune-telling.



AYRAN

Ayran is the most consumed soft drink in Turkey, perfectly paired with any meaty or savory meal. It's made from yogurt, water, and a pinch of salt. Almost, in every restaurant you will find Ayran.



ŞALGAM

[CLICK HERE](#)

Şalgam is made from fermented black carrots and turnips, giving it a tangy and slightly spicy flavor. In Turkey, if you go for a fish meal or a traditional meyhanes dinner, you'll often see it on the table



SAHLEP

[CLICK HERE](#)



BOZA

[CLICK HERE](#)



ŞERBET

[CLICK HERE](#)



RAKI

[CLICK HERE](#)

Sahlep is a drink enjoyed on rainy days or when you want to relax. It's made from the powdered root of wild orchids, mixed with hot milk and sugar, then topped with cinnamon.

Boza is a drink enjoyed during Ramadan. During this time, you'll see boza sellers walking the streets, ready to fill up your bottles. It's primarily made from millet or wheat, giving it a slightly thick consistency similar to a thin pudding or smoothie. Boza is often sweetened with sugar or honey and flavored with cinnamon.

Şerbet is made by dissolving sugar in water over low heat to create a syrup. It's flavored with fruit juices like lemon, orange, or rose water, and sometimes enriched with herbs or spices. Once prepared, şerbet is typically served chilled, making it a refreshing choice, especially during hot weathers

Rakı is one of the essentials of Turkey's alcohol culture. It's a drink that can keep you talking for hours. An anise-flavored liquor, it turns milky white when mixed with water, earning it the nickname "lion's milk." We usually enjoy Rakı as part of a social experience. It holds significant cultural importance in Istanbul, always with lively gatherings, conversations, and the enjoyment of food.



TURŞU SUYU

[CLICK HERE](#)



Turşu suyu, also known as pickle juice, is a great drink choice if you're eating fish near Eminönü or if you're randomly visiting a pickle store to create your own mix.



KEFIR

[CLICK HERE](#)



Kefir is by far my favorite drink. I guess you wonder how many probiotics it contains and how much Mama would push you to drink it. It's made by fermenting milk with kefir grains, which are a combination of bacteria and yeast.



POMEGRANTE JUICE

[CLICK HERE](#)



Pomegranate juice, called nar suyu in Turkish, is one of the nicest things you can enjoy while walking around the city, spiking your glucose levels. Pomegranates originated from Turkey, and their juice is simply delicious



GAZUZ

[CLICK HERE](#)



"Gazoz" is a refreshing Turkish soda that blends sparkling water with various fruit syrups, creating a fizzy, sweet beverage. It's a popular drink enjoyed throughout Turkey, often served chilled and perfect for hot days.



ISTANBUL RESTAURANTS



[CLICK HERE TO VIEW THE MAPS](#)





UNIQUE EXPERIENCES TO DO IN ISTANBUL



TASTE OF ISTANBUL



If you're traveling to Turkey, Istanbul is where you'll truly taste the diversity of Turkish cuisine. This experience was created by your local foodie – Hasan – who turned his colorful neighborhood and its warm-hearted people into an experience full of calories, culture, and connection.

Together with local guides who know the area and its people inside out, you'll discover an incredible variety of Turkish dishes, enjoy drinks in tucked-away spots, and experience everyday life through stories and memories shared by real Istanbul locals. As you walk, taste, and connect, your guide will also share the broader story of the city – both past and present.

This isn't just a food tour. It's a social and cultural deep dive into the heart of Istanbul – its food, its people, and its rhythm. While kebabs and baklava are easy to find, here you'll try dishes you've likely never heard of, but will never forget.



TURKISH MARBLING PAPER WORKSHOP



TURKISH TILE ART PAINTING WORKSHOP



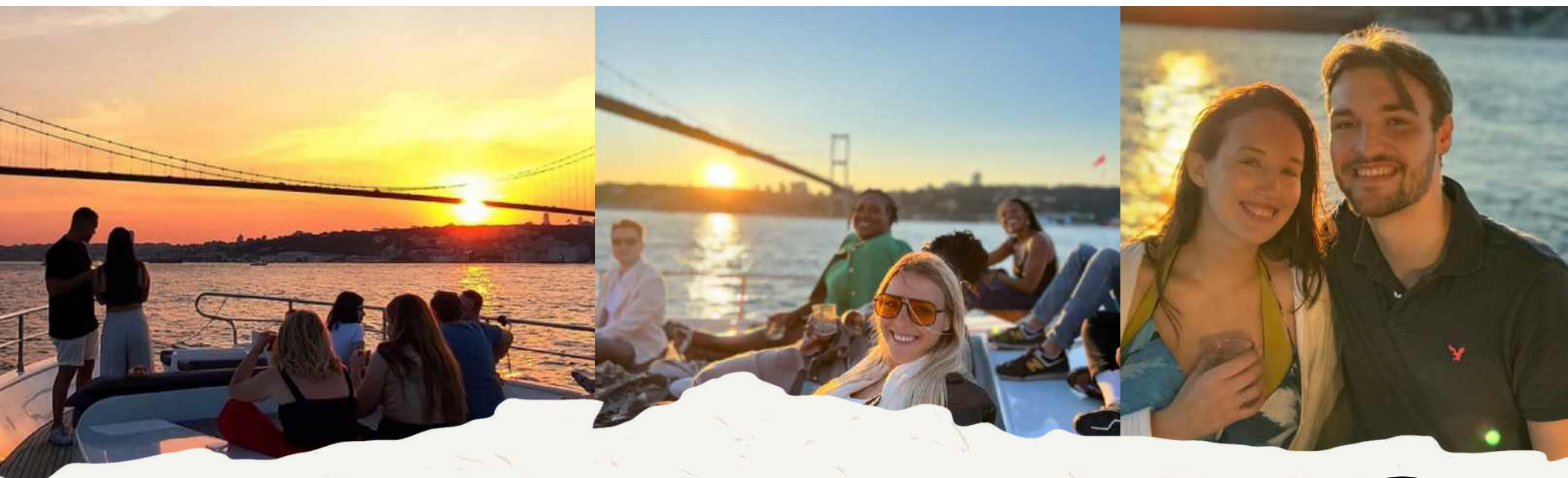
These culturally rich workshops are hosted by a family-run business called Turkish Arts. Ali and Betül are true artists with the greatest hospitality you can ever imagine. If you ever come to Istanbul and want to experience traditional Turkish arts, look no further. One thing is guaranteed: you will have an amazing time and gain friends in Istanbul forever



BAKLAVA MASTERCLASS: FROM SCRATCH



Another food-based experience that I love is cooking classes. In this beautiful art studio, young and talented chef Esra will teach you how to make baklava from scratch. You will experience great hospitality and will surely have a 10 out of 10 experience. Plus, you will eat delicious baklavas that you made.



Bosphorus Sunset Yacht Cruise with Wine & Music



No question about it – if you're in Istanbul, a yacht cruise is an absolute must. Sailing between two continents, watching the sunset, sipping your wine with good music in the background... it doesn't get better than this.

Don't hesitate to try this experience – you'll definitely enjoy your time on the water.



LOCAL HAMAM & FOOD & SHOPPING EXPERIENCE

Designed by Hasan for you to do by yourself!

This is one of my favorite activities to do alone; I do it once a month for sure. The activity is simple: first, take a ferry to Üsküdar from wherever you are.

Then, visit Tarihi Şifa Hamamı. It's my local hamam, so don't expect something touristic—it is very authentic. You can stay inside as long as you want with no time limits. Price is around \$18 for everything included. You don't have to take reservation as well

After enjoying your bath, you can call the washers for a scrubbing, massage, and Turkish soap foam. When you're cleaned up like a baby, head to Kanaat Lokantası, one of the oldest restaurants in Istanbul and a city classic. Enjoy many cool local dishes there. If you visit in the summer, they have some of the best ice cream in the city.

Next, explore the local food and souvenir market called Mimar Sinan Çarşısı. You don't have to negotiate; the prices will shock you with how low they are. Simply enjoy your shopping, take your ice cream, and hop back on the ferry. Trust me, you won't feel depressed for the next 2-3 days.

"PS: If you can't make it to the hamam, you can also visit touristic ones as well. There is no such thing as a bad hamam; it's always an enjoyable experience."



OLD CITY SIGHTSEEING & FOOD

Designed by Hasan for you to do by yourself!

Starting at Gülhane Park: Begin your day with a relaxing walk in Gülhane Park. Then, visit Topkapı Palace, Hagia Sophia, and the Blue Mosque. These famous sites are all close to each other.

Treat Yourself: After seeing the main sights, enjoy traditional smoked meatballs at Tarihi Sultanahmet Köfteci Selim Usta, a popular eatery.

Explore the Grand Bazaar: Wander through the Grand Bazaar. Before you go, set Süleymaniye Mosque as your destination in Google Maps to see the heart of the Grand Bazaar.

Süleymaniye Mosque: Reach Süleymaniye Mosque for a stunning view of the city. Take a moment to relax and enjoy the scenery before heading back.



BOSPHORUS WALK & RELAXATION

Designed by Hasan for you to do by yourself!

First, head to Arnavutköy, a district known for its colorful Ottoman houses and amazing restaurants. Enjoy some small bites there and then follow the picturesque seaside line to Bebek. In Bebek, treat yourself to a great coffee with an amazing view of the Bosphorus and take a leisurely walk. It's a relaxing and enjoyable activity, perfect for clearing your head while enjoying the beautiful Bosphorus view. When deciding where to eat, don't forget to check restaurant recommendations that I provided.



REST IN PEACE (Princes Islands)

Designed by Hasan for you to do by yourself!

Just head to Kabataş Ferry Station, take the ferry to the Princes Islands, rent a bike, visit local eateries and cafes, bike around the island, and simply unwind. Find a scenic spot along the bike route to meditate, take in the views, or just relax. Büyükada is my favourite to visit because it offers more amenities and attractions compared to the others. Here are the schedule for the ferries

[CLICK HERE](#)



TURKISH WAY TO GET DRUNK

Designed by Hasan for you to do by yourself!

In Turkey, going to traditional places called Meyhane with friends is a special social tradition. Whether celebrating or simply relaxing over dinner, it's a lively and communal experience. Each person usually orders fish or kebab, and everyone shares lots of different mezes (appetizers). Throughout the meal, waiters keep bringing more mezes, along with fresh melon slices and cheeses, making it feel like a feast.

The favorite drink at Meyhanes is Rakı, a type of strong, anise-flavored liquor that people mix with water and ice. The main entertainment is the conversations—friends gather to tell stories, laugh, and enjoy each other's company. It's a time for connecting deeply, whether by sharing affection or working through any issues, all in a setting of warm Turkish hospitality.

Visiting a Meyhane isn't just about eating; it's about being with people you care about and having meaningful conversations. It's a great experience for couples and big groups of friends to enjoy together.

Now you know the culture here are great recommendations for you to experience it



TIPS & FAQ





HOW TO USE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION?

Public transportation in Istanbul works well and is designed efficiently. Right now, you don't even need to buy a transportation card (IstanbulKart); you can just use your bank or debit card. To find the best transportation routes, you can use the Moovit app. [Click here to download the app.](#)



WHERE TO EXCHANGE CURRENCY FOR THE BEST PRICE?

The best option is to exchange currency in the city center. Currency exchanges throughout the city generally offer similar rates. For the most current rates, exchanging near the Grand Bazaar is a good option. Just be cautious not to exchange all your money at the airport.



HOW TO GET TO THE CITY CENTER FROM THE AIRPORT?

You can take a taxi using apps like Uber or Bitaksi. Additionally, both airports have metro services to the city center, though depending on where you're staying, the metro may not always be the best option. Instead of the metro, you can use airport shuttles. If you're arriving at IST airport, [click here for shuttle information](#). If arriving at SAW, [click here for shuttle information](#).



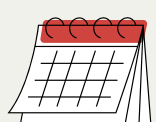
HOW TO FIND OUT ABOUT NIGHTLIFE EVENTS IN ISTANBUL?

Simply download the **BuGece app** to check out major events happening each night. [Click here to download the app.](#)



WHAT SHOULD I WEAR WHEN I VISIT A MOSQUE?

When visiting a mosque, men should wear something that covers their knees, and women should cover all parts of their bodies, including their hair. You can bring your own scarf or purchase one at the mosque entrance.



WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO TRAVEL?

I recommend visiting during the months of April, May, June, September, and October for pleasant spring weather in the city.



WHAT ARE THE SCAMS IN THE CITY?

Like in every big city, don't trust people who offer to show you historical sites or invite you to random bars. The trick with shoe cleaners dropping their brush is not common anymore, but remain cautious and keep walking.



DO I HAVE TO NEGOTIATE?

If you're not serious about buying, it's best not to negotiate. If you're genuinely interested in purchasing something at the bazaars, feel free to negotiate—it's a bit like flirting for us. In touristy areas, give it a try; worst case, you'll enjoy tea and good conversation.



WHICH AREA IS BEST TO STAY?

I recommend staying in the Beyoğlu area because it's close to Sultanahmet for sightseeing and offers vibrant city vibes. You'll also have plenty of options for public transportation. Beşiktaş is another excellent location. If you have time to explore, consider Kadıköy neighborhood as well.



HOW TO USE TAXIS?

In the city center, short distances by taxi can sometimes be challenging. Use apps like Uber or Bitaksi. If you must take a taxi, insist on using the meter. For short trips where the meter isn't an option, I suggest checking Uber prices and offering slightly more than that.



WHICH AREAS ARE BEST FOR NIGHTLIFE?

Beyoğlu, Beşiktaş, and Kadıköy are hands down the best areas for nightlife in Istanbul.