

Istanbul

Beneath its inimitable skyline Istanbul is a teeming, triumphant metropolis with imperial history, intrigue and entrepreneurial zeal written into its streets. It's a city constantly being remade and reimagined, and the resulting sense of opportunity and vigour is palpable. From the domes of its mosques to the frantic pace of its traffic, Istanbul is awe-inspiring, unflinchingly and gregariously urban.

Essentials

Get to grips with the basics

- 01 **First impressions:** On a daily basis both men and women greet each other with a kiss to each cheek; male friends will hug. If you're invited into a more traditional home you should kiss the hands of the elderly members.
- 02 **Sharpen your elbows:** You'll notice Istanbul don't wait for passengers to alight from the tram before piling on – so just join the hordes wrestling for the door.
- 03 **Road rage:** Official pedestrian crossings are not the norm so be bold and nimble and establish eye contact with drivers as you cross. In areas such as Cihangir the pavements are patchy, potholed or non-existent.
- 04 **Blown away:** Locals have names for the winds that buffet the city: the Lodos, a southwesterly force, can bring balmy warm currents but also treacherous storms. Another wind, the Poyraz, comes across the Black Sea and can be punishingly cold in winter.
- 05 **Spoons be damned:** Never stir a Turkish coffee: there is a thick sediment at the bottom and you'll end up drinking the sludge.

Hotels

Suite spots and shore things

- 1 **Vault Karakoy, Karakoy**
On-the-money refurb

Once the headquarters of Credit General Ottoman, this palatial site stood empty for years until it was transformed by architect Han Tumertekin, interior designer Sinan Kafadar and boutique hotelier House Hotel.
Bankalar Caddesi 5, Beyoglu
+90 (0)212 244 6434
thehousehotel.com

- 2 **Soho House Istanbul, Pera**
Club class

Rooms feature well-stocked bars, lemons and limes in the fridge and cut-glass shakers and tumblers. All guests can access the club, gym, cinema and two rooftop plunge pools.
Mesrutiyet Caddesi 56, Beyoglu
+90 (0)212 377 7100
sohohouseistanbul.com

- 3 **Sumahan on the Water, Cengelkoy**
Waterside retreat

Book a suite with French doors opening onto the garden and enjoy sunset views of the Bosphorus from your bed.
Kuleli Caddesi 43, Uskudar
+90 (0)216 422 8000
sumahan.com

Food and drink

Smart bites

- 1 **Meze By Lemon Tree, Pera**
Seasonal star

A meal here starts at the chiller cabinet, where chef Gencay Ucock takes you through the seasonal dishes on display. He'll explain everything, from the demographic shifts that brought Black Sea recipes to the city to the history of tea production.
Mesrutiyet Caddesi 83B, Beyoglu
+90 (0)212 252 8302
mezze.com.tr

- 2 **Mikla, Pera**
Room with a view

Turkish-Finnish chef Mehmet Gurs is a visionary; his tasting menu features staples such as crispy *balik ekmek* (anchovies in bread) and *sutlac* (rice pudding) but all made with a twist.
The Marmara Pera, Mesrutiyet Caddesi 15, Beyoglu
+90 (0)212 293 5656
miklarestaurant.com

- 3 **Mandabatmaz, Taksim**
Thick as a brick

This is the place to come for superior Turkish coffee. Mandabatmaz translates to something like "so thick a water buffalo wouldn't sink in it" and this refers to the coffee's smooth texture.
Istiklal Caddesi 1A
mandabatmaz.com.tr

- 4 **Assk Kahve, Kurucesme**
Walking fuel

This is a great place to indulge in a long brunch while watching the light bounce off the Bosphorus. Try the classic breakfast plate or *avokadolu* bruschetta, then walk it off with a stroll down to Bebek.
Kurucesme 64, Besiktas
+90 (0)212 265 4734
asskkahve.com

- 5 **Unter, Karakoy**
Street party

Beneath a heavy canopy of grapevines, Unter's regulars sit at the pedestrianised crossroads of new Karakoy. There are benches in the street for when the space inevitably gets packed.
Karaali Kaptan Sokak 4, Beyoglu
+90 (0)212 244 5151
unter.com.tr

Retail

Flash the cash

- 1 **Mae Zae, Karakoy**
Tempting mishmash

Within wafting distance of Karakoy's coffee machines you will discover Mae Zae, a magpie's nest of eclectic design owned by Munire Alabaz, a woman whose sparkling taste in objects old and new inspired this shop's launch in 2014.
Hoca Tashin Sokak 16A, Beyoglu
+90 (0)212 288 7768

- 2 **290 Square Meters, Galata**
Dutch invasion

After 13 years in Amsterdam, 290 Square Meters opened its Istanbul outpost in late 2013. Proprietor Ali Isitir picks brands that run from Vancouver-based outerwear maker Arc'teryx Veilance to staples such as APC and Sunspel.
Serdar-i Ekrem Caddesi 27A, Beyoglu
+90 (0)212 249 0121
290sqm.com

- 3 **Beymen, Nisantasi**
Elegant retail mecca

This family-run chain of department stores started as a menswear brand in 1971 and emerged as the city's most discerning retailer. Today Beymen has eight stores across Istanbul, including an elegant flagship in Nisantasi.
Nisantasi: Abdi Ipekci Caddesi 23/1, Sisli
+90 (0)212 373 4800
beymen.com

- 4 **Hamm, Nisantasi and Galatasaray**
Teeming with talent

Interior architects Idil Ozbek and Muhammet Tasli, both of Id-Istanbul, have filled their shops with democratic and timeless design accessories that are united by an exuberant sense of fun.
Akkavak Sokak 10/1, Sisli
+90 (0)533 681 9070
hamm.com.tr

Vocabulary

Local lingo

- 01 **Abi:** Brother (friend)
- 02 **Burada:** Here
- 03 **Havalimani:** Airport
- 04 **Hesap:** Bill
- 05 **Lutfen:** Please
- 06 **Merhaba:** Hello
- 07 **Nerede:** Where
- 08 **Tesekkurler:** Thank you
- 09 **Tele:** Turkish lira
- 10 **Vapur:** Ferry



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