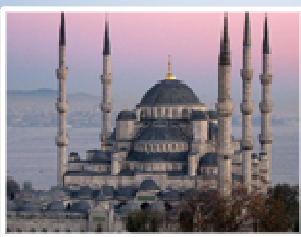


ISTANBUL

Istanbul is the largest city in **Turkey**, largest city proper and second largest metropolitan area in Europe, and fourth largest city proper in the world. Istanbul is also a megacity and the cultural and financial center of Turkey. The city covers 27 districts of the Istanbul province. It is located on the **Bosphorus** Strait and encompasses the natural harbor known as **the Golden Horn**, in the northwest of the country. It extends both on the Europe (Thrace) and on the Asia (Anatolia) side of the Bosphorus, and is thereby the only metropolis in the world that is situated on two continents. The city was chosen as joint European Capital of Culture for 2010. The historic areas of Istanbul were added to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1985.



Hagia Sophia is a former patriarchal basilica, later a mosque, now a museum in **Istanbul**. Famous in particular for its massive dome, it is considered the epitome of **Byzantine architecture**. It was the largest cathedral in the world for nearly a thousand years, until the completion of the Seville Cathedral in 1520. The current building was originally constructed as a church between 532 and 537 A.D. on the orders of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian, and was in fact the third Church of the Holy Wisdom to occupy the site. It was designed by two architects, Isidore of Miletus and Anthemius of Tralles. The Church contained a large collection of holy relics and featured, among other things, a 50 foot (15 m) silver iconostasis.



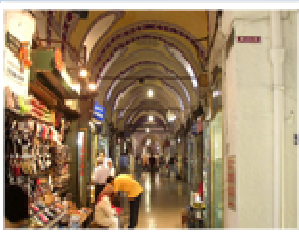
Blue mosque. The Sultan Ahmed Mosque is the national mosque of Turkey, and is a historical mosque in Istanbul. The mosque is one of several mosques known as the Blue Mosque for the blue tiles adorning the walls of its interior. It was built between 1609 and 1616, during the rule of Ahmed I. Like many other mosques, it also comprises a tomb of the founder, a madrasah and a hospice. The Sultan Ahmed Mosque has become one of the most popular tourist attractions in Istanbul.

The Topkapı Palace is a palace which was the official and primary residence in the city of the **Ottoman Sultans**, from 1465 to 1853. The palace was a setting for state occasions and royal entertainments and is a major tourist attraction today. The name directly translates as "Cannon gate Palace", from the palace being named after a nearby, now destroyed, gate. Initial construction started in 1459, ordered by Sultan Mehmed II, the conqueror of Byzantine Constantinople. The palace is a complex made up of four main courtyards and many smaller buildings.



The Dolmabahçe Palace located at the European side of the **Bosphorus**, served as the main administrative center of the Ottoman Empire from 1853 to 1922, apart from a twenty-year interval (1889-1909) in which the Yıldız Palace was used. The design is basically western in style, with elements of Baroque, Rococo and Neo-Classic traditions blended with Ottoman traditional art and culture to form a new approach. Functionally, on the other hand, it is appropriate to the traditional **Ottoman palace** life and also to the Turkish House features. It is the biggest palace in Turkey considering that the area monoblock building occupies 15000 sqm.

The Süleymaniye Mosque is an **Ottoman imperial mosque** located on the Third Hill of Istanbul. It is the second largest mosque in the city, and one of the best-known sights of Istanbul. The design of the Süleymaniye plays on Suleyman's self-conscious representation of himself as a 'second Solomon.' It references the **Dome of the Rock**, which was built on the site of the Temple of Solomon, as well as Justinian's boast upon the completion of the Hagia Sophia: "Solomon, I have surpassed thee!" The Süleymaniye, similar in magnificence to the preceding structures, asserts Suleyman's historical importance. The structure is nevertheless smaller in size than its older archetype, the Hagia Sophia.



The Grand Bazaar in Istanbul is one of the largest covered markets in the world with more than 58 streets, over 1,200 shops, and has between 250,000 and 400,000 visitors daily. It is well known for its jewelry, pottery, spice, and carpet shops. Many of the stalls in the bazaar are grouped by type of goods, with special areas for leather coats, gold jewelry and the like. The bazaar contains two bedestens (domed masonry structures built for storage and safe keeping). The bazaar was vastly enlarged in the 16th century, during the reign of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, and in 1894 underwent a major restoration following an earthquake.

The Galata Tower is located in **Istanbul** to the north of the **Golden Horn**. One of the city's most striking landmarks, it is a huge, cone-capped cylinder that dominates the skyline on the Galata side of the Golden Horn. In the 1960s the original wooden interior of the tower was replaced by a concrete structure and it was opened to the public. There is a restaurant and café on its upper floors which commands a magnificent view of Istanbul and the **Bosphorus**.

The Basilica Cistern is the largest of several hundred ancient cisterns that lie beneath the city of Istanbul. The cistern, located South West of the Hagia Sophia on the historical **peninsula of Sarayburnu**, was built in the 6th century. This cathedral-sized cistern is an underground chamber of 143 metres (470 ft) by 65 metres (210 ft), capable of holding 80,000 cubic metres (2,800,000 cu ft) of water, and covering an area of 9,800 square metres (105,000 sq ft). The large space is broken up by a forest of 336 marble columns each 9 metres (30 ft) high. The columns are arranged in 12 rows each consisting of 28 columns, spaced 4.9 metres (16 ft) apart. The capitals of the columns are mainly Ionic and Corinthian styles, with the exception of a few Doric style with no engravings.

The Golden Horn is an inlet of the Bosphorus dividing the city of **Istanbul** and forming a natural harbor. In 1502 Leonardo da Vinci produced a drawing of a single span 720-foot (240 m) bridge over the Horn as part of a civil engineering project for Sultan Bayezid II. The Bridge will be an exact copy of da Vinci's design, with a width of 8 metres, and a height above the Golden Horn of 24 metres, as shown on his sketches.

DO

- A visit to a hamam (Turkish bath) is an essential part of any trip to Istanbul and is something you'll be sure to repeat before leaving.
- Once upon a time, the narghile, or Turkish water pipe, was the centre of Istanbul's social and political life. Today the locals still consider it one of life's great pleasures and is something interesting to try. Most of the places where you can smoke a hooka are in Yaniceriler Ceaddesi, near the Grand Bazar.

INFORMATION

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