

ISTANBUL

CITY GUIDE

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WELCOME TO THE 3RD ANNUAL ISSUE OF THE VAKKO HOTEL & RESIDENCE ISTANBUL GUIDE BOOK

Welcome to the 3rd annual issue of the Vakko Hotel & Residence Istanbul City Guide! Our Istanbul city guide has been curated exclusively for our distinguished guests providing a thoughtful resource during your stay in our enchanting city. With the opening of Vakko Hotel Sumahan Bosphorus, every effort has been made to create an informative, comprehensive and versatile city guide for each side of Istanbul, meeting all the expectations of our valued guests.

Istanbul is a fast-paced city that can throw you a wonderful curve at every turn. Keeping up with the pace of our historic yet modern and versatile city can be complicated. However, as Istanbulites, we are constantly up for the challenge!

We've made every effort to ensure that all the information we've shared in the Vakko Hotel & Residence Istanbul City Guide is accurate and up-to-date. We would like to apologize in advance if there are any errors as life in Istanbul can change quickly and unexpectedly.

We hope you enjoy Vakko Hotel & Residence, a member of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World, as well as Istanbul; get a chance to experience and discover everything our city has to offer and definitely come back again. One trip is not enough to really understand and appreciate our exciting city built on centuries old history, ever-evolving present and a future that will hopefully be filled with many new developments and changes.

Dear Valued Hotel Guests,

Welcome to Vakko Hotel & Residence, a member of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World!

We began our journey at the beginning of 2023 with Vakko Hotel & Residence Nişantaşı İstanbul, located on the popular Abdi İpekçi Street in the fashionable, trendy and upscale Nişantaşı neighborhood above the Vakko fashion store. The hotel features 31 meticulously and elegantly designed residence suites (2 Studio, 12 Premiere, 16 Signature and The Room) with sizes ranging from 95 m² to 198 m² available for short or long-term stays.

Set in a landmark waterfront property, a 19th-century Ottoman distillery in the idyllic Çengelköy neighborhood on İstanbul's Asian side, Vakko Hotel Sumahan Bosphorus is the most recent addition to our family. With its 12 spacious rooms and suites (5 Rooms Bosphorus, a Suite Bosphorus and 6 Maisonette Bosphorus) that take guests into a world of sophisticated luxury and exclusivity the hotel brings together unmatched luxury and unrivaled Vakko hospitality in an unbeatable location on the Bosphorus. All of our suites are decorated with neutral colors and the minimalist designed suites are fitted with appealing, plush and comfortable furnishings and fixtures. Besides providing all the exclusive amenities and services of a luxurious hotel, we also provide many unique personalized services for our discerning hotel guests.

At our hotels, you can enjoy an excellent dining experience at Vakko L'Atelier, in both Vakko Hotel & Residence Nişantaşı İstanbul and Vakko Hotel Sumahan Bosphorus, which offers selections from French bistro and world cuisines in a sublime atmosphere for breakfast, lunch or dinner. Vakko Hotel Sumahan Bosphorus is also home to Caviar Kaspia, a Parisian institution dubbed the unofficial headquarters for the international style set since its founding in the French capital almost a hundred years ago, as well as Vakko Le Specialità, a magical dining corner by the sea celebrating the rich and diverse culinary heritage of Italy.

During your stay, treat yourself to a soothing and lavish massage or other wellness treatments in-room or at the on-premise deluxe Sanitas Spa and Wellness; work out till you drop at the Vakkorama Gym, equipped with the latest Technogym products and a revolutionary program before relaxing at the sauna or steam room. Finally, after rejuvenating and refreshing your body and soul and savoring the pleasures of a palate-pleasing meal, either visit the Vakko fashion store closest to you or request the assistance of our advisors and stylists for the ultimate personal shopping experience.

It is our great pleasure to host you during your stay in our lovely city and we hope to see you again soon!

Vakko Hotel & Residence Team

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ISTANBUL OVERVIEW

Nearly anything and everything you need to know about Istanbul is explained in detail in the ensuing pages but just a short summary has been prepared with some additional statistics and data.

Istanbul is a major metropolitan city in Türkiye built on 2 continents (Europe and Asia) divided by the Bosphorus strait. At an elevation of 40 m, the total area of the city is 5,343 km².

With a population of approximately 16 million residents as of the end of 2024, Istanbul is one of the world's most populous cities and is the largest city in Europe.

Istanbul has a borderline Mediterranean climate, humid subtropical climate and oceanic climate. Winters are quite cold; spring and fall are usually mild; and summers are hot, humid and sunny. The city is strongly influenced by the Sea of Marmara to the south and the Black Sea to the north.

FROM BYZANTIUM TO ISTANBUL

The city was founded and called Byzantium in the 7th century BCE; in 330 CE Roman Emperor Constantine the Great made it his imperial capital, first renaming it New Rome and then Constantinople after himself. The city served as the imperial capital for almost 1600 years: from the Roman/Byzantine (330–1204) period playing a key role in the advancement of Christianity before its transformation to an Islamic stronghold following the Fall of Constantinople in 1453 CE to the Ottomans (1453–1922). After the Turkish War of Independence in 1923, Ankara replaced the city as the capital of the newly formed Republic of Türkiye. In 1930, the city's name was officially changed to Istanbul.



TOP ISTANBUL DISTRICTS AT A GLIMPSE

Istanbul, the largest metropolitan city in Europe with nearly a population of 16 million inhabitants, is divided into 39 districts 25 with on the European side and 14 on the Asian part.

The districts listed below are the most densely populated and popular ones, offering great occasions for tourists visiting this captivating city.

HISTORICAL PENINSULA, FATİH

BEYAZIT, EMİNÖNÜ, SİRKECİ,
SULTANAHMET

As the word “historic” suggests; this is the district where the story of Istanbul has begun: The mesmerizing Topkapı Palace; the impressive Blue Mosque; the mystical Hagia Sophia; and the breathtaking Basilica Cistern are just some of the must-visit landmarks in the area. Alternatively, visitors can enjoy the magnificent Grand Bazaar, one of the largest covered markets in the world, and the striking Spice Bazaar, offering a sensory experience with its selection of herbs and spices. The locale is also home to great spots for taking a break, such as Pandeli, offering the best of traditional Turkish cuisine, or Hamdi Restaurant, serving some of the best kebabs in the city!

THE GOLDEN HORN, FATİH

FENER, BALAT, EYÜP

The Golden Horn provides a stunning panoramic view of the historical Peninsula and Bosphorus coastline, accompanied by the famous outdoor cafe atop the Pierre Loti Hill in the Eyüp neighborhood. The area is also home to the Santralistanbul Energy Museum, an expansive, multi-purpose complex of exhibition spaces, various eateries, chic cafes, and a university campus.

BEYOĞLU

GALATA, KARAKÖY, TOPHANE;
ASMALIMESCİT, PERA, ŞİŞANE,
TÜNEL; GALATASARAY, ÇUKURCUMA;
CİHANGİR, TAKSİM

Known for its dynamic, bohemian, and artsy crowd, Beyoğlu offers a bit of the best of Istanbul: From the authentic Galata Tower anchoring the Galata locale to the traditional Turkish Hammams, contemporary art museums, galleries, designer boutiques, various culinary options, and vibrant bars; one can never get enough of this district. Also, Galataport is located here on the Karaköy coast, providing immersive experiences of dining, shopping, and culture.

BEŞİKTAŞ

ORTAKÖY, ARNAVUTKÖY, KURUÇEŞME,
BEBEK; AKATLAR, BEŞİKTAŞ, LEVENT,
LEVAZIM, AKARETLER, ETİLER, ULUS

Beşiktaş has some of the most affluent residential neighborhoods in the city, with a few lined up along the Bosphorus shore while others are perched on the district's hilltops. It also hosts some of the city's major financial zones, shopping districts, upscale shopping malls and entertainment venues. Moreover, the area is a haven for food aficionados, art lovers, and music enthusiasts, who can attend concerts from all genres at the state-of-the-art Zorlu Performing Arts Center.

ŞİŞLİ

HARBİYE, MAÇKA, NİŞANTAŞI,
OSMANBEY, TEŞVİKİYE

While Harbiye and Osmanbey are dedicated to bridal shops, merchants, and small retailers, Maçka, Nişantaşı, and Teşvikiye neighborhoods are known for their upscale vibes. Hosting exclusive fashion houses (i.e., Vakko) and flagship stores of international fashion brands such as Louis Vuitton, Prada, and Hermès; the locale is known for its stylish character. Punctuated with voguish eateries, cafes, and bars alongside the both new and restored affluent residential dwellings, it is also home to The Vakko Hotel & Residence. Located right in the center of the action and within walking distance of everything the district offers, The Vakko Hotel & Residence is also a proud member of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World.

SARIYER

RUMELİHISARI, EMİRGAN, YENİKÖY,
İSTİNYE, TARABYA; AYAZAĞA, MASLAK

Sarıyer's Ayazağa and Maslak regions are home to a large group of skyscrapers, contemporary residential projects and commercial complexes; while its other neighborhoods are located on the stretch of the Bosphorus with no tall buildings at all. Infusing a cozier vibe, the waterfront is lined with posh historical yalis and mansions, scattered on both sides of the Bosphorus. The district hosts the Rumelihisarı Fortress Museum and contemporary Sakıp Sabancı Museum as well, with fish restaurants galore, in addition to the luxurious İstinyePark shopping mall a little up the hill from the Bosphorus waterfront.

ASIAN SIDE

KADIKÖY, MODA, SUADIYE, ÜSKÜDAR;
ANADOLU HİSARI, BEYLERBEYİ,
ÇENGELKÖY, KANDİLLİ

Rather less explored, the Asian side of Istanbul is actually home to many venues and attractions worth visiting. Various fish restaurants on the Asian Bosphorus waterfront provide boat shuttle services for customers, making the journey to the Asian side more enjoyable. Inaugurated in 2021, Çamlıca Tower offers observation decks where guests can view the city from the highest point in Istanbul. A bit further inland, Bağdat Caddesi offers a wide range of shopping and dining options in a lively tree-lined verdant residential setting. It is also home to Vakko Hotel Sumahan Bosphorus, set in a landmark waterfront property, a 19th-century Ottoman distillery in the idyllic Çengelköy neighborhood. Vakko Hotel Sumahan Bosphorus combines unmatched luxury and unrivaled Vakko hospitality in an unbeatable location on the Bosphorus.

GETTING TO THE CITY

ISTANBUL AIRPORT

European Side

Istanbul Airport, the new and main international airport serving Istanbul opened in Arnavutköy, (not to be confused with the neighborhood of the same name in the Beşiktaş district), about 39 km from the Taksim city center. Inaugurated on October 29, 2018, all scheduled flights were transferred from Atatürk Airport to Istanbul Airport on April 6, 2019. Atatürk Airport was then permanently closed for scheduled passenger flights.

Currently, Istanbul Airport has one terminal in-service for domestic and international flights with five runways; three main and two backups. The terminal has a total of five concourses with 143 passenger boarding bridges. From April 2019 until October 2022, the airport handled over 160 million passengers with more than 1 million flights to 262 global destinations. It is also home to 201 retail shops and 85 food and beverage outlets, a luxury airport hotel and other amenities for discerning inbound/outbound or transit passengers.

ISTANBUL AIRPORT



TAXI

Available 7/24; three types of taxis are utilized to transport passengers to the city: Black (sedan or van) "E" type; Turquoise "D" type and Orange "C" type. The orange cabs are readily available and lined up at the exit of the International Terminal and all have (must) a taximeter. The orange cabs charge the same opening rate, and with a rate charged for every kilometer thereafter. The only extra fee passengers should pay upon reaching their designated destination are applicable road tolls or bridge tolls. Tipping is not required; however, appreciated. Also, other taxis with larger trunk space and higher passenger capacity are available for the upmarket segment. As such, taxis in these categories have higher fares: turquoise taxis are 15% higher, while the black luxury taxis cost 70% higher than the standard orange taxi fares.

For detailed information:
www.istairport.com/en or
www.havalimanitaksi.com.tr



BUS & METRO

The commute to Istanbul Airport from the city is available by public (IETT) buses and HAVAIST (www.havaist.com), a privately owned shuttle bus company charging flat rate/person. The airport is linked to the lines of the Istanbul Metro system.

SABİHA GÖKÇEN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Asian Side

Located 32 kms from the city center in the Pendik district on the Asian side of the city, Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen International Airport primarily serves domestic flights with a more limited number of international airline carriers with scheduled flights.

(www.sabihagokcen.aero)

SABİHA GÖKÇEN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT



TAXI, HAVAIST SHUTTLE, PUBLIC BUS & METRO

Only the standard "yellow or orange" taxis drive to this airport and are located in front of the terminal. Please note to use the ones with taxi meters.

Recently HAVAIST (www.havaist/en) also serves passengers arriving/departing the airport with stops in Kadıköy (Asian side) and Taksim (European side), charging flat rate/person.

Alternatively, visit the airport's website for more information on the public bus routes run by Metropolitan Municipality of Istanbul.

As of 2025, the airport is also linked to the lines of the Istanbul Metro system.

GETTING AROUND THE CITY

TAXIS

The easiest way to get around the city is by taxi. However, there are only 17,395 registered taxi plates in Istanbul. Therefore, it might be difficult catching one in some of the more populated historical parts of the city, during rush hour or during “taxi driver rotations” (usually between 2:00pm–4:00pm when one driver goes off-duty and the other takes over). Please beware of the taxis that do not have a taximeter. There is an initial opening rate, and a rate is charged for every kilometer thereafter. The rates vary for yellow, turquoise and black cabs and are revised according to inflation rates.

There is also a flat “hop on– hop off” rate, which must be paid even if the taximeter shows a lower amount. Although appreciated, tipping is not required. When needed, the cost on the taximeter upon disembarking is rounded up to the TL (Turkish Lira). The only extra amount passengers have to add to the price on the taximeter are road or bridge tolls.

CARS

Renting a car in Istanbul is not advised as visitors might find it hard to get around the city, while parking is also a problem. Preferably, it is best to hire a car with a driver. The concierge at the Vakko Hotel & Residence is happy to assist guests upon request.

METRO

Istanbul’s metro system is limited compared to other metropolitan cities in Europe or the U.S., but it has been progressing as the construction of new rail lines continue. The concierge at the Vakko Hotel & Residence can assist guests in planning their route and transportation via the Metro system if it is feasible for that destination.

BUSES

Buses and metrobus are particularly popular among visitors but the bus system can be overwhelming and complicated to understand. Therefore, the concierge at the Vakko Hotel & Residence would be pleased to assist guests when needed.

WHAT IS AN ISTANBULKART?

Issued by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, Istanbulkart, or Istanbul Card is a multi-purpose transportation (bus, metro, metrobus, ferry, funicular and trams) boarding pass. The pre-paid, contact-free, reloadable, credit card-sized smart card has been in use since 2009 and is required for public transportation since cash is not accepted, while tokens are also rarely accepted on most modes of transportation. The card can be obtained at the airports, from vending machines at metro stations, most supermarkets, and other points throughout the city. A one-time-only non-refundable fee is paid for the standard (no photo-id) Istanbulkart, which can be shared by a maximum of five passengers. After each use at the point of transaction; passengers can check and see the balance left on the card. If the machine alerts “yetersiz bakiye – insufficient funds”; one must reload the card. Any amount of your choice can be loaded at most newsstands and small shops too.

LET'S GET STARTED

CURRENCY, BANKS & ATMS, FOREIGN EXCHANGE BUREAUS, CREDIT CARDS & TAX-FREE SHOPPING

The TL (Turkish Lira; symbol ₺) is the official currency of Türkiye and the ISO code is TRY. Banknote denominations are ₺5; ₺10; ₺20; ₺50; ₺100; and ₺200; and coin (*kuruş*) denominations are 5kr; 10kr; 25kr; 50kr and ₺1.

As of March 2024, there are 57 **banks** in Türkiye offering all sorts of services for individuals and corporations. Three of them are state-owned deposit banks (Ziraat, Halkbank, VakıfBank), while a few are privately-owned (Akbank, İş Bankası, Yapı Kredi, etc.), while the others are foreign deposit banks (Garanti BBVA, QNB, HSBC, etc). Providing branches and **ATMs** throughout the city, all are open Monday–Friday 9:00am–12:30pm and 1:30pm–5:00pm. Most ATMs allow for withdrawals and deposits of major foreign currencies (USD, Euro, etc.) and from major credit cards (Visa and Mastercard). Please note some might charge an international fee for the transactions.

The best rates for exchanging foreign currency to TL are offered at **Foreign Exchange Bureaus** with storefronts clearly marked as **Döviz Büro**. When exchanging FX to TL, visitors should check the column dubbed '**Satış**', while '**Alış**' column must be checked when exchanging TL to FX. It must

be noted that the FX Bureaus at shopping malls do not offer the most convenient rates. Only those with street-front bureaus offer better rates for exchanges. Banks are also an alternative; however they offer lower rates and might require a queue.

When in Istanbul, using plastic to make payments is usually the best option. It is recommended to have at least two **credit cards** during your stay in Istanbul. Mastercard and Visa cards are widely available at most places, while American Express and Diners Club cards are rarely accepted. It is also advised to have a small amount of cash handy, to purchase less costly items or to use for the tips.

Tax-Free shopping usually works the same way in all countries. To qualify for a tax refund based on your expenditures; visitors should ask the store staff to prepare a Tax-Free form during the purchase. At the airport or other ports of departure, one can visit the Customs Desk to validate the completed tax-free form along with their passport, receipts and purchases. All goods purchased must be unused and available for inspection along with the original receipts. Once the form is stamped, one should go to the nearby desk or office of the tax-free company to obtain their cash refund.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Turkcell, Vodafone and Türk Telekom are three main telecommunications operators in Türkiye, all providing 2G, 3G and 4G high-speed internet services. Turkcell is the largest operator in the country with the best network coverage.

Free Wi-Fi is available at the airports, hotels and major shopping malls while the Metropolitan Municipality of Istanbul provides free Wi-Fi access (ibbWifi) too. Majority of restaurants and cafes all over the city also allow for free Wi-Fi access.

PHARMACIES

Called '**Eczane**' in Turkish, pharmacies are open Monday–Saturday from 9:00am–7:00pm. On Sundays, a certain number of pharmacies are assigned as **Nöbetçi** (on call) from Sunday 9:00am to 9:00am on Monday to handle emergency healthcare requests. All pharmacies post the name/address of the closest on-call pharmacy in the neighborhood on their storefronts.

CALL CENTER TO REPORT EMERGENCIES

According to a directive issued by the Ministry of the Interior; as of 2022 all emergencies have been collected under a single call-center number: **112**. This includes the Police, Fire, Coast Guard, Ambulance, AFAD (Disasters & Emergencies Management), and many others. The line operates 24/7; however, an English-speaking representative might not be available at all times. The number can be called directly from any mobile phone without having to enter the area code pleased to assist guests when needed.

NATIONAL HOLIDAYS & OBSERVANCE

The following is a list of the national holidays & Observance Day in Türkiye in 2025. Only the dates of religious holidays (Ramadan and Sacrifice of the Feast) change annually.

HOLIDAY	DATES
New Year's Day	January 1
Ramadan Holiday	March 30–April 1
National Sovereignty & Children's Day	April 23
Labor and Solidarity Day	May 1
Commemoration of Atatürk, Youth & Sports Day	May 19
Sacrifice of the Feast Holiday (Kurban Bayramı)	June 6–9
Democracy and National Unity Day	July 15
Victory Day	August 30
Republic Day	October 29
Atatürk Memorial Day (Observance)	November 10



HISTORICAL SIGHTS & BAZAARS



MOSQUES

Istanbul is home to over 3,000 mosques. The most impressive and imposing mosques were built during the Ottoman period by some of the best Ottoman architects and considered as exquisite examples of classic Ottoman architecture. There is one exception with the Hagia Sofia Mosque, which was built during the Byzantine period as a church and converted to a mosque after the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans.

The mosques built by the sultans were so much more than a mosque: They were called *külliye* or multi-purpose complex. Adjacent to almost all the mosques in the Old City, annex buildings were built, housing religious schools, hospitals and markets. The following mosques are prime examples of these sprawling houses of worship of the Muslim world in Istanbul.

All visitors, Muslims and non-Muslims alike are permitted to visit the historic mosques in Istanbul. However, visitors must follow some rules during their time in mosques: Guests should not enter a mosque during prayer times (5 times daily) especially during the noon prayer services on Fridays. One should dress modestly and shoulders should be covered (no tank tops). Shorts should be below the knee and women should cover their hair with a scarf. Visitors should remove their shoes before entering the mosque; you can leave them at the entrance (not recommended) or carry them in a bag. Eating or talking loudly on the phone or to others is not permitted as silence is of the essence of the worship. Taking photographs is permitted as long as you don't capture the prayers. Entrance to mosques is free, however, donations are appreciated.

HAGIA SOPHIA MOSQUE

Ayasofya Square Sultanahmet, Fatih

Hagia Sophia is the world's oldest cathedral. It was built in a mere 5 years and is gracefully situated on the first of the 7 hills in Ancient Constantinople at the tip of the historical peninsula, surrounded on 3 sides by the Marmara Sea, Bosphorus Strait and the Golden Horn. It was the largest and first Christian Cathedral in Constantinople and among the first to have a pendentive dome with monolithic marble columns and unparalleled mosaics. The embodiment of Byzantine architecture that changed the history of architecture, Hagia Sophia (Ayasofya in Turkish), formally called the Church of the Holy Wisdom was built on the order of Eastern Roman Emperor Justinian I. It was designed by Greek geometricians Anthemius of Tralles and Isidore of Miletus in 532 which was completed and opened for worship in 537 with great fanfare. After the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Empire in 1453, Hagia Sofia was converted to an imperial mosque by Mehmed the Conqueror and became the primary mosque in Istanbul until the 1616 construction of Sultanahmet (Blue) Mosque. During the reign of numerous sultans, Hagia Sophia was transformed into a major complex with the addition of 4 minarets, minbar (pulpit), mihrab (a niche in the wall of a mosque that indicates the direction of Mecca towards which the congregation faces to pray), rostrum (raised platform) şadırvan (fountains built in the courtyard providing drinking water or water used for ritual ablutions), madrasa (school), library, soup kitchen and Sultan's office. It was decorated with refined examples from Turkish art such as calligraphy and tiles. The mosque also went through other renovations during the reign of Murad III (1574-1595) which was undertaken by Mimar Sinan (the most prominent architect during the Ottoman period) to

reinforce the domes and walls that had repeatedly collapsed due to earthquakes during the Eastern Roman period. The magnificent complex, which also includes the mausoleums of five sultans and their families situated in the exterior areas, remained a mosque until 1931. Afterwards it was closed to the public for 4 years and then re-opened in 1935 as a museum under the auspices of the Republic of Türkiye, founded on October 29, 1923 by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. In July 2020, with the annulment of the 1934 decree that established Hagia Sophia as a museum. Hagia Sofia once again re-opened as a house of worship for Muslims. Today, it remains open to visitors from all around the world under its new status.

ORTAKÖY MOSQUE

Mecidiye Köprüsü Sokak No.1 Ortaköy, Beşiktaş

Commonly referred to as Ortaköy Mosque, Büyük Mecidiye Camii, is located on the Bosphorus waterfront at pier square in Ortaköy, a highly popular lively site for Turks and tourists alike. The construction of the mosque was commissioned during the reign of Abdülmecid I (1839-1861), the 31st Ottoman Sultan and it was completed circa 1854 - 1856. The architects were the prominent Armenian descent father and son team Garabet and Nikos Balyan, who were also the architects of the nearby Dolmabahçe Palace. The mosque has long been a symbol of Ortaköy and one of the most photographed with the Bosphorus. Relatively small compared to the mosques along the Golden Horn, the single-domed mosque has a façade with embedded columns decorated with carved stone relics, two rows of windows to illuminate the interior, and two slender minarets with balconies, resembling Corinthian-style columns. The mosque was designed with and includes accents from contemporary European Revivalism or neo-classical architecture and some elements from Ottoman baroque architecture.

RÜSTEM PASHA MOSQUE

Hasircılar Caddesi No.62 Tahtakale, Fatih

Located steps from the Spice (Egyptian) Bazaar in Eminönü, Rüstem Pasha Mosque was named after Rüstem Pasha (1500-1561) who served as the Grand Vizier (1544-1553 and 1555-1561) to Sultan Süleyman I, commonly known as Süleyman the Magnificent (1494-1566), the tenth and longest reigning (1520-1566) Sultan of the Ottoman Empire. Also, Rüstem Pasha was the Sultan's son-in-law and married to Mihrimah Sultan, one of his daughters. Known as one of the most influential and successful Grand Viziers of the Ottoman Empire, he amassed great wealth, and significantly contributed his own funds to the development of the state. Rüstem Pasha funded and commissioned numerous important structures from religious schools and mosques to covered bazaars, baths and more. His wish to construct a final mosque was fulfilled by Süleyman I, who authorized the project after the Grand Vizier's death. The project was assigned to the Ottoman chief imperial architect Mimar Sinan. Built between 1561 and 1563, this mosque was unique compared to others designed by the prominent architect and the interior was lavishly decorated with İznik ceramic tiles. The mosque was re-opened for worship in 2021 after extensive restorations.

SÜLEYMANİYE MOSQUE

Prof. Siddik Sami Onar Caddesi No.1

Süleymaniye, Fatih

Located on the third hill that Ancient Constantinople was founded on, offering a commanding panoramic view of the city around the Golden Horn, Süleymaniye Mosque was commissioned by Sultan Süleyman I, known as Süleyman the Magnificent to be built as a tribute to the Sultan by the legendary Mimar Sinan, the imperial Ottoman architect. The mosque was built between 1550 and 1557.

ARCHITECT SİNAN

Architect (Mimar in Turkish) (circa 1488–1490;–1588), the chief Ottoman architect and civil engineer to Süleyman the Magnificent, Selim II and Murad III was referred to as the “Grand Architect” or “Grand Sinan”. He was the most celebrated of all Ottoman architects and is said to be the greatest architect of classic Ottoman architecture (1453–mid 16th century). Mimar Sinan spearheaded the construction of more than 300 exceptional structures and complexes (mosques, palaces, schools, public baths, tombs, religious schools etc.).

The son of Greek or Armenian Christian parents (not completely known), Sinan was born in a small town called Ağırnas near the city of Kayseri in Central Anatolia. First, Sinan entered his father’s trade as a stone mason and carpenter. In 1512, he was sent to Constantinople to be trained as an officer at the Janissary Corps. Sinan, whose Christian name was Joseph, converted to Islam. After a period of schooling and rigorous training, he became a military engineer. He then quickly rose through the ranks to first become an officer and finally promoted to a Janissary commander. He continuously improved his skills when he was the Janissary and became an expert at constructing all types of fortifications. He also worked on military infrastructure projects such as roads, bridges, aqueducts, and more. At the age of 50 he was appointed the chief royal architect and remained in this post for nearly 50 years until his death. The architect headed a vast governmental department and was responsible for training those under his command, who in turn, became distinguished architects themselves. For example, one of his apprentices, Sedefkâr Mehmed Agha, was the architect of the Sultanahmet Mosque. Mimar Sinan’s most famous work is the Süleymaniye Mosque (1550–1557) in Istanbul, however, the Selimiye Mosque Complex (1568–1575) in the city of Edirne in the Thrace Region is considered his masterpiece. The works of Mimar Sinan are among the most noteworthy structures in history.

With its staggering size, elegantly decorated interior includes a central dome standing 47m high, emphasized with supporting semi-domes to the northwest and southeast, and the monumental arched spaces to the southwest and northeast. Other major features include a grandiose courtyard with marble, granite and porphyry columns, and four minarets situated in the four corners of the courtyard. With all these glorious details, the mosque is recognized as one of Mimar Sinan’s masterpieces. It is also one of the most valued structures from the Ottoman Period. There is also an enclosure containing the separate mausoleums of Süleyman the Magnificent and his wife Hürrem Sultan (1502–1558: one of the most influential and powerful women in Ottoman history) behind the qibla (the direction towards the Kaaba in the Sacred Mosque in Mecca) wall at the mosque. Unfortunately, Süleymaniye Mosque was damaged by a major fire in 1660 and restored by Sultan Mehmed IV (reign 1648–1687). Later, part of the dome collapsed during the earthquake of 1766 and subsequent repairs impacted the original features instilled by Mimar Sinan. Additionally, the courtyard was used as a weapons depot during World War I and the mosque suffered another fire after some of the ammunition ignited. The damaged mosque was not fully restored until 1956. For 462 years, it was considered as the largest mosque in the city. However, built in 2019 Çamlıca Mosque surpassed it with a capacity for 63,000 worshippers. The mosque is located on the Çamlıca hilltop overlooking the Bosphorus strait and visible from much of the center of the city on the Asian side of the city in Üsküdar.

SULTANAHMET (BLUE) MOSQUE

Atmeydanı Caddesi No.7 Sultanahmet, Fatih

Dominating Istanbul’s imposing skyline, the Sultanahmet Mosque, or commonly acknowledged as the Blue Mosque is an elegant masterpiece with towering domes and six slender tall minarets. The Ottoman period imperial mosque was built between 1609 and 1616. It is majestically situated in Sultanahmet Square steps away from the Hagia Sofia mosque. It was commissioned by Ahmed I during his reign from 1603 until his untimely death at the young age of 27 in 1617. The name of the awe-inspiring Blue Mosque comes from the interior walls that are almost entirely adorned with handmade blue İznik ceramic tiles. In the evenings, the mosque is bathed in blue from the lights that frame the mosque’s five main domes, six minarets and eight secondary domes.

After the devastating loss by the Ottomans in the 1603–1618 war with Persia, Sultan Ahmed I decided to build a sizable mosque in Istanbul to reassert Ottoman supremacy. The Blue Mosque was built at the site of the palace of the Byzantine Emperors, in front of the Hagia Sofia and the hippodrome, which had a significant symbolic meaning as it dominated the city skyline from the south. Also, major portions of the southern side of the mosque rest on the foundations and arch of the old Grand Palace. Considered the last great mosque of Ottoman architecture, Sedefkâr Mehmed Ağa, the architect of the project applied the ideas of his master and teacher Mimar Sinan and successfully integrated Byzantine and Islamic architectural styles in his design.

The exquisite interior of the mosque is decorated with more than 20,000 handmade İznik ceramic tiles with more than 50 different tulip designs. It is illuminated with natural light via the intricately designed 20 stained glass windows, and chandeliers that are added today.

The *mihrab*, (a niche in the wall of a mosque that indicates the qibla, or the direction of the Kaaba in Mecca) was made with finely carved and sculptured marble. Next to the mihrab there is the attractively decorated *minbar* or pulpit. Typical to all grand imperial mosques, it has a grand courtyard with a large fountain and special area for ablution. Each semi-dome has 14 windows and the central dome 28 (four of which are blind windows). The stained glass used for the windows was a gift to the Sultan from the Signoria of Venice. The complex or *külliye* contains Sultan Ahmed's tomb, a madrasa (school) and infirmary. The compelling, majestic and towering mosque includes so many more features to discover and see during your visit.

YENİ (NEW) MOSQUE

Yeni Cami Caddesi No. 3, Eminönü, Fatih

The Yeni (New) Mosque was the first mosque commissioned to be built by a woman: Safiye Sultan (1550–1621), who was the wife of Sultan Murad III (reign 1574–1595) and the mother of Mehmed III who ascended to the throne upon the death of his father in 1595 and reigned until his death in 1603 at the age of 37. In her capacity as Valide Sultan (Queen Mother), she ordered the construction of the mosque in 1597, to be named Valide Sultan Mosque. The first architect of the project was Davut Ağa, an apprentice of the great Ottoman imperial architect Mimar Sinan. Upon his death in 1599, he was replaced by Dalgıç Ahmed Çavuş (died 1608, birth unknown). However, due to political discord, financial issues and the Janissaries' resentment of her growing political power, Valide Sultan was forced to abandon the project upon her son's death in 1603. Ahmed I, the new Sultan, had no interest in continuing the project after Valide Sultan was relegated to the Harem. Thus, the built structure that had

fallen into ruins was further damaged severely during the Great Fire of 1660. Later that year imperial architect Mustafa Ağa suggested that Valide Sultan Turhan Hatice (1627–1683), the mother of Sultan Mehmed IV (reign 1648–1687), also called Mehmed the Hunter complete the project as an act of respect for Safiye Sultan. She agreed and also ordered the construction of the nearby Spice Bazaar (then called Valide Bazaar), which became part of the *külliye* (complex) of the New Valide Sultan Mosque, later to be just called the New Mosque. Construction began in the last months of 1660 and the mosque was completed in 1663. The mosque welcomed worshippers in 1665. Yeni Mosque has 66 domes and semi-domes arranged resembling a pyramid with two minarets. The interior is supported with four large piers in the center and with colonnades of slender marble columns connected with arches on the sides and rear. It is further decorated with blue, green and white ceramic İznik tiles. The mihrab is adorned with gilded stalactites and the minbar (pulpit) has a conical canopy with slender marble columns. Further additions were made to the mosque in the 1700s and 1800s. As with all imperial mosques at the time, it was designed as a *külliye* or multi-purpose complex with adjacent structures that included an infirmary, primary school and the mausoleums of Valide Sultan Turhan, her son Mehmed IV as well as five later sultans and numerous members of the court.



Sultanahmet (Blue) Mosque

PALACES

While in rule, the Ottomans built a number of spacious and lavishly decorated palaces in some of the most beautiful areas of the city, mainly along the Bosphorus Strait. As the primary or summer residences of the Sultans, the palaces included sections to accommodate visiting heads of states and handle governmental affairs.

All the palaces listed below are truly amazing examples of architectural designs from the Ottoman period. Today, as palaces-museums, they attract visitors from other parts of Türkiye as well as all around the world.

BEYLERBEYİ PALACE

Abdullah Ağa Caddesi No.12 Beylerbeyi, Üsküdar
Tel: (0216) 321 93 20; www.millisaraylar.gov.tr
Visiting Hours: Tuesday–Sunday 9:00am–6:00pm.
Box Office closes at 5:30pm. Closed on Mondays.

Located on the Bosphorus shoreline on the Asian side of the city in Beylerbeyi, this lovely palace was built as an imperial Ottoman summer residence and commissioned by Sultan Abdülaziz, who reigned as the 32nd Sultan between 1861–1876 before being dethroned after a coup d'état. Designed in the Second Empire style by Sarkis Balyan (1835–1899) an esteemed Ottoman architect of Armenian descent, it was relatively modest in design compared to that of Dolmabahçe Palace, designed by other members of the Balyan family. Built between 1863 and 1865 the commanding palace includes the main building housing the Mabeyn (administrative offices), Harem (Sultan's residence), and garden pavilions. The 3-story palace including the basement has 24 rooms and 6 halls. The interior floors are covered with Egyptian-made reed matting for insulation and exquisite Turkish Hereke carpets. The

ceilings are adorned with French Baccarat crystal chandeliers and the interior further decorated with porcelain vases (produced in Türkiye, China, Japan, France and Germany), among other valuable objects and collectibles. Considered one of the most prestigious structures of the 19th century, the 70,000 m² verdant gardens are connected to each other with ramps and tiered steps. The magnolia and chestnut trees in the imperial garden, linden trees in the Harem garden, and the judas trees as symbols of the Bosphorus located in the terraced gardens, were planted during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876–1909). Alas, the opulent summer residence was also where deposed Sultan Abdülhamid II was held in captivity from 1912 until his death in 1918. The palace was also used to entertain visiting heads of state such as Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria and King of Hungary (1869), Empress Eugénie of France on her way to the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, and German Emperor Wilhelm II among many other distinguished guests. The Yellow, Marble, Stable and Marine Pavilions surrounding the gardens are closed to visitors.

DOLMABAHÇE PALACE

Dolmabahçe Caddesi Vişnezade, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 259 32 92; www.millisaraylar.com.tr
Visiting Hours: Tuesday–Sunday 9:00am–6:00pm.
Box Office closes at 5:30pm. Closed on Mondays.

The monumental landmark Dolmabahçe Palace, preserving its original furnishings and décor, opened to the public as a palace-museum in 1984. Besides the palace, the complex includes the Apartment of the Crown Prince (residence of the heirs to the throne) now housing the National Palaces Paintings Museum, a Clock Tower, Departures Kiosk as well as a glass factory, foundry, aviary and stables. The site of Dolmabahçe was originally a bay on the Bosphorus strait and was used as a dock by the Ottoman fleet. It was

then gradually reclaimed by the Ottoman sultans during the 18th century and converted to an imperial garden. Hence, the garden was named Dolmabahçe (dolma meaning “filled-in” and bahçe meaning garden). During the 18th and 19th century, various small summer residences and wood pavilions were built at the site and the collective complex was called “Beşiktaş Waterfront Palace”. Deeming that this complex was impractical, Abdülmecid I (reign 1839–1861), the 31st Sultan of the Ottoman Empire had it demolished and ordered the construction of Dolmabahçe Palace. Built between 1843–1856, the palace was designed and spearheaded by the noted Armenian descent Ottoman architect Garabet Balyan and his son Nikoğos Balyan. While a traditional Turkish household layout was preserved, Baroque, Rococo and neoclassical designs were widely used combined with traditional Ottoman architectural designs. At the time, the sultan and his family were residing at Topkapı Palace and he decided to build a new modern palace because Topkapı was lacking the contemporary style, luxury and comforts that the European monarchs had. A monobloc structure, the colossal and breathtaking 45,000 m² Dolmabahçe is the largest palace in Türkiye with a total of 285 rooms, 44 halls, 68 bathrooms and 4 Turkish baths. The 2-story main structure with an attic and basement is divided into 3 sections: the southern wing which contained the quarters reserved for the men and administrative section (Mabeyn), northern wing serving as the private residence of the Sultan and his family (Harem). Both wings were separated with the 2,000 m² Grand Ceremonial Hall with a 36-meter-high dome, where the Sultan conducted official ceremonies or received state notables, foreign dignitaries or diplomats. The Harem included 8 interconnected apartments, each with its own bathroom for the wives of the sultan, his concubines and his mother. The palace is decorated with spectacular

Hereke carpets and has the largest collection of French Baccarat crystal chandeliers in the world. It features French Sèvres and Turkish brand Yıldız porcelain objects, paintings by Western artists received as gifts from world state leaders, and 14 tons of gold which was used to gild the ceilings. Dolmabahçe Palace is also home to the famous U-shaped Crystal Staircase built with Baccarat crystal, brass and mahogany. In 2014 the National Palaces Painting Museum opened at the Crown Prince Residence at the palace. It contains about 200 paintings from the Palace's collection of 19th century works by Turkish and international artists such as Gustave Boulanger, Fausto Zonaro and Osman Hamdi Bey among many other great painters of their time. The palace was inhabited by six sultans from 1856 until the abolition of the Caliphate in 1924. With a law that went into effect on March 3, 1924, the palace was transferred to the Republic of Türkiye, founded on October 29, 1923 by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Atatürk, the first president of the new republic, used Dolmabahçe Palace as his presidential residence from 1927 until 1938. Atatürk's health was weakened in 1937 and he spent the last days of his life at this palace where he passed away on November 10, 1938.



Topkapı Palace

TOPKAPI PALACE

Babı Hümayun Caddesi No. 1 Sultanahmet, Fatih

Tel: (0212) 512 04 80; www.millisaraylar.gov.tr

Visiting Hours: Monday, Wednesday–Sunday 9:00am–6:00pm. Box Office closes at 5:30pm.

Closed on Tuesdays.

The astounding Topkapı Palace was built on 700,000 square meters of land in the Historic Peninsula on the Seraglio Point (Sarayburnu) surrounded by the Golden Horn bay, Bosphorus Strait and Marmara Sea. Previously, the site of the palace was the location of the Eastern Roman acropolis of Byzantium. Following the conquest of Istanbul by Sultan Mehmed II, referred to as Mehmed the Conqueror (reign 1444–1445; 1451–1481) on May 29, 1453, the Sultan ordered the construction of the Topkapı Palace which began in 1460 and completed in 1478. Over the centuries, modifications and annexes were added to the complex creating the palace complex as we know it today. At first, it was named the “New Royal Palace” to distinguish it from an earlier palace built in Beyazıt, but later the name changed to “Top Kapısı” Palace after the “Toplu Kapı” (Cannon Gate) pavilion. For nearly four centuries Topkapı Palace remained the official residence, center of the government, education system and as the arts center of the Ottoman Empire until the mid-19th century. By the 1840s the palace became inadequate for the requirements of state protocol and Dolmabahçe Palace was built (1843–1856) as the new official residence and administrative center of the Ottoman Empire. However, Topkapı Palace continued to retain its historical and symbolic importance. After the Ottoman Empire was overthrown in 1923, Topkapı Palace was converted to a museum. The new status was based on a government decree dated April 3, 1924 after the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk on October 29, 1923. Today, the palace and grounds extend on a 350,000 m² area after Gülhane Park became a public park and is no longer a part of the palace gardens. Topkapı Palace is one of the largest palace-museums in the world with its historic structures, large courtyards surrounded with colonnades, fountains and ponds, private collections and more than 300,000 records and documents in its archives. The Palace is divided into 4 sections: Outer Palace (service buildings and guard posts), State Council Building (administrative center of the Empire), Palace School, and the Harem, the sultan’s private residence. The massive palace complex has hundreds of rooms and chambers with only the most important ones being accessible to the public. The museum’s vast collection includes Ottoman clothing, weapons, armor, miniatures, religious relics and the Topkapı Manuscript or Topkapı Quran, an early manuscript of the Quran dating back to the early 2nd century AH (Anno Hegirae, in the year of the hijra) among many other valuable and precious collectibles. The most noteworthy objects to see “up-close” are the Kaşıkçı Elması (literally translated as spoon maker’s diamond) and the mid-18th century emerald studded curved dagger, or jambiya– simply called the “Topkapı Dagger”.

OTHER HISTORICAL SIGHTS

MAIDEN'S TOWER

Bosphorus Strait, Salacak Üsküdar
Tel: (0216) 342 47 47; www.kizkulesi.com.tr

The enchanting Maiden's Tower (Kız Kulesi) is located on a small islet 200 meters off the coast of Üsküdar, a district on the Asian side of the city, at the southern entrance of the Bosphorus strait. There are many myths on why the tower was named as such and exactly when. In short, the original Maiden's Tower, made of wood with a stone wall for protection, was built during the Byzantine Period by Alexios I Komnenos, who reigned between 1081–1118. From the Tower an iron chain was stretched to another tower on the European Shore at Mangana, a quarter in Constantinople on the easternmost edge of the neighborhood called Sirkeci in the old city. The islet was connected to the Asian shore via a defense wall, whose underwater remains are still visible today. During the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453, the Tower was used as a Byzantine barracks. Subsequently, the Maiden's Tower was used as a watchtower during the reign of Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror. The tower went through some damages and deconstruction during its history. It was first destroyed during the earthquake of 1509. After it was rebuilt, a fire damaged the tower once again in 1721. After it was repaired (1731, 1734) and erected—this time with a stone structure—it was used as a lighthouse until 1763. During the reign of Sultan Mahmud II (1808–1839) the tower was used as an incarceration post from 1829 to 1832 after once again being restored by the Sultan. In the ensuing years, the tower was again restored in

1945 and 1998. It is accessible via boat services provided by the Maiden's Tower from the Üsküdar Salacak port or Kabataş port on the European side of the city.

PIERRE LOTI HILL

Karyağdı Sokak No.20, Eyüpsultan
Tel: (0212) 497 13 13; www.pierrelotitepesi.com

After taking a short cable car ride (some prefer to walk up the hill) up to the Pierre Loti hill, you will be confronted with an amazing and breathtaking panoramic view of the Golden Horn, Bosphorus strait, Marmara Sea and Galata Tower to the Sülemaniye Mosque. The magnificent spot even offers a sight of the Princes' Islands on a clear day. Why is it called the Pierre Loti hill? Julien Viaud (1850–1923), nom de plume Pierre Loti, was a French naval officer and novelist, the best creative writer of his time. He first came to Istanbul in 1876 and then around 1919 simply because he fell in love with the city and was fascinated with Ottoman culture. In fact, he was officially received by Sultan Mehmed V (reign 1909–1918) on one of his visits. In 1879, Pierre Loti published his first book *Aziyadé* (published anonymously), part romance novel and part autobiography which he wrote during his free time in Istanbul at a coffeehouse called "Rabia Kadın Kahvesi" (Rabia's Woman Coffeehouse). It was later renamed the Pierre Loti cafe after the new parliament sent him a message of gratitude for his support of the Turkish War of Independence. Stop by one of the modest cafes for beverages or a light snack or shop at one of the typical souvenir shops stretching along the hillside after getting over being mesmerized by the incredible view.

HISTORICAL BAZAARS

EGYPTIAN (SPICE) BAZAAR

Mısır Çarşısı No: 92 Eminönü, Fatih
Tel: (0212) 513 65 97; www.misircarsisi.org.tr/en
Open weekdays 8:00am–7:00pm; Saturday 8:00am–7:30pm; Sunday 9:30am–7:00pm.
The bazaar is open from 9:30am–7:00pm on January 1 and is closed on all Muslim religious holidays and October 29 Republic Day of Türkiye

The Egyptian (or Spice) Bazaar is located in Eminönü, a short distance from the Galata bridge and behind the Yeni (New) Mosque and adjacent to the Flower Market. Opened in 1664, and then called the Valide (Queen Mother) Bazaar (after Turhan Hatice Sultan who ordered the construction of the New Mosque), the structure is part of the New Mosque complex and the rents collected from shops at the bazaar were used for the upkeep and maintenance of the mosque. Subsequently it was called the Egyptian (Mısır) Bazaar as most of the spices sold were imported from Egypt. It is one of the largest covered bazaars in Istanbul and has six gates. The lively and versatile bazaar with its arcade roofed streets, a legacy from classic Ottoman architecture, hosts a total of 85 shops offering a wide range of products from herbs & spices, dried fruits and nuts, Turkish cheeses and deli meats, Turkish coffee, Turkish delights (lokum) and other sweets to souvenirs, jewelry, handicrafts and textiles. The Egyptian Bazaar was last restored between 2013–2018 by the General Directorate of Foundations.

GRAND BAZAAR

Kalpakçılar Caddesi No.22 Beyazıt, Fatih
Tel: (0212) 519 12 48
Visiting hours: Monday–Saturday 9:00am–7:00pm.
Closed on Sundays.

Befitting its name, the Grand Bazaar (*Kapalıçarşı* in Turkish), is the largest covered bazaar in the world with its 30,700 m² space, 61 indoor streets and over 4,000 shops. The core construction of what we call the Grand Bazaar today was built and called a "bedesten" (covered market or hall) at the time was built with wood between 1455–1461, shortly after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453. The bazaar suffered from recurrent catastrophes, fires and earthquakes between 1515 and 1701. Several parts of the complex were rebuilt in 1730–1731 after receiving severe damage. However, the bazaar had achieved its final shape at the beginning of the 17th century. In 1894 a major and strong earthquake rocked Istanbul and once again damaged Grand Bazaar, which was repaired and completed in 1898. The Grand Bazaar has 21 gates: the main gates are the Nuruosmaniye Gate and Beyazıt Square Gate. You can probably buy anything and everything you want or need: from expensive and elegant jewelry, leather goods, antiques, top-quality carpets and kilims, silverware and copperware to ceramics, textiles, lamps, lanterns, nargile (water pipes) and evil eyes among other trinkets and knickknacks as souvenirs to take back home for family or friends. A piece of advice when shopping at the Grand Bazaar: bargain, bargain and bargain especially when purchasing high-priced items! It is par for the course and an accepted tradition.

Editor's Note: The Grand Bazaar is not known for its cuisine offerings (mostly street foods at kiosks in the surrounding areas). However, for a taste of Ottoman–Turkish cuisine you can stop by the Havuzlu Restaurant. (Gani Çelebi Sokak No. 3; Tel: (0212) 527 33 46; Open Monday–Saturday 11:30am–5:00pm)

SIGHTSEEING SPOTS

BOSPHORUS STRAIT

The Bosphorus (simply called *boğaz* in Turkish) is a natural strait in Istanbul in northwestern Türkiye connecting the Black Sea to the Sea of Marmara. It is an internationally significant waterway and shipping route that links the Black Sea with the world's oceans. It also forms part of the continental boundary between Asia and Europe and divides Türkiye by separating Anatolia from the Thrace region. The Bosphorus is 31 kilometers (19 miles) long; maximum depth is 110 m (360 ft); has a width that varies between 700–3,300 meters; and is the world's narrowest strait used for international navigation.

There are 3 suspension bridges that link the European side to the Asian side of the city. The Bosphorus (Boğaziçi) Bridge, renamed the 15th July Martyrs Bridge on July 25, 2016, opened in October 1973 and extends between Ortaköy (European side) and Beylerbeyi (Asian side). The Fatih Sultan Mehmet Bridge was inaugurated on May 29, 1988 and spans from Rumelihisarı to Anadoluhisarı. The 3rd one called the Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge, located at the entrance to the Black Sea was launched in August 2016.

The majority of the Bosphorus strait shorelines are heavily settled with historical landmarks (Ottoman palaces, fortresses, etc.), centuries-old restored *yalıs* (waterfront mansions), hotels, universities, contemporary individual/multi residential houses, restaurants, etc. Moreover, "underwater" transportation began on the Bosphorus strait with the opening of the Marmaray tunnel in October 2013: The commuter rail line spans 76.6 km (47.8 mi) and runs between Üsküdar and Yenikapı on the European side of the city. The 5-km (9.1 mi) long Eurasia Tunnel opened on December 22, 2016 and runs between Kumkapı (Fatih district) on the European side to Koşuyolu, Kadıköy on the Asian side of the city. Only motor vehicles like cars, minibusses and motorcycles are allowed to use the tunnel.

The best way to see and appreciate the magnificence of this significant strait is by hopping on a standard ferryboat, private yacht or join a Bosphorus Dinner cruise (private or group) organized by different tour operators. The simplest and "no frills" way to see the Bosphorus is by buying a ticket for the "extended" Bosphorus tour organized by the municipality's "*Şehir Hatları*". This special service ferryboat departs from the Eminönü pier with stops in Beşiktaş, Üsküdar, Kanlıca, Sarıyer, Rumeli Kavağı and Anadolu Kavağı (to pick up/drop off passengers), returning along the same route back to Eminönü. The one-way trip takes about 2,5 hours. On the way back, you can hop off at any of the piers that the ferryboat stops and you don't have to return to the initial departure pier. Just a note on the last 2 stops on this route: Rumeli Kavağı and Anadolu Kavağı are the last two villages on the most northern end of the Bosphorus before linking to the Black Sea. The ferryboat stops for a one-hour on the Asian side village, so that passengers can disembark to eat lunch or shop in the small village. Make sure your phone is fully charged because you will be taking tons of photos!

Private and customized luxurious Bosphorus cruises can be organized through different full service yacht rental companies. Another option is joining a Bosphorus Culture Tour organized by companies specializing in culture tours (i.e., the longstanding Fest Travel) with English speaking professional guides who share all the wonderful details about the historic Ottoman palaces and famous multi-million-dollar historic *yalıs* lined along both shores of the Bosphorus.



ÇAMLICA TOWER

At a height of 369 meters (1,211 feet) and a total of 583,5 meters above mean sea level, the 49-story Çamlıca Tower is located on Çamlıca Hill, one of the highest points in the city in the Üsküdar district on the Asian side. The official opening of the tallest structure in Istanbul was May 29, 2021. Easily seen from most parts of the city, besides its use for TV and radio broadcasts, the tower has observation decks and a cafe and restaurant. The tower is open Monday–Saturday from 10:00am to 9:00pm and charges visitors an admission fee. The observation decks are located on the 33rd and 34th floors and the cafe & restaurant on the 39th and 40th floors. The tower also has exhibition spaces, a panoramic elevator and gift shop. Tickets can be purchased on-site or on-line from various ticket sellers.

PRINCES' ISLANDS

The Princes' Islands are a cluster (archipelago) of 9 islands southeast of Istanbul in the Sea of Marmara and only four are open to the public. They are Kınalıada, Burgazada, Heybeliada and Büyükada. The 5 smaller islands are Sivriada, Tavşan Adası, Yassıada, Sedef and Kaşık Adası.

Why named the "Princes' Islands"? During the Byzantine period, imperial family members and disgraced aristocrats were exiled in the monasteries at the islands. However, during the Ottoman period, the islands became the favorite destination of the Ottoman aristocracy and even today there are many Ottoman-style mansions still standing. Also, during this period, the islands were re-named *kızıl adaları* (red islands) due to the color of the soil; today they are just referred to as "*adalar*" by the locals.

To this day, there is a sizeable population of residents (full-time or part-time) on the 4 main islands which are made up of a mix of ethnic and cultural groups. For example, during Ottoman times, Kınalıada was the holiday destination for Armenian bishops and Armenians from Istanbul; Burgazada used to be a Greek fisherman village; Heybeliada was the island preferred by Turkish and Greek bourgeoisie from then Constantinople; and Büyükada was popular with Jews and Europeans living in Istanbul. In fact, all of the islands still have many active mosques, churches and synagogues.

The islands are a perfect oasis or retreat for both residents and tourists alike—away from the hustle and bustle of city life, even if only for one day. Alternatively, there are a few good hotels for those wishing to extend their stay. All fuel driven vehicles are banned and the main means of transportation are bicycles, electric buses or electric taxis; the latter replaced the horse-drawn carriages banned in 2020. Another feature that makes the Princes' Islands unique is that you will find yourself walking or riding through narrow curving streets flanked with untouched pine forests and elegant restored manors or mansions.

The 4 main islands are easily accessible via sea buses (fast ferry—usually preferred by commuters), which takes about 55 minutes to reach Büyükada, the last and preferred island to visit; or regular ferries, which take about 1 hour 45 min from ferryboat piers that depart from Beşiktaş, Kabataş and Eminönü on the European side of the city. The closest pier to the Vakko Hotel & Residence is the one located in Kabataş. The ferryboat timetables change according to the season.

The following are just some of the places you can visit during your day-trip to Büyükada. Upon disembarking at the pier; the waterfront is lined with side-by-side fish restaurants where you can have a relaxing fish & meze (also referred to as *rakı balık*) lunch or dinner after your tour of the island. Right in front of the pier is the Clock Tower, built in 1923 and an iconic symbol and meeting point on the island. A little bit further up, the area is surrounded by hotels and Ice Cream Parlors selling a variety of Turkish ice cream. A must visit is the Adalar Museum, Istanbul's first contemporary city museum (Aya Nikola Mevkii, Tel: (0216) 382 64 30; 9:30am–5:00pm, admission fee charged) which includes about 20,000 documents, 6,000 photographs and other collectibles with information on the history of the Princes' Islands. The museum is about a 30-minute walk from the pier or you can rent a bike. Yücestepe is one of the most popular hill-tops on the island and is also home to the Aya Yorgi Greek Orthodox Church. It is accessible by walking up a steep hill (about 1 km), but the walk is definitely worth it. First take a breather at Yücestepe Teahouse, have a glass of tea and soak up the stunning view. Büyükada also has a number of parks. Büyükada Natural Park is 45,000 m² and has WCs, refreshment stands, etc. and a perfect spot for a picnic or just a long walk. A short distance from the park is the Aya Nikola Monastery, Adalar Museum, Aya Yorgi Greek Orthodox Church, Greek Orphanage and Hamidiye Mosque. Another park, but only a short distance from the main square is the 7,000 m² Dilburnu Natural Park with picnic areas and coves for swimming.

The best time to visit the Princes' Islands is April–September, but be aware that the ferries can be quite crowded during the summer months. There are tours that take visitors to Büyükada, but they too use the ferries. Depending on your budget, you can also rent a boat for the day. So, if you have a full-day to spare, it's worth to take a trip to Büyükada where you can spend a peaceful day amidst nature.

OFF THE BEATEN PATH

THE GLASS FURNACE (CAM OCAĞI)

Köyiçi Caddesi No.72/A Öğümce, Beykoz
Tel: (0216) 433 36 93; www.glassfurnace.org

Have you ever wanted to try your hand at glassblowing? Not a very common hobby surely, but it is different and interesting. The Glass Furnace Foundation (Cam Ocağı Vakfı) offers a variety of workshops– from intensive to daily classes for adults to those geared toward children. Founded in 2002, The Glass Furnace Foundation is the largest and best-equipped glass arts center in Türkiye. The riverside complex amidst lush green surroundings is located in Öğümce, a village in the Beykoz district on the Asian side of the city; about 35.5 km from the Vakko Hotel & Residence. Education is an essential component of the Glass Furnace’s mission and they prepare programs for many different groups and levels of participants from professionals to elementary school students. They also have a wonderful gift shop where you can find all sorts of hand-blown glass accessories. So, visit their website (www.glassfurnace.org) for detailed information and then plan a “different kind of day & experience” on your trip to Istanbul.

POLONEZKÖY

Polonezköy is a village on the Asian side of the city within the borders of the Beykoz district. It was first named Adampol to honor Adam Czartoryski (Chairman of the Polish National Uprising Government and the leader of a political emigrant party) who settled in this area in 1842 with a small group of Polish emigrants after the failed November Uprising (1830–31 Polish Russian War or the Cadet Revolution). To this day there is still a small Polish community in Polonezköy with their own church and cemetery. Located about 30 km (19 mi) from the Vakko Hotel & Residence, the village has a population of about 1,000 residents, but it is chock-full of small hotels, restaurants offering huge breakfast spreads and brunches on the weekends (relax on comfy beanbags, large cushions or take a nap in a hammock after eating or take a walk on the walk path or take a bicycle tour). The other alternatives are meat (BBQ) restaurants with huge picnic areas amidst verdant lush surroundings. What makes these restaurants unique is that customers BBQ their own meat (beef, chicken, etc.) purchased at the no-frills restaurants and grilled at their reserved picnic table. The restaurants also sell salads, other sides (French fries, etc.) desserts and beverages for a relaxing day of sun, fun and nature with family and friends. Some tour operators organize day excursions to Polonezköy too.

Polonezköy is also famous for its honey and cherries. You can purchase honey from Arıcılık Müzesi (Apiculture Museum), a longstanding museum/shop founded by Kemal Sayal, an apiarist for over 39 years and located in the village square. Honey is produced from local bees and honey varieties (i.e., chestnut honey), royal jelly, propolis (bee glue) and bee pollen are sold at the shop. Moreover, the Polonezköy Cherry Festival is held annually during the 1st and 2nd weekends in June. Many activities to include Polish folklore performances, concerts, exhibits, cultural activities and recitals are organized in the garden of the village church. (www.polonezkoy.com). Please consult the 2025 program before making any plans to attend.



Yıldız Park

MAJOR PARKS & A FOREST

Istanbul has its fair share of lovely and perfectly manicured lush verdant parks in the frequently visited areas of our city's districts by locals and tourists alike. The city also offers a number of forests that are far from the city centre. Below is a list of some of the popular parks and one forest worth visiting in Istanbul which are all operated by the Metropolitan Municipality of Istanbul or its subsidiaries.

Most tourists know **Gülhane Park** because it is located on the grounds of the Topkapı Palace: the 163-acre park was once part of the private gardens of the palace. The expansive park first opened to the public in 1912. After going through major renovations in 2001, Gülhane Park once again started welcoming visitors in 2003.

Located along a hilltop overlooking the Bosphorus waterfront in Emirgan, thus, named **Emirgan Park**, this one covers an area of 117 acres and is enclosed with high walls. The park has two decorative ponds, more than 120 species of plants, terraces with lovely views

of the Bosphorus, jogging and walking paths, picnic areas, and children's playgrounds. The grounds also include three 19th century Ottoman era historic pavilions named Yellow, Pink and White Pavilions after their exterior colors and all were restored between 1979–1983. Today they house eateries that offer snacks and modest cafe fare. Moreover, since 2005 the Istanbul Tulip Festival is held annually throughout the month of April, celebrated with a variety of events at Emirgan Park. The tulip is the name of an era (1718–1730) during the Ottoman Empire and a special garden was established in the 1960s at the park to revive the city's tradition of tulip cultivation. There is no admission fee if arriving on foot. However, a parking fee is charged for those arriving with their cars.

With approximately 157,000 m² space, the **Maçka Democracy Park** is located at the Kadirgalar Valley and surrounded by the fashionable Nişantaşı, Maçka and Teşvikiye neighborhoods. The park is a short walk from the Vakko Hotel & Residence in Nişantaşı. It is highly frequented by the locals in the neighborhood as a tranquil retreat away from the hustle and bustle of city life. The park was renovated in 1993 and renamed the Maçka Democracy Park and has decorative pools, 2 children's playgrounds, rest areas, benches, and jogging, walking and dog walking paths. In 2021, the park went through some minor renovations and free-standing secured fitness equipment were installed in different sections for the use of the public. While there, you can hop on the Maçka-Taşkışla cable car and take a short 3-minute ride (operates every 5 minutes during peak hours) to the Taşkışla quarter in walking distance to Taksim Square.

Ulus Park, as its name suggests, is located on a scenic hilltop in the prestigious residential neighborhood Ulus bordering the Ortaköy and Etiler neighborhoods. The park itself is only 21,000 m² but offers a breathtaking view of the Bosphorus. On a clear day, the July 15th Martyrs Bridge (Bosphorus Bridge), Topkapı Palace and Üsküdar—a district on the Asian side of the city—are visible. The park has a modest cafe at the highest point of the park and is flanked with two of the best fine dining restaurants in the city.

The 287,000 square-meter **Yıldız Park** is located steps away from the Bosphorus strait in the neighborhood of Yıldız, a short distance from the Dolmabahçe Palace in the Beşiktaş district. It used to be part of the imperial garden of Yıldız Palace and the walled park was only accessible to palace dwellers during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876–1909). Today, the outer section of the two-section park is open to the public. The beautiful garden is planted with flowers, plants and trees gathered from around the world, dating back to the Ottoman period. The park also has two man-made lakes, picnic areas and offers panoramic views of the Bosphorus from strategic points. There is no admission fee if arriving on foot. However, a parking fee is charged for those arriving with their cars.

Attention nature buffs: you are definitely in for a treat! **Belgrad Forest (Orman)** is about 19 km from the city center in Taksim. Located on the easternmost border of the Thrace peninsula, the forest terrain is located both in the Sarıyer and Eyüp districts in Istanbul. The forest is named after the nearby village which was settled by thousands of Serbians who were displaced from their homeland by Süleyman the Magnificent after the 1521 Siege of Belgrade. The imposing protected forest (nature reserve) is about 5,000 hectares (12,355 acres) and contains countless varieties of plants, trees, birds and animal species. The forest has nine nature parks, picnic areas and numerous walking, jogging and hiking paths. It is common to see historic ruins scattered around the forest. There are also the ruins of reservoirs and aqueducts built by the Ottomans in the 18th century. An admission fee is charged to enter Belgrad Forest.

ARTS & CULTURE



Welcome to a compact yet vivid glance of the highly diverse and exciting Arts & Culture world in Istanbul! The city's public museums will enthrall you with their historic depth including significant selections from Byzantine and Ottoman architecture, art and artifacts; and some sprinkled with selections from Mesopotamian, Egyptian and Hittite civilizations. On the other hand, the private museums and art galleries mainly display breathtaking, exquisite and eclectic permanent contemporary and Turkish art collections as well as hosting temporary solo or group exhibits by up-and-coming Turkish artists as well as prominent Turkish and internationally acclaimed contemporary artists from different genres. However, for a change of pace, the city's public and private industrial museums are also appealing with permanent exhibits of trains, planes, classic cars and a submarine to a restored power plant and Ottoman era caiques! Moreover, Istanbul's dynamic and lively performance and cultural centers have been attracting music, dance and other performing arts aficionados from around the world for years. So, let's take a whirlwind tour of the remarkable historical, cultural and contemporary treasures in Istanbul!

Editor's note: Unless otherwise specified, all public, private museums and cultural centers charge an entrance fee. The cost has not been included as it changes periodically. Also, every effort has been made to ensure that the visiting hours for all the arts and culture venues listed are accurate, but it is always a good idea to check ahead as they too can change from time to time and almost all are closed on New Year's Day and national holidays. Moreover; most have gift shops while some have cafes or independently-owned superb restaurants.

MUSEUM PASS ISTANBUL

Museum Pass Istanbul can be used to visit most of the public museums under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and Directorate of National Palaces and the Republic of Türkiye. The best part is that you no longer have to wait in long lines to purchase tickets. Istanbul museum pass can be purchased online (muze.gen.tr) or at the entrance to the museum.

In short:

- Museum Pass offers one-time free access to any one of the accepted lists of public museums in Istanbul and is valid for 5 consecutive days after activation with visit to first museum.
- Museum Pass is only valid for general admission and does not cover admission to special events, audio guides or private exhibitions at the museum visited.
- Moreover, some of Istanbul's private museums, museum shops, attractions, cafes and Turkish Baths (Hammam) offer up to 30% discount for Museum Pass cardholders.

PUBLIC MUSEUMS

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUMS

Osman Hamdi Bey Yokuşu Sokak, Güllhane, Fatih

Tel: (0212) 520 77 41; www.muze.gov.tr

Visiting hours: April 1–October 31: Open daily from 9:00am–8:00pm. Box Office closes at 7:00pm;

November 1–March 31: Open daily from

9:00am–6:30pm. Box Office closes at 6:00pm

The first documented museum in the history of the Ottoman Empire, the Archaeological Museums complex contains 3 main sections; The Archaeology Museum, The Museum of the Ancient Orient and the Tiled Kiosk Museum; all located on the grounds of the verdant gardens. The complex contains about 1 million artworks and artifacts from a variety of cultures collected from the imperial territories as well as the palace collections from the late 19th century accumulated by Osman Hamdi Bey (1842–1910), an accomplished archaeologist, master painter, art expert and then museum director. During his tenure as museum director, he excavated numerous Alolia necropolises (1887–1888). During his excavations conducted at the necropolis of King Sidon, he uncovered many sarcophagi; the most important one being that of Alexander the Great. Collecting historical artwork and artifacts dates back to the reign of Mehmed the Conqueror (1444–1446; 1451–1481), but the institutional emergence of museums coincides with the opening of the Imperial Museum (*Müze-i Hümayun*), or now referred to as the Archaeological Museums. Also built during his reign, The Tiled Pavilion or *Çinili Köşk* (circa 1472) was restored and converted to a museum in 1880 and is decorated with mosaic tiles with a 14-column marble arcade, displaying a wide variety of tiles and ceramics from the Seljuk and Ottoman periods in its six rooms and inner salon. The Museum of the Ancient Orient, designed by French–Ottoman architect Alexander Vallaury (1850–1921) was originally built to house the first Fine Arts Academy of the Ottoman Empire. As a museum, it contains an exquisite collection of historic artifacts from the Mesopotamian, Egyptian and Hittite civilizations. Architect Vallaury, was then commissioned to build the Archaeological Museums' main building, one of the best examples of neo-classical architecture which opened in 1891 containing such artifacts like Alexander's Tomb, Tomb of "Mourning Women" among others brought back to Istanbul from the King Sidon Necropolis excavation conducted by Osman Hamdi Bey. The main building was re-opened in July 2022 after major restorations and renovations were completed. The restorations in The Tiled Pavilion and The Museum of the Ancient Orient continue.

BASILICA CISTERN MUSEUM

Yerebatan Caddesi No.1/3 Sultanahmet, Fatih
Tel: (0212) 512 15 70; www.yerebatan.com
Visiting hours: Daily from 9:00am–7:00pm

A short distance from the Hagia Sophia Mosque, the Basilica Cistern (Yerebatan Sarnıcı) once again opened to the public on July 22, 2022 after extensive restorations that lasted nearly four years. Once a subterranean water reservoir, it was built by Byzantine Emperor Justinian I (527–565) and named Basilica Cistern because the area was once the site of a church, or basilica. During the Byzantine period, the cistern was used to meet the water requirements of the Great Palace of Constantinople, the main imperial palace of the Eastern Roman or Byzantine emperors and other inhabitants in the region. After the conquest of the city by the Ottomans in 1453, the still water was used to supply water to Topkapı Palace, but the Ottomans preferring running water built their own facilities in the city. Thereafter, the cistern laid dormant and forgotten until the mid-16th century. It was re-discovered by Dutch traveler P. Gyllius who came to Istanbul (1544–1550) to do research on Byzantium ruins, thus introducing the Basilica Cistern to the Western world. This incredible historic cistern is the largest of several hundred ancient cisterns that lie beneath the city. A total of 9,800 square meters; the Basilica Cistern is accessible via a 52-step stairway, has 4.8 m high brick walls, is composed of 12 rows—each with 28, 9-meter high (total 336 columns) columns which reflect Corinthian and Doric order columns spaced 4.8 m apart, and has a capacity to store 100,000 tons of water. Moreover, the two Medusa heads used to support two columns at the northwest edge of the cistern are examples of impressive works of art from the Roman period. Many myths about the tales of the Medusa are rampant but none are supported. Opened to the public in 1987 after the Metropolitan Municipality of Istanbul had it cleaned, followed by further

extensive cleaning in 1994. Managed and operated by Kültür Inc., an affiliate of the Metropolitan Municipality of Istanbul established in 1989, Basilica Cistern is not only a museum, but also home to national and international events.

GALATA MEVLEVİ HOUSE MUSEUM

Galip Dede Caddesi No. 15, Tünel, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 245 41 41; <https://muze.gen.tr>
Visiting hours: Not available at press time.

Established in 1491 and called the Galip Dede Tekke, or lodge among other names, the museum contains important relics from the Ottoman period. It was first opened to visitors in 1975 as the Divan Literature Museum; in 2011 it was renamed the Galata Mevlevi House Museum. After you visit the many rooms containing a whole host of the museum's collection including the tombs of many prominent religious figures from the Ottoman Period, there are permanent exhibitions of calligraphy, the Ottoman Army band and musical instruments, etc. at the 2-story lodge. The highlight of any visit to the Galata Mevlevi House is attending the Whirling Dervishes show with performances only on Sunday nights at 6:00pm lasting for 1 hour. In short, their performance is a traditional form of Sufi worship where the dervishes aim to reach the source of all perfection or karma through physically active meditation by abandoning their ego or personal desires by focusing on God and continuously whirling with one hand pointed upward reaching for the divine while the other hand is pointed toward the ground. Tickets for this spiritual performance can only be purchased online (biletinal.com). The hall accommodates up to 150 guests and there are no seat numbers, so arrive early for front row seats.

Editor's note: Galata Mevlevi House Museum is closed to visitors for a restoration and enhancement project.

Basilica Cistern Museum

GALATA TOWER MUSEUM

Galata Kulesi Galata, Beyoğlu

Tel: (0212) 245 41 41; <https://istanbul.ktb.gov.tr>

Visiting hours: April 1–October 31: Open daily 8:30am–11:00pm. Box Office closes at 11:00pm; November 1–March 31: Open daily 8:30am–midnight. Box Office closes at 11:00pm.

What we call the Galata Tower (Kulesi) today, was first built standing 62.59 meters tall in 1348 by the Genoese colony in Constantinople. Without any resistance, the Genoese handed over the colony to the Ottomans on May 29, 1453 upon the conquest of Istanbul by the Ottoman Empire. The tower was damaged by an earthquake in 1509 and repaired in 1510. Then the tower was severely damaged by a fire in 1794 during the reign of Sultan Selim III (1789–1807) and the repairs made included the addition of a coffeehouse on one of the upper floors. Once again, a fire broke out at the tower in 1831 during the reign of Mahmud II (1808–1839), and it was once again restored. The tower's troubles continued: a storm in 1875 destroyed the conical roof and two rooms made of wood were built on the top masonry floor to be used by the city's fire department as a fire lookout tower. Alas, the tower remained without its iconic roof for the rest of the Ottoman period. The conical roof was finally restored during the restoration of the tower between 1965 and 1967. At the same time, the wood interior was replaced with a concrete structure before opening to the public for the first time. The Galata Tower was once again restored and converted to a museum by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in 2020 and re-opened to the public on October 6, 2020 on the 567th anniversary of the Independence of Istanbul. One of the striking landmarks in the city, the 9-story Galata Tower also has a basement, ground floor and mezzanine. It was the tallest structure in the city when it was first built in 1348. An elevator was added that goes up to the 6th floor with a steel construction staircase

from the 6th to the 8th floor and an observation deck affording a spectacular panoramic view of Istanbul. Moreover, the remaining floors have been arranged as a museum and include a variety of artifacts and relics from the Neolithic, Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman periods with a separate temporary exhibition hall on the 3rd floor and a gift shop on the 1st floor.

GREAT PALACE MOSAIC MUSEUM

Arasta Çarşısı (Bazaar) Sultanahmet, Fatih

Tel: (0212) 518 12 05; <https://muze.gen.tr>

Visiting hours: Not available at press time.

The Great Palace Mosaic Museum houses the remarkably preserved mosaics from the Byzantine Empire. They were unearthed at the site of the Great Palace of Constantinople at the former capital of the Eastern Roman Empire, built during the reign of Constantine the Great (306–337 AD). You can reach this “off the beaten path” museum which is right next door to the grandiose Blue Mosque in Sultanahmet Square after finding your way through the maze of souvenir stands at Arasta Bazaar, but definitely worth the trip. The northeastern section of the cloister at the Eastern Roman Grand Palace was excavated in 1935 unearthing non-religious original and brilliantly decorative mosaics depicting daily life, nature and mythology dating back to 450–550 AD. The restoration and conservation of the museum began in 1982 and was completed in 1997.

Editor's Note: Great Palace Mosaic Museum is closed to visitors for a restoration and enhancement project.

MILITARY MUSEUM AND CULTURAL CENTER COMMAND

Vali Konağı Caddesi No. 2 Harbiye, Şişli

Tel: (0212) 233 27 20; www.askerimuze.msb.gov.tr

Visiting hours: Wednesday–Sunday 9:00am–5:00pm. Box office closes at 4:30pm.

Located in the Harbiye (which means military in Turkish) neighborhood, some of the buildings at the Military Museum housed the Military Academy governed by the Ottomans during the latter part of their reign; in fact, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Türkiye graduated from this academy. 5,000 of the 55,000 objects in the Military Museum's inventory are on display in the exhibition halls. Moreover, the Ottoman Janissary (Mehter) Band performs twice between 3:00pm–4:00pm on the days the museum is open which is an interesting experience for museum goers. Also, archery lessons are available to visitors at the Cannon Exhibition Hall on Wednesdays and Saturdays between 2:00pm–3:00pm.

NATIONAL PALACES PAINTINGS MUSEUM

Dolmabahçe Palace Dolmabahçe, Beşiktaş

Please refer to the section on Palaces for detailed information.

NAVAL MUSEUM COMMAND

Beşiktaş Caddesi No. 6/1 Beşiktaş

Tel: (0212) 327 43 45; <https://denizmuzesi.dzkk.tsk.tr>

Visiting hours: Monday–Friday 9:00am–5:00pm. Box Office closes at 4:00pm. Saturday–Sunday 10:00am–6:00pm. Box office closes at 5:00pm.

With the permission of Sultan Abdülhamit Han and the then called Museum and Library Administration Office, the museum was established, located in several buildings at various sites throughout Istanbul in 1897. Renamed “The Naval

Museum and Archive Directorate”, the museum was consolidated and moved to one building at its present location on the Bosphorus waterfront in Beşiktaş in 1961. Then, in 1971, the imperial caiques collection was transferred to the museum and displayed to the public in “The Gallery of Historical Caiques”. Finally, the construction of a new museum building to house the annex exhibition building, the gallery of historical caiques, culture center and outdoor exhibition area was approved in 2008 and opened to the public in October 2013.

RUMELİ FORTRESS MUSEUM

Yahya Kemal Caddesi No.42, Rumelihisarı, Sarıyer

Tel: (0212) 263 53 05; <https://mize.gen.tr>

Visiting hours: April 1–October 31: Tuesday–Sunday 9:00am–7:30pm. Box Office closes at 6:30pm; November 1–March 31: Tuesday–Sunday 9:00am–5:00pm. Box office closes at 4:00pm. Closed on Mondays.

The breathtaking 30-acre Rumeli Fortress is majestically perched on a series of hilltops on the banks of the Bosphorus strait in Rumelihisarı, set in lush verdant garden surroundings. Before the conquest of Istanbul in 1453, the fortress was built in a mere 4 months by Mehmed the Conqueror (1432–1481), which was then used as a barrier to avert potential armed forces attacks from the north of the Bosphorus. As a sidebar, its “older sister” the Anadolu Fortress was built for the same purpose by reigning Sultan I. Beyazid (1389–1402) in 1393 and used primarily as a watch tower with five watchtowers located at its corners. It is located on the Asian side shoreline on the narrowest part (only 660 meters) of the Bosphorus, aptly in Anadoluhisarı. The fortress was restored in 1991–1993 and a new restoration project began in 2021 by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. However, this picturesque historical site is not open to the public. Both were utilized in tandem during the final siege, stopping

all naval traffic along the Bosphorus which played a major role for the 21-year-old Ottoman Sultan to successfully conquer Constantinople (later renamed Istanbul in 1930) which became the Ottomans imperial capital city in 1453, bringing an end to the Byzantine Empire.

The timber and stones used to build the façade and interiors of Rumeli Fortress were transported from different parts of Anatolia while the ruins are the remains of Byzantine structures from the surrounding areas. The historic structure was restored and converted to a museum in 1953, opening its doors to visitors in 1968. In the same year, the open-air amphitheater was built, but it is no longer used to host performing arts shows. Also, the damaged fortress mosque was rebuilt to its original form in 2014. The Rumeli Fortress has 4 main gates, 1 secondary gate and 17 tall and short towers. As there is no exhibition hall in the museum, the cannonballs and a piece of the chain used against attacks are exhibited in its garden.

TOPKAPI PALACE MUSEUM

Topkapı Palace, Sultanahmet, Fatih

Please refer to the section on Palaces for detailed information.

TURKISH AND ISLAMIC ARTS MUSEUM

Atmeydanı Sokak İbrahim Paşa Sarayı No.46

Sultanahmet, Fatih

Tel: (0212) 518 18 05; <https://muze.gen.tr>

Visiting hours: April 1–October 31: Open daily 9:00am–7:30pm. Box Office closes at 6:30pm; November 1–March 31: Open daily 9:00am–6:30pm. Box office closes at 5:30pm.

The Turkish and Islamic Arts museum is the first museum in Türkiye that contains the consolidated artworks of Turkish and Islamic Art. In 1914; then called the

Evfak-ı İslamiye (Islamic Foundations Museum), it opened at a converted hospice at the Süleymaniye Mosque social complex– one of the most important architectural masterpieces of Mimar Sinan (circa 1488/1490–1588), the chief architect and civil engineer of the Ottoman Sultans of the period. In 1983, the renamed museum moved to the Ibrahim Pasha Palace located to the west of the Sultanahmet (Blue) Mosque. Moreover, this lavish palace's rooftop terrace affords a breathtaking view of Sultanahmet Square. Dating back to the 15th century, the palace was the imperial court residence of Pargalı İbrahim Paşa (1494–1536), the Grand Vizier of Süleyman the Magnificent (reigned 1520–1566) from 1523 until his execution in 1536. He was the spouse of Sultan Süleyman's daughter Mihrimah Sultan. The museum was closed to visitors between 1983 to 2012 for extensive restorations. Re-opened in 2014, it includes rare artworks from Umayyad, Abbasi, Artuklu (in the southeastern province Mardin in Türkiye), Ayyubid, Ilkhanate, Timurid, Safavid, Qajar, Mamluk, Seljuk and Ottoman periods and dynasties collected over time from different parts of the Islamic world. The museum also contains the best rug collection in the world to include one-of-a-kind rare 13th century Seljuk period carpets. The list of artworks exhibited are endless and include a Holy Relics section; glassware, stoneware and terracotta artifacts, metal and ceramic objects, and the large courtyard hall is devoted to an ethnography collection representing daily life in 19th century Istanbul.

PRIVATE MUSEUMS

BORUSAN CONTEMPORARY MUSEUM

Hisar Caddesi No.5 Baltalimanı, Sarıyer
Tel: (0212) 393 52 00; www.borusancontemporary.com
Visiting hours: Saturday, Sunday 10:00am–7:00pm.
Box Office closes at 6:00pm.

An initiative of the Borusan Kocabiyyık Foundation, Borusan Contemporary is a contemporary art museum and educational center with over 800 works of art in its permanent collection to include paintings, sculpture, photographs, videos and more of esteemed Turkish and international artists. Moreover, it provides a multi-program platform with temporary exhibitions, events and educational activities. The museum is located along the Bosphorus shoreline at the Perili Köşk (Haunted Mansion), which also serves as the headquarters of Borusan Holding; an industrial group specializing in steel manufacturing, car dealerships, energy production and logistics. A leading example of Istanbul's rich historical past, construction of the mansion began in the 1910s but came to a standstill with the outbreak of WWI. Hence, the local community started referring to it as the "Haunted Mansion" as many of the floors remained empty. Architect Hakan Kıran was commissioned to complete the construction and restoration of the mansion, which lasted 5 years (1995–2000). While the façade was preserved, the interior design provides a modern look with spacious commercial spaces. The 10-story mansion also boasts remarkable views of both the Black Sea and Marmara Sea from its impressive rooftop terrace. Make sure to stop by the Müze Café for a light snack, brunch or just a cup of coffee and soak up the view.

ELGİZ MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

Meydan Sokak Beybi Giz Plaza Maslak, Sarıyer
Tel: (0212) 290 25 25; www.elgizmuseum.org
Visiting hours: Wednesday–Friday 10:00am–5:00pm;
Saturday 10:00am–4:00pm. Free admission.

Founded in 2001, Elgiz is the first privately-owned, non-profit museum in Türkiye dedicated to contemporary art. It contains the intriguing and eclectic private contemporary art collection of many influential Turkish and international artists gathered by collectors Seveda and Can Elgiz. The 2,000 square meter museum allows the visitor to enjoy a comprehensive journey through the major contemporary movements in the past two decades. Formerly called Proje 4L, the space also functions as an experimental platform for young and promising artists and curators. Furthermore, educational programs and workshops are organized. Elgiz is located in the heart of Istanbul's business district in Maslak with an outdoor terrace used to exhibit sculptures and other land-art projects.

ISTANBUL MODERN

Tophane Iskele Caddesi No. 1/1 Tophane, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 334 73 00 www.istanbulmodern.org
Visiting Hours: Tuesday-Sunday 10:00am–6:00pm;
Friday 10:00am–8:00pm. Closed on Mondays.

Istanbul Museum of Modern Art, or simply referred to as Istanbul Modern, is Türkiye's first museum of modern and contemporary art and opened its doors to the public at Antrepo No. 4 in Tophane on December 11, 2004. Once a dry cargo warehouse for the Turkish Maritime Organization, the 8,000 square meter building was allocated to Istanbul Modern in early 2004 which was then quickly restored and converted to a modern museum building by Tabanlıoğlu Architects, an internationally renowned Turkish architectural firm headquartered in Istanbul. After 14 years in this building, Istanbul Modern moved to a temporary space in Beyoğlu in 2018 (closed at the end of 2021) while its new building was being built. Istanbul Modern reopened last year at the same site of the original building on the waterfront at Galataport Istanbul. The new building was designed by Renzo Piano, an Italian iconic architect, internationally acknowledged for designing the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City among many other notable structures. Besides displaying its impressive and striking permanent collection of contemporary artworks from all genres, Istanbul Modern will continue to organize world-class exhibitions of prominent contemporary artists from the Turkish and international art scene to the delight of all art aficionados from all walks of life. Boasting a large public square at the entrance, Istanbul Modern has created a "cultural living space" in an effort to change the public's perception of a museum and includes a movie theater, library, design shop, event spaces, cafe and restaurant (see Restoran Modern). Moreover, Istanbul Modern provides educational workshops for art enthusiasts of all ages so that art can be more accessible to the general public. This "visitor-centered" museum was designed according to internationally accepted standards and was built with the contributions of Eczacıbaşı Group, the museum's founding sponsor; and Doğuş Group and Bilgili Holding, its main sponsors. Istanbul Modern should definitely be on your list of museums to visit during your trip.



Pera Museum

PERA MUSEUM

Meşrutiyet Caddesi No.65 Tepebaşı, Beyoğlu

Tel: (0212) 334 99 00; www.peramuseum.org

Visiting hours: Tuesday–Saturday 10:00am–7:00pm; Friday 10:00am –10:00pm; Sunday noon–6:00pm.

Closed on Mondays.

Founded by the Suna and İnan Kiraç Foundation, Pera Museum opened on June 8, 2005 in a lovely restored 19th century historic building in the Tepebaşı neighborhood in Beyoğlu. This impressive building was designed by architect Achille Manoussos in 1893 to house the Hôtel Bristol which remained open until the early 1980s. In 2003, restorer and Turkish architect Sinan Genim was assigned the task of renovating the building. While skillfully preserving the historic façade, the interior was impeccably designed and transformed into a modern and state-of-the-art museum. The permanent exhibition areas include 3 collections from the Suna and İnan Kiraç Foundation, a leading institution founded in October 2003 to support activities in the areas of education, arts and culture and health. They are: “Orientalist Paintings”; “Anatolian Weights and Measures” and “Kütahya Tiles and Ceramics” on display on different floors of the 5-story museum. Although all the 17th century to early 19th century orientalist paintings in the collection are all very valuable; the *pièce de résistance* is the “Tortoise Trainer” painted in 1906 by Osman Hamdi Bey (1842–1910), a renowned pioneering Ottoman painter and accomplished architect among the many other hats he wore during his lifetime. The Museum has also been home to many spectacular temporary exhibitions of some of the most illustrious internationally acclaimed artists to include, but not limited to Jean Dubuffet, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Marc Chagall, Pablo Picasso, Fernando Botero, Andy Warhol and Frida Kahlo. Pera Museum continues to collaborate with local and international art and educational institutions to hold temporary exhibitions and also supports young and up-and coming artists. Moreover, in parallel to its seasonal programs, Pera Film offers movie buffs a wide selection of screenings of films from the classics and independent films to animated works and documentaries. Today, Pera Museum is one of the leading distinguished cultural centers in Istanbul.

RAHMI M. KOÇ MUSEUM

Hasköy Caddesi No. 5 Hasköy, Beyoğlu

Tel: (0212) 369 66 00; www.rmkm-museum.org

Visiting hours: Tuesday–Friday 9:30am–5:00pm;

Saturday–Sunday 10:00am–6:00pm.

Closed on Mondays.

A submarine (on loan from the Turkish Navy), Douglas D-3 airplane (1935), eye-catching classic automobiles, the retired MV Fenerbahçe ferryboat (1952), Sultan Abdülaziz's dazzling imperial coach (1867), and nostalgic trains and trams are just a drop in the bucket of some of the most valuable examples of industrial objects from around the world that are permanently on display at the remarkable Rahmi M. Koç Museum. Set on the northern shore of the Golden Horn in Hasköy, the museum opened in 1994 and is so named after Rahmi M. Koç, the Honorary Chair and Member of the Board of Directors of Koç Holding, the largest industrial conglomerate in Türkiye. Through the years, the first and only industrial museum in Türkiye has expanded and is now spread over an area of 27,000 square meters. The museum is divided into two sections: the restored Lengerhane (*lenger* is an anchor and *hane* in this case means factory), built during the reign of Sultan Ahmed III (1703–1730) and renamed Mustafa V. Koç (1960–2016) Lengerhane in 2016; and the Hasköy Dockyard, purchased by the Rahmi M. Koç Museology and Cultural Foundation in 1996 and then restored to its original form before becoming an annex of the museum in 2001. This museum takes visitors of all ages on an epic journey through time with all sorts of land, air and sea transports; communications and scientific instruments, models and toys, and so much more. You can also take a submarine tour (age limitations apply) or nostalgic train or boat tours. The museum also has a couple of casual and fine-dining restaurants and cafes as well as a nostalgic truck snack bar. There is also an area with a carousel and playground for the kids.

SABANCI UNIVERSITY SAKIP SABANCI MUSEUM

Sakıp Sabancı Caddesi No.42 Emirgan, Sarıyer

Tel: (0212) 277 22 00; www.sakipsabancimuzesi.org

Visiting hours: Tuesday–Sunday 10:00am–6:00pm;

Closed on Mondays.

Once you pass through the gates of the Sabancı University Sakıp Sabancı Museum and spiral your way up the road to the top, you will first notice the exceptional spacious and lush verdant garden as you arrive at the immaculately restored white mansion with its breathtaking panoramic view of the Bosphorus strait. The perfectly manicured 18-decade garden surrounding the museum is planted with more than 115 plant varieties from around the world and rare plants from Türkiye, encircled with horse statues and fountains. The garden is also used to display outdoor artworks. Built in 1925 by Italian architect Edoardo De Nari for Prince Mehmed Ali Hasan, a member of the Khedivate of Egypt, the mansion was used as a summer residence by the Khedive family. The massive property was then purchased by prominent Turkish industrialist Hacı Ömer Sabancı in 1951; the mansion was then named Atlı Köşk (Equestrian Mansion) after Mr. Sabancı purchased a horse statue from Louis Doumas. Afterwards he purchased another horse statue that was looted by the Crusaders at Sultanahmet Square in Istanbul during the 4th Crusade in 1204 and displayed in front of the San Marco Church in Venice. After his death in 1966, the mansion became the private residence of his eldest son business tycoon and philanthropist Sakıp Sabancı (1933–2004), the Chairman of the Board of Directors at Sabancı Holding, a leading Turkish business conglomerate. In 1998, the mansion that also housed Sakıp Sabancı's valuable and unique vast private collection of Ottoman and Turkish paintings, statues and calligraphy was donated to Sabancı University, which was founded in 1999. Converted and restored to museum standards, the Sakıp Sabancı Museum opened to visitors in 2002 after the addition of modern exhibition halls. The versatile museum also plays host to

temporary exhibitions across all platforms: some of the past exhibits have included the artworks of Salvador Dali, Picasso, Rodin, Joan Miró, Abidin Dino, Anish Kapoor, and Monet among many others. The Sakıp Sabancı Museum also provides art-related educational programs and hosts conferences and seminars. It has an independently owned restaurant (MSA, an exceptional teaching restaurant of The Culinary Arts Academy of Istanbul), Gift Shop, and The Seed, a two story 1,700 square meter multi-purpose venue equipped with state-of-the-art technologies.

SANTRALISTANBUL ENERGY MUSEUM

Eski Silahtarğa Elektrik Santrali,
Kazım Karabekir Caddesi No.2/20, Eyüpsultan
Tel: (0212) 311 78 78; www.santralistanbul.org
Visiting hours: Open daily 9:00am–5:30pm.

Free admission.

Located on the grounds of one of the 4 campuses of Bilgi University established in 1996, the Silahtarğa Power Plant was the Ottoman Empire's first urban-scale power plant (*santral* in Turkish) that went into service in 1911 in Istanbul's oldest industrial area along the Golden Horn, supplying electricity to the city until 1983. With funding from private, public and non-governmental organizations, *santralistanbul*, including the restored former power plant and renamed the Energy Museum, opened in 2007. The interior of the museum maintains its original form and takes the visitors down the memory lane. All of the industrial equipment at the plant were meticulously preserved (turbine rooms, etc.). There is also a 3,500 square meter Main Gallery building allocated for contemporary art exhibitions and cultural events, restaurant and cafes at the restored maintenance workshop and storage buildings of the former power plant.

THE QUINCENTENNIAL FOUNDATION MUSEUM OF TURKISH JEWS

Neve Shalom Synagogue
Büyük Hendek Caddesi No.39 Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 292 63 33; www.muze500.com
Visiting hours: Monday–Thursday 10:00am–5:00pm;
Friday 10:00am–1:00pm;
Sunday 10:00am–5:00pm. Closed on Saturdays. Last
visitors are allowed entry to the museum 30 minutes
before closing time. A valid officially issued identity
card or passport is required for entry.

The Quincentennial Foundation Museum of Turkish Jews opened in the Karaköy neighborhood in 2001 before moving to a modernized complex at the Neve Shalom Synagogue in December 2015. It now includes a richer selection of historic content with state-of-the-art exhibition technologies. The museum shares the 2600 years of historical and cultural heritage of Turkish Jews on these lands to include their contributions to the social and public life of the country they live in, exhibited via photographs and videos including touch-screens that provide detailed information to visitors. On exhibit in separate sections of the museum are religious objects and the ethnography section includes materials on traditions and habits. The 3-story museum is connected to the Neve Shalom Synagogue via the midway hall enabling the viewing of religious ceremonies. Witnessing rituals such as Jewish weddings or Bar Mitzvah festivities makes the visitor a part of the ceremony. The cultural center of the museum is located on the basement floor and is used for temporary exhibitions. The interactive museum offers film screenings, Judaic-themed music concerts and has a children's activities area. You can also stop by the Museum Cafe to sample selections from Sephardic cuisine.

ART GALLERIES

DIRIMART DOLAPDERE

Irmak Caddesi No.1 – 9 Dolapdere, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 232 66 66; www.dirimart.com
Visiting hours: Tuesday–Saturday 10:00am–7:00pm; Sunday noon–7:00pm.

Established in 2002, this leading contemporary art gallery opened its 2nd gallery Dirimart Dolapdere in 2016 and combined all its activities at this 1,000 square-meter space in January 2019. Dirimart displays the works of established and up-and-coming Turkish artists as well as organizing temporary exhibits of artists from the international art world.

GALERİ NEV İSTANBUL

İstiklal Caddesi No:163/23 Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 252 15 25; www.galerinevistanbul.com
Visiting hours: Tuesday–Friday 11:00am–6:30pm; Saturday noon–6:30pm.
Closed on Mondays and Sundays.

Starting its journey by showcasing 20th century Turkish modern art in 1987, Galeri Nev now promotes a more diverse approach to art in terms of technique as well as supporting artists from different backgrounds and generations.

GALERIST

Meşrutiyet Caddesi No. 67/1 Passage Petit Champ Tepebaşı, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 252 18 96; www.galerist.com
Visiting hours: Tuesday–Saturday 11:00am–7:00pm.

Exhibits the contemporary artworks of prominent Turkish artists since 2001.

ISTANBUL'74

Beyazgül Sokak, No. 24, Arnavutköy/Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 244 29 94; www.istanbul74.com
Open Monday – Saturday 11:00am – 7:00pm;
Sunday 11:00am – 6:00pm.

Founded in 2009, ISTANBUL'74 is an independent arts and culture platform that organizes the annual '74 IST. ARTS & CULTURE FESTIVAL, along with exhibitions and large-scale installations in collaboration with leading artists, galleries, museums, and institutions. The platform has recently expanded with a new cultural space in Arnavutköy, housed in a renovated five-story traditional wooden building, with each floor telling a different story.

MERKUR GALLERY

İstiklal Mahallesi Piyalepaşa Bulvarı No:32 Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 225 37 37; www.galerimerkur.com
Call to schedule a visit.

Established in 2010, MERKUR Gallery works with emerging and established artists in the contemporary art scene in Türkiye.

MEŞHER ART GALLERY

İstiklal Caddesi No. 211 Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 708 59 00; www.meshher.org
Open Tuesday–Sunday 11:00am–7:00pm.

Initiated by the Vehbi Koç Foundation; Meşher (which means exhibition space in Ottoman Turkish) is a 3-story art gallery located in a restored historic building and is home to solo and group exhibits from various disciplines of the art world.



ISTANBUL'74

PG ART GALLERY

Atatürk Oto Sanayi Sitesi 6. Sokak No:171
Maslak, Sarıyer
Tel: (0212) 252 80 00; www.pgartgallery.com
Visiting hours:
Monday-Saturday 10:00am - 06:00pm
Closed on Sundays.

Founded in 1993, Pg Art Gallery is one of the pioneering contemporary art galleries in Istanbul. With its unique location in one of Istanbul's biggest industrial sites (Maslak Oto Sanayi Sitesi) it recently expanded with Pg Pop Up, a dynamic and casual space of display as if it's the house of an art collector. Pg Art Gallery also discovers and supports young local artists, taking part in many local and international art fairs.

PI-ARTWORKS

Piyalepaşa Bulvarı No. 32B Piyalepaşa, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 245 13 23; www.piartworks.com
Visiting hours: Tuesday-Saturday noon-7:00pm.

Displays the contemporary artworks of prominent Turkish and international artists and has a branch of the gallery in London, UK.

SEVİL DOLMACI ART GALLERY

Cihannüma, Çömezler Sokak No. 16, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 258 95 85 www.sevildolmaci.com.tr
Open Tuesday-Saturday 10:30am-6:00pm;
Monday: Call to schedule a visit.

Founded by art historian Sevil Dolmacı, this gallery opened in 2020 in the historic Villa Ipranosyan, a preserved early 20th-century building overlooking the Bosphorus. Spanning four floors, it showcases both established and emerging artists and has become a key player in the contemporary art scene through curated national and international exhibitions.

THE PILL®

Ayvansaray, Mürselpaşa Caddesi No. 181, Balat, Fatih
Tel: (0212) 533 10 00; <https://thepill.co>
Visiting hours: 10:00am-06:00pm.
Closed on Sundays and Mondays.

Founded in 2016 and located in the historical peninsula, The Pill operates as a platform that brings together locally and internationally acclaimed artists.

ÖKTEM AYKUT

Meşrutiyet Caddesi No:99 Beyoğlu
info@oktemaykut.com; www.oktemaykut.com
Visiting hours: Tuesday-Saturday noon - 7:00pm

Founded by Doğa Öktem and Tankut Aykut in 2014, Istanbul-based Öktem Aykut exhibits works by local artists with diverse backgrounds and with a curation that highlights the underlying social commentary towards contemporary societies.

ZİLBERMAN GALLERY

İstiklal Caddesi No:163/10 Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 251 12 14; www.zilbermangallery.com
Visiting hours: Tuesday-Saturday 11:00am-07:00pm
Closed on Mondays and Sundays.

Located in one of the most iconic buildings of art nouveau architecture in Istanbul, Mısır Arpatmanı, Zilberman Gallery was founded in 2008 in Istanbul and expanded to Berlin in 2016. Taking part in global art fairs every year, Zilberman Gallery is also a space for art talks, lectures, book launches and round-table discussions.

OTHER CULTURAL CENTERS & FOUNDATIONS

ARTER

Irmak Caddesi No.13 Dolapdere, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 708 58 00; www.arter.org.tr
Visiting hours: Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday-Sunday 11:00am-7:00pm;
Thursday 11:00am-8:00pm. Closed on Mondays.

A subsidiary of the Vehbi Koç Foundation, Arter opened in 2010 on İstiklal Street in Beyoğlu and then moved to its new contemporary and versatile building in 2019, marking the 50th anniversary of the Foundation. The building, designed and spearheaded by the London-based Grimshaw Architects, has 18,000 square meters of indoor space and includes exhibition halls used for permanent and temporary exhibitions; two modest-sized state-of-the-art performance halls used for concerts, dance performances and conferences or panels with flexible seating structures; Learning Studio, providing flexible space for workshops, discussions, etc.; Arter Library, which provides reference books on all art disciplines; Arter Bookstore containing publications focusing on the arts, social sciences, as well as non-fiction and children's books; Bistro by Divan serving a variety of excellent café fare; and a terrace that caters to outdoor events. Arter's main function spaces are connected by a main atrium; the six galleries and terrace constitute roughly 5,000 square meters of dedicated exhibition area spread over six floors. By 2024, the Arter Collection includes more than 1,400 artworks, encompassing paintings, drawings, sculptures, prints, photography, film, videos, and installations from the 1960s to the present, created by approximately 400 artists.

ISTANBUL FOUNDATION FOR CULTURE AND ARTS

Nejat Eczacıbaşı Building
Sadi Konuralp Caddesi No.5 Şişhane, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 334 07 00; www.iksv.org

The Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (IKSV) is a non-profit and non-governmental institution founded in 1973 by Dr. Nejat F. Eczacıbaşı (1913-1993), a chemist, philanthropist and entrepreneur. In 1942 he founded Eczacıbaşı Holding, whose core sectors are building products, consumer products and healthcare. Led by Mr. Eczacıbaşı, a devoted and dedicated art enthusiast, 17 businessmen and art enthusiasts established IKSV aiming to organize international art festivals in Istanbul which they successfully accomplished. IKSV regularly organises the Istanbul Festivals of Music, Film, Theatre and Jazz, the Istanbul Biennial, Leyla Gencer Voice Competition and autumn film week Filmekimi. At the Nejat Eczacıbaşı Building, the Foundation hosts concerts at its performance venue Salon IKSV and offers creative events for children and youngsters at IKSV Alt Kat. The 7-story Nejat F. Eczacıbaşı building also houses their offices, a restaurant, and a popular rooftop terrace cocktail bar (Monkey).

SALT GALATA

Bankalar Caddesi No. 11 Karaköy, Beyoğlu

Tel: (0212) 334 22 00; <https://saltonline.org>

Visiting hours: Tuesday–Saturday 11:00am–7:00pm; Sunday 11:00am–6:00pm.

Founded by Garanti BBVA Bank, SALT Galata opened in November 2011. Located on Bankalar Street (the financial district during the Ottoman Empire and lined with historic 19th century buildings which today mostly converted to culture centers, hotels, etc.), this extraordinary landmark building has two façades, neo-classical on one side and orientalist on the other. Designed by French–Ottoman architect Alexandre Vallaury (1850–1921), the building housed the headquarters of the Imperial Ottoman Bank (1892–1999). Before SALT Galata’s opening in 2011, the building went through some major restorations spearheaded by internationally acclaimed Turkish architect Han Tümertekin. SALT Galata is a multi-purpose cultural institution dedicated to exhibitions and events: held at the 410 square-meter exhibition space, it offers a variety of educational programs via workshops, screenings, and conferences. It includes Salt Research a 650 square-meter user-friendly library located in the main atrium and open to the public, an auditorium with 281 seating capacity used to screen full-length films, etc., a comprehensive bookstore including Turkish and International publications and periodicals and managed by Robinson Crusoe 389 on the ground level with a cafe, and Neolokal, an excellent independently owned fine dining chef restaurant on the top floor’s covered terrace. Moreover, the digital presentations of the 145-year history of the Ottoman Bank Museum can be seen throughout SALT Galata. SALT also has a branch on İstiklal Street in Beyoğlu which is located in a restored 6-story mid–19th century historical building. Visit their website for detailed information.

VİTALİ HAKKO CREATIVE INDUSTRIES LIBRARY

Atatürk Culture Center, Mete Caddesi No.2 Gümüşsuyu, Beyoğlu

www.vakko.com

Visiting hours: Tuesday–Sunday 10:00am–5:00pm.

As the first library established by a fashion house in Türkiye, the Vitali Hakko Creative Industries Library opened at the Vakko Fashion Center which also served as the Corporate Headquarters of the Vakko Group located in the Nakkaştepe neighborhood in Üsküdar in 2011. The library was established by Cem Hakko, Vakko Chairman of the Board, in tribute to Vitali Hakko (1913–2007) who founded Vakko in 1934, to carry his legacy to future generations. In 2022, the library was moved to the recently re-opened Atatürk Cultural Center in the heart of the city in Taksim Square, Beyoğlu on the European side of the city. Now accessible to even more art enthusiasts, academicians, university students and the general public, the up-to-date comprehensive art library contains 15,000 books (including signed copies of special editions from the world's most prestigious publishing houses), digital and visual archives and more.



Vitali Hakko Creative Industries Library

WINING & DINING



Welcome to the world of wining and dining in Istanbul: a truly exciting, amazing and even maybe mind-blowing and insightful culinary experience for food aficionados from around the world. We can unequivocally state that Istanbul has come to a point where it can compete with pretty much any major cosmopolitan city in the world in the culinary arts, nightlife and hospitality industries. On top of it, we throw in a bit of history, culture and fantastic Bosphorus views as an extra complimentary bonus! In fact, to further support our claim; some of the “best” fine dining restaurants from around the world have branches in Istanbul. If you are visiting for the first time, you will realize that “Turkish cuisine” is not just kebabs and meats. You will notice the diversity of our cuisine, ingredients used and cooking techniques by dining at some of the restaurants recommended not only under the heading “Turkish cuisine”, but also listed under other categories (i.e., chef-owner restaurants, off-the-beaten path, fish restaurants, etc.). What’s more; a number of highly skilled and creative Turkish women chefs have successfully made themselves heard in the restaurant industry. While some have opened their own restaurants or cafes, others are at the helm of some popular international restaurants with branches in Istanbul. Kudos to all of them as the trendsetters leading the way for others of the same gender. Another trend that has become quite popular in the past few years is “one-stop” dining/clubbing. More and more restaurants and cafes have live music or DJ performances with bar/lounge areas so that dinner guests can continue the night at the same venue without having to go somewhere else to listen to music or have drinks.

Based on data from the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce, there are 17,525 restaurants in Istanbul as of 2024. So, you can imagine the difficulty we had preparing this “short” list of venues that are worth visiting while in our fair city! None of the establishments included are geared towards “tourists”, and all are places frequented and popular with Istanbulites. We hope that like our city dwellers, you chalk up some exciting and pleasant memories to share with your family and friends upon returning home. Happy wining and dining and hope to see you again in the future!

Editor’s note: Reservations are a must for all establishments (except maybe coffee houses) for breakfast, lunch or dinner; and bars and clubs. The concierge staff at the Vakko Hotel & Residence can assist you with all your reservation needs. Except where specified, all accept Mastercard and Visa; with a more limited number of venues accepting American Express or Diners Club. More and more establishments have started adding a “service charge” or “gratuity” (10%–12%) to your bill which is clearly stated on the bottom of menus. Feel free to tip more if you are more than satisfied with the service and the attention you’ve received. Since this is an annually published guide; it is possible the opening/closing days and times (even addresses if they move) of establishments can change after the date of publication.

DINING IN THE OLD CITY

BALIKÇI SABAHATTİN

Seyit Hasan Kuyu Sokak No.1 Cankurtaran, Fatih
Tel: (0212) 458 18 24; www.balikcisabahattin.com
Open daily noon to 2:00am
Fish and Seafood

Located on a secluded side street in a lovely restored historic wooden building, this family-owned fish restaurant going strong since 1927, offers indoor and outdoor dining areas, including some tables on a vine-covered cobbled street. The fish is always fresh and cooked to perfection; the traditional scrumptious hot & cold *meze* (tapas) and salads are prepared using only organic ingredients. Not your typical location for a fish restaurant, but definitely worth a visit.

CUMA

Çukurcuma Caddesi No:51 Cihangir
Tel: (0212) 293 2062; www.cuma.cc
Open daily 8.30am-midnight
Michelin Bib Gourmand

Located in the trendy Çukurcuma district, renowned for its antique shops, Cuma is a must-visit destination. The terrace is a highlight, providing a tranquil space to enjoy your day. The menu offers traditional Turkish breakfast and Mediterranean inspired lunch and dinner, featuring a culinary journey with tapas, seasonal produce, richly garnished pizzettas, and flavorful pasta dishes. Cuma stands out with locally sourced delicacies, including anchovies from Ayvalık and grilled octopus with a delectable black olive sauce, making it a culinary gem for those seeking diverse and flavorful experiences. It is perfect for a casual breakfast or lunch; or to watch the locals while enjoying a delightful meal. Cuma has been awarded the Michelin Bib Gourmand award for two consecutive years, 2024 and 2025.

HAMDİ RESTAURANT

Tahmiş Caddesi Kalçın Sokak No.1 Eminönü
Tel: (0212) 528 03 90; www.hamdi.com.tr
Open daily noon to 11:00pm
Meats and Kebabs

A 5-story restaurant located in a restored building, Hamdi is steps away from the Spice Bazaar, faces the Haliç Bay and offers panoramic views of the Bosphorus, Galata Tower and so much more and each floor affords partial views. The menu includes delectable hot and cold starters and a variety of juicy meat and kebab dishes prepared with the traditional cooking techniques used in Southeastern Anatolian cuisine. Chef and owner Hamdi Arpacı moved to Istanbul from his hometown Urfa in 1969. Starting out small; after his popularity quickly spread, the restaurant moved to its current location in 1980 and has been serving to meat lovers from all over the world ever since with two more branches in the city.

OLDEN 1772

Mimar Vedat Sokak No:3 Sirkeci, Fatih
Tel: (0850) 259 17 72; www.olden1772.com
Open daily 07:30am-midnight.
Contemporary Anatolian Cuisine

Nestled in a restored 250-year-old building in Eminönü, Olden 1772 offers an amazing dining experience surrounded by the rich historical texture of Istanbul. An old inn in the 1770’s, Muhsinzade Hanı now operates as a luxury boutique hotel under the name Han 1772 after 14 years of restorations and is home to the new Anatolian cuisine of Olden 1772. Without doubt one of the best places to experience the flamboyance and elegance of the Ottoman culture in Istanbul, Olden 1772 offers an Anatolian-inspired menu with modern touches. With a unique architecture that fully reflects the authentic texture of the old city, Olden 1772 also has great music and an extensive cocktail selection for those who want to hang out after dinner.



OLDEN 1545

Nafiz Gürman Caddesi No: 74, Cerrahpaşa

Tel: (0549) 695 15 45; www.olden1545.com

Open daily 6:00pm-2:00am

Mimar Sinan's first hamam masterpiece is transformed into a remarkable restaurant: Olden 1545, housed in the historic Kapiğaşı Yakupağa Hamam in Fatih, exudes a mystical atmosphere. The interior design of the restaurant, meticulously crafted by Naif Design, introduces a captivating dimension. The fusion of Turkish and global influences is evident in the menu led by Chef Aykut Can Akın. The octopus skewer, lamb kebab yakitori, and dry-aged steak steal the spotlight. With its alluring ambiance and a selection of specially crafted cocktails, the bar elevates the experience. Olden 1545 is an ideal setting for a range of occasions, be it a joyous celebration or a laid-back gathering among friends. The venue's enchanting atmosphere and diverse menu offerings promise a memorable experience tailored to various preferences and events.

PANDELİ

Balık Pazarı Kapısı Sokak No.1/2 Mısır Çarşısı, Eminönü, Fatih

Tel: (0212) 527 39 09; www.pandeli.com.tr

Open Monday-Saturday 11:00am -6:30pm

Turkish Cuisine

Michelin Bib Gourmand

Without knowing the past of Pandeli, you cannot totally appreciate how far it has come! Pandeli, so named after its owner, was a Greek descent Turk who moved to Istanbul in 1901 from the city of Niğde. On a street behind the Spice Bazaar, he sold white bean salads and meatball sandwiches to workers in the same neighborhood before opening Hamal. During the WWI years, his restaurant was frequented by intellectuals, politicians, journalists, artists and writers. In 1926, he opened Pandeli in a 3-story building in Eminönü. His restaurant survived through the WWII years. However, after the unfortunate Istanbul riots in 1955, he was forced to close it. Eventually persuaded by then President Celal Bayer and Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, he once again opened Pandeli inside the Spice Bazaar in 1958 where he became the first to introduce Turkish cuisine to an international discerning clientele. After Pandeli passed away in 1967; his son Hristo and long-time employee Cemal Biberici took over the helm, before the responsibility of running the restaurant was assigned to Mr. Biberici's son-in-law Naşit Aydınhan. Upon Mr. Aydınhan's death, Pandeli closed in 2016. To the delight of many, the restaurant reopened in 2018 under the management of the Desert Group, preserving its original decor, the spirit of Pandeli, and food quality and is once again packed with Istanbulites and international customers. In its heyday, Pandeli hosted the likes of Queen Elizabeth II, Audrey Hepburn, and Sean Connery among others. Pandeli was awarded the Michelin Bib Gourmand title in 2023 and continues to hold this prestigious recognition.

CHEF-OWNED RESTAURANTS

Istanbul has its fair share of chef-owner restaurants – whether Turkish or other residents who call Istanbul their home. Actually, this tradition is not new and goes back for many years in Türkiye as the majority of the meat and kebab restaurants and typical Turkish *esnaf lokantası* (tradesman restaurant) are family run with “on-the-job” educated chef-owners and the restaurants are usually handed down from generation to generation. However, almost all the “new age” chef-owners have received formal culinary training and/or have apprenticed under some of the best chefs in Türkiye or abroad before they take the leap and go out on their own. Below is a short list of very successful chef-owner restaurants in Istanbul which we highly recommend you visit for lunch or dinner during your visit.

ALAF/ALAF 2TEK

Kuruçeşme Caddesi No.19 Kuruçeşme, Beşiktaş
Tel: (GSM) 0532 015 9419; www.alafkurucesme.com
Open daily 6:00pm-midnight.
Alaf 2 Tek Tel: (GSM) 0530 979 47 95
Open daily: 3:00pm-midnight.
CHEF DENİZ TEMEL/Anatolian Cuisine
Michelin Bib Gourmand

33-year-old Mersin born (a city on the southern Mediterranean coast) Chef Deniz Temel has managed to gain culinary experience at some of the best restaurants in Istanbul and abroad in a short period of time. He graduated from the Tourism and Hotel Management Vocational High School in his hometown; his first experience was at the Mövenpick Hotel Istanbul, where he trained with acclaimed Chef Maximilian J.W. Thomae; he then studied

Culinary Arts at Kocatepe University in Afyon; and completed his internship at the Four Seasons Bosphorus Hotel. Afterwards, he worked at a couple of hotels in Virginia in the USA. Upon returning to Istanbul, he was the kitchen chef at Mimorelett, owned by esteemed Chef Murat Bozok. Crossing international borders; he interned at D.O.M. in São Paulo, Brazil then the world's 7th best restaurant; he then interned for 3 months at Noma in Copenhagen in late 2012 followed with a 2-month stint at the now closed Relae, a Michelin star restaurant in Denmark the following year. Upon returning to Türkiye in 2013 he was on the team of Alancha, a very successful restaurant that first opened in Alaçatı and then in Istanbul (now closed). Then came the time for him to go out on his own: in September 2018, Chef Temel opened Alaf 2Tek, specializing in traditional Turkish street foods like stuffed intestines (kokoreç); sweetbreads (uykuluk); mussels (midye), etc. in a casual setting with a Bosphorus view. Then came Alaf, located on the 2nd floor of the same building in December of the same year and open only for dinner. Chef Temel describes the food at Alaf as a “nomad experience fed through its roots”. Alaf, a derivative of the word asaf means burning amber fire in the nomadic dialect. This unique restaurant serves dishes from various cultures and you can find yourself tasting Kurdish, Armenian or Yezidi dishes during your dining experience. The modest-sized restaurant has seating for 45 people with a menu that changes according to the season and availability of fresh ingredients. The a la carte menu with an emphasis on offal or organ meat dishes are all cooked using wood-fired techniques. There are also two tasting menus, with or without wine pairing. Alaf is a good choice if you are adventurous and enjoy trying different culinary delights. Alaf boasts the Michelin Bib Gourmand award since 2022.

ARAF

Sümer Sokak Sümko N Blok No.1 AG, E İç Kapı No.2, Kadıköy
Tel: (0533) 969 27 23
Open Monday-Sunday 7:00pm-10:00pm
Closed on Tuesdays.
CHEF KENAN ÇETİNKAYA - PINAR ÇETİNKAYA
Contemporary Turkish Cuisine
Michelin Bib Gourmand

Founded by chefs Kenan Çetinkaya and Pinar Çetinkaya, Araf Istanbul has quickly gained recognition for its mastery of flavors and warm, inviting atmosphere. With seating for just 12 guests, the restaurant offers an exclusive and personal experience that ensures each diner feels like part of the culinary journey. The bar seating provides front-row access to the action, allowing diners to watch as dishes are masterfully prepared over an open fire. The menu is concise yet carefully curated, showcasing a commitment to fresh, high-quality ingredients. Signature dishes like lamb chops, veal cheeks, and chicken cooked over a wood fire highlight the chefs' expertise, while starters such as beetroot with thyme and pesto, or grilled tongue and baby octopus, display their flair for creative flavor combinations. Even the simplest elements, like a vegetarian beetroot dish, are elevated with bold, harmonious flavors. The restaurant has also been awarded the Michelin Bib Gourmand, a recognition of its exceptional quality and value.

ARAKA

Kapalı Bakkal Sokak No.8 Yeniköy, Sarıyer
Tel: (0212) 223 72 23
Open Tuesday-Saturday noon-midnight;
Sunday noon - 11:00pm
CHEF Z. PINAR TAŞDEMİR / Gastro Bistro Cuisine
Michelin One Star

Low-key, unassuming and highly skilled Chef Pinar Taşdemir opened Araka in a modest 2-story building in 2018 with seating for 50 customers. Set in minimalist and cozy surroundings; the focus is on just eating tasty unique dishes. What led her to open Araka In 2011, she attended a 4-month cooking course at MSA (The Culinary Arts Academy) in Istanbul. In the same year she joined the staff at Mest, which was then in Reşitpaşa. Here she had the opportunity to improve her culinary skills with Beyhan Gence who was a major influence in her decision to become a chef. In 2012, she joined the kitchen staff at the highly popular Müzedechanga. Then in 2014 she opened Fumée Restaurant with a few partners which was unfortunately short-lived. She returned to Müzedechanga in the same year and remained until it closed on December 31, 2016. She decided to open her own restaurant after taking an 8-month break to decide her future plans. During the interim, she attended photography courses and worked as a menu consultant for several restaurants which eventually led to her opening Araka where she creates and prepares dishes that cater to her targeted audience of foodies in a homey and cozy setting. She wanted to ensure that the “star” at Araka was the incredibly delicious unique dishes. Araka is open for lunch and dinner with an a la carte menu which changes based on the sourcing of fresh ingredients. A tasting menu can be prepared if customers request it in advance. Araka has earned a Michelin Star for three consecutive years, from 2022 to 2024.

ARKESTRA

Dilhayat Sokak No: 28, Etiler
Tel: (0212) 970 72 73; www.arkestra.com.tr
Open Monday-Saturday 6:00pm-midnight
CHEF CENK DEBENSASON / French Asian Cuisine
Michelin One Star

Arkestra (orchestra in Hindi) located in a beautifully renovated two-story villa, the sophisticated main dining area features an open kitchen, connecting dining rooms, and floor-to-ceiling windows that lead out to a lovely terrace covered by a pergola. The first floor offers seating for 74 guests. The colorfully decorated, comfy Listening Room or bar/lounge, with a snack menu, is on the second floor, complete with a small patio and DJ setup. Ritmo, Arkestra's more informal sibling, offers small plates, local and international wines, and curated cocktails, making it an ideal spot for private events and celebrations. Chef Cenk Debensason, who received his Bachelor's Degree in International Hotel & Restaurant Management from the Institute Paul Bocuse in Lyon, France, in 2012, has worked in various positions in the culinary world in Lyon, Paris, San Francisco, and Los Angeles before returning to Istanbul in early 2016. He served as Chef de Cuisine at Petra Roasting Co. and also worked as a food consultant for Vakkorama Cafe. Arkestra's à la carte menu features amazing dishes that are not only delicious but also visually stunning, including several reinterpreted signature dishes from French and Asian cuisines. Arkestra earned a Michelin Star in the 2023 and 2024 guides.

AŞEKA KARAKÖY

Müeyyeddade Karanlık Fırın Sokak No:6, Karaköy
Tel: (0530) 398 54 04; www.aseka.co
Open Tuesday-Sunday for lunch noon-4:00pm
for dinner 6:00pm-11pm
CHEF ÖMER AKOSMAN/Creative Cuisine

Situated within a century-old historical building in Karaköy, Aşeka promises a unique dining experience and high-quality signature cocktails in a delightful atmosphere. Named after the ivy that adorns its historic structure, Aşeka is Chef Ömer Akosman's culinary haven, offering a seasonally changing menu featuring ethnic cuisine with distinctive touches. The restaurant is divided into two levels: the upper floor for private events and the lower floor, which comprises the bar area and the main dining room. Aşeka takes pride in crafting all its products, including bread and sauces, in its own kitchen, earning its place in the Michelin Guide Istanbul selection. Whether you're seeking an intimate evening or a delightful meal with close friends, Aşeka is a good choice.

BASTA NEO-BISTRO

Operatör Cemil Topuzlu Caddesi No.39 F
enerbahçe, Kadıköy
Tel: (0216) 755 77 50
Open Tuesday-Friday 3:00pm-10:00pm;
Weekends 2:00pm-10:00pm;
Closed on Mondays.
CHEF KAN SAKARYA AND CHEF DERİN ARIBAŞ
Turkish Cuisine

Owned and operated by chefs Kaan Sakarya and Derin Arıbaş, Basta Neo-Bistro was founded as an evolution of its sister restaurant, Basta Street Food. Set in a space with classic bistro charm, the restaurant is known for dishes that embody a blend of creativity and innovation. The "neo" in its name is evident in items like beef brains with salsa and Urfa peppers, delivering a unique umami taste, and the refreshing tomato gazpacho with raw shrimp. The wine selection focuses on artisanal wines from independent producers, perfectly complementing the inventive cuisine.



Arkestra

CLOVE

Pınar Mahallesi Katar Caddesi İstinye Park No: 1 İç Kapı No: 488, Sarıyer
Tel: (0212) 279 90 90; www.clove.ist
Open daily 10:00am–midnight
CHEF EMRE ŞEN/ Gastro Bistro Cuisine

Nestled in İstinye Park, Clove introduces a fresh and distinctive experience to the locale. Chef Emre Şen, celebrated for his culinary prowess at the prestigious Casa Lavanda in Şile, crafts the menu. Offering an eclectic array of signature and seasonal dishes, Clove provides a versatile dining experience, spanning lunch and dinner, as well as options for a casual drink at the bar or a relaxed time in the cafe. Additionally on Fridays and Saturdays after a delicious dinner you can continue your night at the bar with DJ performances. Clove seamlessly blends fashion, art, and city life, making it a good choice for group gatherings, parties, and any kind of celebrations

FILO D'OLIO TRATTORIA

Vadistanbul Shopping Mall No.3/C Ayazağa, Sarıyer
Tel: (0212) 285 03 01; www.filodolio.com.tr
Open daily 10:00am–10:00pm
CHEF DANILO ZANNA/Italian Cuisine

The “jack of all trades” 40-year, Prato, Tuscany born Italian chef Danilo Zanna opened Filo D’olio in early 2022 and already has a branch in Izmir, a city in the Aegean region. Chef Zanna moved to Istanbul a little over 10 years ago because of his passion to learn Turkish cuisine. He is highly fluent in Turkish; has hosted numerous cooking shows on local TV; and since 2019 is one of the chef/judges for the highly popular MasterChef Türkiye, a competitive cooking reality TV show. His goal at Filo D’olio, (which means the actual act of pouring olive oil into a dish) is to create dishes using Italian recipes integrated with local and fresh ingredients. Designed to resemble a typical Italian trattoria, the

eatery has indoor and outdoor dining areas. Chef Zanna already has a few signature dishes: he highly recommends the Milanese-style schnitzel, which literally melts in your mouth. The menu also includes dishes from Sicily, Naples and Tuscany. A reinterpreted version of Vitello Tonnato or the 18-layered lasagna prepared with a special sauce also stand out. Moreover, Chef Zanna has a cheese factory which he established a couple of years ago in Istanbul with an Italian cheese expert at the helm, so he only uses cheeses from his own factory. This is the place to go for lunch or dinner if you want to taste real home-style Italian comfort food. But make sure you leave room for Chef Zanna’s signature dessert: Napoleon (Mille-Feuille)!

GALLADA

Kemankeş Caddesi No:34, Karaköy
Tel: (0212) 931 28 88; www.galladaistanbul.com
CHEF FATİH TUTAK/Turkish-Asian Cuisine

Internationally renowned Chef Fatih Tutak has collaborated with The Peninsula Istanbul to offer an exceptional culinary journey set against the breathtaking backdrop of the Bosphorus. In his latest endeavor, the two Michelin-starred Chef Tutak guides us through a fusion of Turkish and Chinese influences, crafting a distinctive and special menu. Showcasing contemporary Turkish and Asian cuisine, Chef Tutak skillfully employs techniques refined over years of experience. Notably, accomplished Chef Taylan Yücel is also a key member of the kitchen team at Gallada, ensuring a culinary experience of the highest caliber. On the second floor of Gallada, the Topside Bar seamlessly combines breathtaking views of the Bosphorus with an impressive cocktail selection and Chef Tutak’s curated bites.

HODAN

Hayriye Caddesi No.12 Galatasaray, Beyoğlu
Tel: (GSM) 0533 304 76 34
Open Tuesday–Saturday Lunch: 12:30pm–4:00pm
Dinner: 6:00pm–11:00pm;
Sunday Brunch: 11:00pm–3:00pm
Dinner: 5:00pm–10:00pm
CHEF ÇİĞDEM SEFEROĞLU/Turkish Cuisine

After deciding to make major decisions in her business and personal life, Chef Seferoğlu decided to pursue a career in culinary arts at the age of 30 and was one of the first graduates of the Gastronomy Department at Okan University. She then interned at different venues before becoming the Private Chef of the Chairman of the Board at THY (Turkish Airlines). She pursued her passion for cooking and discovering local tastes and ingredients by traveling from village to village and by visiting outdoor food markets before deciding to go out on her own after 4,5 years with THY. Moreover, this year she is celebrating the 5th season of her cooking show called “Soframız” on a local cable TV channel. Chef Seferoğlu opened her first restaurant Hodan in June 2021, located in the spacious back terrace/garden at the Cezayir, a historic building dating back to 1901. The white tablecloth Hodan’s setting is inviting and decorated with art works, with a glass-encased retractable pergola and surrounded with trees creating a sublime ambiance. She added a stone oven in an area of the garden as well as planting aromatic herbs such as oregano, mint, basil and rosemary in another part of the garden. The modest-sized menu consists of classic dishes from Turkish cuisine with refined touches added by the chef. Each dish looks like a masterpiece and is only prepared with fresh and seasonal ingredients. For a gastronomic treat Hodan is a good choice for lunch or dinner or maybe even for Sunday brunch. Hodan; borage or starflower in English, is an edible herb native to the Mediterranean region and is traditionally cultivated for culinary or medicinal purposes.

LİMU LOKANTA

Köybaşı Caddesi No:158 D:B; Yeniköy
Tel: (0533) 580 22 55
Open Weekdays 11:30am-midnight;
Weekends 2:00pm-midnight
CHEF SARA TABRİZİ/Modern Turkish Cuisine

Nestled in the timeless charm of Yeniköy, Lokanta Limu seamlessly combines tradition with a contemporary touch. Led by Chef Sara Tabrizi, with over twenty years of culinary experience in Aheste, Lika, and Yan Mutfak, Lokanta Limu seamlessly blends tradition and contemporary flavors. The restaurant’s dishes, adapted to suit modern tastes, create a culinary journey that honors both heritage and innovation. What distinguishes Lokanta Limu is its steadfast dedication to seasonality, ensuring that every dish becomes a celebration of fresh, locally sourced ingredients. Chef Tabrizi’s meticulous approach is apparent in every bite, elevating the dining experience to unmatched heights. With an extensive selection of delightful mezes, the menu features classic options alongside choices you won’t find anywhere else.



Mikla

WINING & DINING

MIKLA

Meşrutiyet Caddesi No.15 Tepebaşı, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 293 56 56; www.miklaestaurant.com
Open Monday-Saturday, The Kitchen 6:00pm-11:30pm; The Bar 6:00pm-midnight
CHEF MEHMET GÜRS/New Anatolian Kitchen
Michelin One Star

The ground-breaking Mikla entered the restaurant scene in October 2005. The 2-story refined and stylish restaurant is perched on the top floor of the Marmara Pera Hotel with a small patio for dining on the main level next to the indoor dining room with a sizeable rooftop terrace; both affording incredible views of the Bosphorus and historic peninsula. The décor is funky retro with chrome; floor to ceiling windows; furniture from the 50s and 70s with a striking wooden rail-sleepers bar and lounge and a partial open kitchen. Not the first restaurant opened by internationally acclaimed Chef Mehmet Gürs; his venture into the culinary world began after he graduated from John and Wales University with a degree in Culinary Arts and Food Service Management. He then worked at several hotels and restaurants in the USA before returning to Istanbul. He opened Downtown restaurant in 1996; then came Lokanta, Nu Teras and numnum, a casual comfort food eatery. When it came time to start planning the concept for Mikla, Chef Gürs' idea was to create a refined, yet contemporary "Istanbulite" restaurant with a menu that reflected the Turkish-Scandinavian background of the illustrious chef. Almost immediately, Mikla started receiving rave reviews from not only discerning local and international guests, but also from the local and international press for its outstanding food and superior service. Not stopping there; after extensive research on the subject, Mikla launched its visionary "New Anatolian Kitchen" approach in 2012. What this means is that Gürs and his team treat traditional and true top-quality products with the utmost respect when creating dishes using a blend of new and ancient cooking techniques with the products carefully sourced from

Istanbul and throughout Türkiye. With a menu that changes seasonally; you can choose a 3-course prix-fixe à la carte menu or a 7-course tasting menu. There is also a tasting menu for vegans and all are offered with or without wine pairing. For an unparalleled gastronomic feast like no other you must experience Mikla for yourself! Since 2015, Mikla has graced "The World's 50 Best Restaurants" list, and in 2022, the restaurant was honored with a Michelin star—a prestigious recognition Mikla proudly continues to hold.

MÜKELLEF KARAKÖY

Maliye Caddesi No. 8/A Karaköy, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 243 03 04; www.mukellefkarakoy.com
Open daily; Breakfast 7:30am-12:30pm; Lunch 2:00pm-6:00pm; Dinner 7:00pm-11:00am
CHEF ARDA TÜRKMEN/ Turkish Tavern

Arda Türkmen, our "chef next door" took a plunge into the culinary scene when he opened a catering company in 2003 (sold in 2012), which quickly became very popular and was preferred by local and international celebrities including Metallica and Depeche Mode. He opened his first restaurant, 11 Leblon in Asmalimescit in 2008. In 2010 he was asked to prepare a cooking show called "Arda'nın Mutfağı" (Arda's Kitchen) for a TV channel; this year our congenial chef is celebrating the 13th anniversary of his cooking show. He closed 11 Leblon in 2013 and opened Forneria in Karaköy before changing the concept of the restaurant and reopening it as Mükellef at the same location in 2015. Located on the top floor of the Haze Hotel, the spacious eatery has an indoor dining area and 2 separate terraces, with the large one offering a lovely view of the Bosphorus and parts of the historic peninsula. The à la carte menu includes a good selection of delicious and freshly prepared daily classic Turkish cold and hot meze, mains and desserts; all meant to be shared. Mükellef which means "bountiful or abundant" also serves typical Turkish breakfast treats.



Neolokal

WINING & DINING

NAZENDE

Caddebostan Plaj Yolu Sokak No.13/A
Caddebostan, Kadıköy Tel: (0533) 617 02 68
Open Tuesday-Sunday 6.30pm-midnight;
Closed Monday
CHEF ULUÇ SAKARYA/Mediterranean Cuisine
Michelin Bib Gourmand

Nazende is a charming restaurant renowned for its warm atmosphere, fresh meze, and signature dishes. Founded in 2019 by Chef Uluç Sakarya, whose passion for cooking and hospitality led him to open this beloved establishment, the restaurant quickly became a favorite. Chef Uluç Sakarya had a long career in textiles but was truly known for his exceptional cooking. He and his wife loved hosting dinner parties, and guests always raved about his food. Friends encouraged him to open a restaurant, and he finally did! With two menus – a regular menu and a daily-changing specials menu – Chef Sakarya ensures that the dishes are always fresh and seasonal. The portions are generous, making them perfect for sharing with friends and family. Some of the most popular dishes include tempura, favali enginar (bean dip with artichoke) and fried zucchini. Whether you're celebrating a special occasion or simply looking for a great place to socialize with friends, Nazende offers a welcoming ambiance and delicious food that will leave you wanting more. Nazende was awarded the Bib Gourmand by Michelin Guide 2025 edition.

NEOLOKAL

SALT Galata
Bankalar Caddesi No.11 Karaköy, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 244 00 16; www.neolokal.com
Open Tuesday-Saturday 6:00pm-1:00am
CHEF MAKSUT AŞKAR
Contemporary Anatolian Cuisine
Michelin One Star & Michelin Green Star

Highly innovative and skilled 1976 born Chef Maksut Aşkar studied Tourism and Hotel management at a vocational high school in his hometown in Iskenderun before continuing his education at Boğaziçi University (1994-1999) in Istanbul. Before opening his first restaurant Multi (2007-2009), he worked at various restaurants; managed venues and was also a food consultant for numerous restaurants. He then opened his second restaurant LilBitz (2009-2012). He eventually opened his "ultimate dream"; the unique fine dining restaurant Neolokal on the top floor of the SALT Galata Museum in 2014. The refined restaurant has floor to ceiling windows offering a stunning view of the historic peninsula with parquet floors, soft lighting and a modest-sized bar. The menu is made up of exquisitely presented dishes prepared with modern takes on Anatolian cuisine. Chef Aşkar's philosophy is quite simple; "... exclusively designed dishes that provide an opportunity to reminisce about traditions on the verge of extinction as they are no longer commonly used...". Neolokal offers three distinct menus: the Neolokal Tasting Menu, the Vegetarian Tasting Menu, and the Gluten-Free, Lactose-Free, Nut-Free Tasting Menu, each available with or without wine pairing. Each menu has been carefully crafted using select ingredients to satisfy the discerning tastes of food enthusiasts. Neolokal earned its first Michelin star in 2022 and continues to hold this prestigious recognition. It is also one of Istanbul's Green-Starred restaurants. Chef Aşkar is also the co-owner of Foxy (see Café Fare - Yet Chic & Trendy).

NICOLE

Boğazkesen Caddesi No:18
Tomtom Kaptan Sokak, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 292 44 67; www.nicole.com.tr
Open Tuesday-Sunday 6:30pm-11.30pm
CHEF SERKAN AKSOY
Contemporary Turkish Cuisine
Michelin One Star
Michelin Service Award

Ever since childhood, Chef Serkan Aksoy harbored the dream of becoming a chef, and now, not only has he become a chef, but he also leads a Michelin-Starred restaurant, Nicole. Boasting experience gained at renowned establishments such as Delicatessen, Frankie and Maçakızı, Chef Serkan Aksoy has solidified his place in the culinary world. Nicole Restaurant, situated on the top floor of a meticulously renovated historical building, derives its name from one of the building's previous owners, nun Agnés Marthe Nicole. Inspired by the historical legacy of the building and incorporating modern reflections, Nicole aspires to offer guests unforgettable culinary experiences on its stylish terrace, providing a breathtaking view of Istanbul. The restaurant achieves this by seamlessly blending the concept of Traditional Turkish cuisine with a unique and contemporary interpretation. You can choose from a choice of tasting menus, both of which showcase Chef Aksoy's culinary finesse.

Nicole has maintained its Michelin Star for the third consecutive year, further solidifying its position as a culinary destination. In the 2025 Michelin Guide, the restaurant was also honored with the prestigious Michelin Service Award.

PEOPLE NİŞANTAŞI

Vali Konağı Caddesi No: 8/A , Nişantaşı
Tel: (0532) 432 64 05; www.peoplenisantasi.com
Open Monday to Saturday noon-3:00pm for lunch;
6:00pm-22:30pm for dinner;
The bar daily noon-midnight
CHEF VOLKAN TÜRE/Modern Turkish Cuisine

It might look like a regular coffee joint, but don't let appearances deceive you—step inside, and you're in for a ride through a cozy yet selective tasting menu or the classic à la carte options. Aydan Önder and Ali Özbora, the founders of People of Coffee, known for their delicious coffees for years, now offer a gastronomic experience as People Nişantaşı with Chef Volkan Türe. This is a genuine farm-to-table experience since Aydan Önder comes from a family deeply rooted in farming and livestock. The culinary journey kicks off with a 12-year-aged sourdough walnut bread, accompanied by whipped browned butter. The tasting menu offers a delightful variety of dishes, each a testament to the dedication of People Nişantaşı to providing a unique and memorable dining experience. Vegan, vegetarian and gluten free options are both included in tasting and a la carte menus. It's a perfect place to explore new flavors and enjoy a glass of wine with friends.

RESTORAN MODERN

Kılıç Ali Paşa Mahallesi Tophane İskele Caddesi
No:1/1, Tophane, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0539) 613 58 64
Open Tuesday-Sunday noon-midnight
CHEF TUĞÇE MİRZA CANİK/Gastro Bistro Cuisine

Turkey's pioneering museum of modern and contemporary art, İstanbul Modern, has a new home designed by renowned architect Renzo Piano. Since reopening in 2023, the museum has reclaimed its status as a cultural focal point of the city. Along its south façade, Restoran Modern offers breathtaking views of the Bosphorus from an outdoor terrace. In the kitchen, Chef Tuğçe Mirza Canik creates seasonal menus featuring the finest examples of Mediterranean and contemporary Turkish cuisine, prepared with local ingredients and modern touches. The restaurant offers distinct menus from breakfast to dinner, with dedicated options for children. The wine list predominantly highlights local wines, complemented by expertly crafted cocktails available throughout the day. On weekends, indulge in a delightful breakfast experience. Pair your meal with a visit to the museum for a seamless blend of culinary and artistic inspiration.

THE RED BALLOON

Ruz Hotels, General Yazgan Sokak
No. 6, Asmalımescit, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0532) 434 34 95; www.theredballoon.com.tr
Open Tuesday-Sunday 5:30pm-midnight;
closed on Mondays
CHEF ULAŞ DURMAZ/Mediterranean Cuisine
Michelin 2024 Young Chef / Ulaş Durmaz
Michelin Bib Gourmand

The Red Balloon was founded in 2022 in Yeniköy, with a focus on ingredient-driven cooking and a menu inspired by the coastal flavors of the Aegean. Today, it has reemerged in the heart of Beyoğlu, breathing new life into a charming three-story building that invites exploration across its layered spaces. Downstairs, a cocktail bar sets the rhythm of the day; one floor up, a "casual fine dining" experience awaits with a menu crafted around seasonality and locality. At the very top, an intimate space designed for private events offers a more personal kind of memory-making. Led by Michelin 2024 Young Chef winner Ulaş Durmaz, whose roots in Ayvalık deeply inform the kitchen's philosophy, The Red Balloon delivers dishes that are heartfelt and produce-driven, complemented by an extensive drinks list and signature cocktails. Chef Durmaz sources his ingredients as locally as possible to create Mediterranean dishes with a North Aegean sensibility. From the menu, one standout is the squid from Babakale, seared to bring out its deep flavor, then brightened with crisp, fruity mandarin notes that cut through the richness. His creative approach and youthful energy breathe new life into familiar tastes. Awarded a Bib Gourmand, The Red Balloon balances refined elegance with soulful simplicity, offering not just a meal, but a feeling.

TURK FATİH TUTAK

Silahşörler Caddesi Yeni Yol Sokak No.2 Bomonti, Şişli
Tel: (0212) 709 56 79; www.turkft.com
Open Tuesday-Saturday 7:00pm-11:30pm;
CHEF FATİH TUTAK/New Turkish Cuisine
Michelin Two Stars

What's your take on going to a fancy restaurant that only offers one set menu that changes frequently? Are you adventurous and like trying unique food combinations prepared by a highly accomplished chef who only uses fresh ingredients sourced from the four corners of Türkiye, if "definitely yes" is your answer; then book a table at Turk Fatih Tutak for a truly amazing gastronomic experience.

Chef Fatih Tutak opened his first restaurant in Istanbul in December 2019. In a way this is a homecoming for him after working with some of the best chefs abroad for the past 15 years. He apprenticed under renowned French chef Paul Pairet in Shanghai, as well as at some of the country's best hotels and restaurants. He then grasped the depths of global cuisine in Beijing, Tokyo, Singapore, Hong Kong and Bangkok. He also worked under Rene Redzepi at Noma in Copenhagen and under chef Seiji Yamamoto at the 3-Michelin-starred Nihonryori Ryugin, before moving on to Singapore to work at Marina Bay Sands. Chef Tutak felt it was time to return to his roots and use all this experience to open a restaurant in his homeland dedicated to Turkish cuisine. He says his vision is not to reinvent existing traditional recipes, but rather to create new dishes that are balanced and harmonious. He adds; "We are inspired by the past but cook for the future". The set menu changes regularly and includes 10 dishes (dessert included), however the menu is not suitable for vegans. The decor is inviting in its simplicity with seating for 60 guests. The design was inspired by Türkiye's cultural past and letters from ancient Orkhon inscriptions are added to the designs of the wall and floors adorned with Seljukian patterns. By retaining its two Michelin stars once more, the restaurant reaffirms its position as a culinary master. Chef Tutak also leads Gallada Restaurant.

YENİ LOKANTA

Kumbaracı Yokuşu No:66/B, Tomtom, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 292 25 50; www.yenilokanta.com
Open Tuesday-Saturday
noon-4:00pm / 5:00pm-midnight
CHEF CİVAN ER/ Turkish Cuisine

Yeni Lokanta, located in Beyoğlu, stands as a Michelin Guide recommended restaurant, offering an authentic gastronomic experience. Chef-owner Civan Er puts his unique spin on classic Turkish cuisine with creative interpretations and refinements. The restaurant features a seasonally changing tasting menu, and à la carte menu. Signature dishes like mantı (dumpling) with beef, mersin prawns, and beef ribs from the wood oven are among the favorites. With its vibrant Mediterranean decor and the inventive touch of a skilled chef, the venue welcomes you to indulge in Turkish flavors that blend original ideas. Yeni Lokanta also has a second branch in London, Soho.



Turk Fatih Tutak

TURKISH WINES / INDIGENOUS WINE GRAPES

According to historical data, the first traces of viniculture dates back about 7.000 years to the Hattians and Hittites, the oldest civilization on these lands. At that time, wine played an essential role in their social life. Today Türkiye is one of the leaders in viticulture and is the 6th largest grape producer in the world, but sadly only about 5% of the grapes are used for winemaking: the rest is consumed fresh or dried.

In present day, the Aegean region is home to around 50% of the approximately 150 wine producers in Türkiye; the 2nd largest is the Marmara region with about 30% of the country's wineries and vineyards. It's impossible to list them all but some of the major and boutique wine producers in Türkiye are: Doluca, Kavaklıdere, Kayra, Sevilen, Pamukkale, Lykia, Chamlıja, Vinkara, Urla, Corvus, Arcadia, Suvla, Paşaeli, Barbare, Büyülbabağ, Chateau Kalpak, LA Wines, Perdix, Urlice, etc.

Although many of the internationally recognized grape varieties (Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot) are also cultivated in Türkiye; this is an introduction to the most popular indigenous Turkish grapes used to produce excellent Turkish wines.

The Aegean region is home to around half of the country's 150 or so wine producers.

RED WINE GRAPES

BOĞAZKERE

The blue/black colored small, round and thick-skinned, grapes are grown in the Diyarbakır province in Southeastern Anatolia. Varietal wines made with this grape are dark, full-bodied with dense tannins, medium to high acidity and have a complex aromatic profile. Compared to the Cabernet Sauvignon grape, it is more common to find Boğazkere (which means throat burner) as a blend and is usually blended with the Öküzgözü grape, which is compared to a Merlot.

KALECİK KARASI

Taking its name from its town of origin, Kalecik Karası is mainly grown in the Central Anatolian region in the Ankara province; however, it is also grown in the Aegean region (Denizli, Manisa, Elmalı, Uşak); Thrace region in Tekirdağ; and Cappadocia and Nevşehir in Central Anatolia. Although the grape skins are quite dark; light to medium-bodied wines are produced. The wines have great potential for aging (preferably up to 5 years) and is probably Türkiye's most ageable grape variety. Produced at its worst, it is a simple and fresh wine with no complexity with fruit and distinctive cotton candy aromas. However, when made well, the grape has the potential to produce wine with complexity and elegance with a good aroma profile.

ÖKÜZGÖZÜ

Türkiye's most cultivated red wine grape gets its name (Öküzgözü means bull's eye) from the large, round and almost black color. Mainly grown in the Elazığ province in the Eastern Anatolian region; it is now also planted in Ankara and Uşak in Northern Anatolia; Nevşehir and Cappadocia in Central Anatolia; and in Kırklareli in the Thrace region. The wines produced are usually medium opaque, garnet-colored and medium bodied with round fruity aromas, some

tannins and robust acidity, which makes this grape a good choice to produce rosé wines. Since the Öküzgözü grape is compared to the Merlot grape and Boğazkere to a Cabernet Sauvignon; the two are often blended to produce wines.

WHITE WINE GRAPES

BORNOVA MISKET

This grape (muscat) is used to produce dry and sweet wines and is grown in the Aegean region in the province of Izmir and its surroundings. The grapes are medium-sized and are a pinkish color when ripe. Very aromatic wines are produced that are light and easy to drink.

EMİR

This grape is grown in Central Anatolia in the Cappadocia and Nevşehir provinces. It is suitable for producing dry, primeur or sparkling wines and is refreshing and easy to drink. The color of wines produced with this grape are greenish yellow.

NARİNCE

Grown in the Tokat province in the Black Sea region, Narince is used to make dry straw yellow-green color wines with floral notes, fruity flavors and citrus aromas. The wines are medium-sized, full-bodied and balanced with good acidity. When fully ripe, it has a striking amber color.

SULTANİYE

A seedless, pale green oval grape and globally known as Sultana, it is grown in Manisa in the Aegean region. It is the most commonly grown grape in Türkiye because it is not a *vitis vinifera*, but a table grape. Despite not being a wine grape, wineries still use it to produce wine. The grapes are medium-sized, round and have a bright green color. Wines made with sultana range from sweet to dry but even the driest has fruity aromas and flavors. It is a fresh wine that is easy on the palate with a rounded finish.

FISH & SEAFOOD

One of the most popular pastimes for Turks is to go out with family or friends for *rakı-balık*. Rakı, also referred to as “lion’s milk” (*aslan sütü*) is one of the national drinks in Türkiye; the aniseed-flavored alcoholic beverage is made with twice-distilled grapes. *Balık* means fish, so undoubtedly Turks head straight to a fish restaurant to socialize, share some good food and cheer!

At last count, there were over 1,100 fish restaurants in Istanbul, but the *crème de la crème* is located along the Asian and European shorelines of the Bosphorus Strait. Although there are no set rules, the meal starts off with a selection of Turkish cold & hot meze (*tapas*). Usually, at most fish restaurants the cold meze selections are brought to your table on a large tray to select from and range from white cheese, melon (*beyaz peynir, kavun*), olive oil braised vegetable dishes like *börülce* (samphire), purslane (*semizotu*) and a variety of different eggplant (*patlıcan*) dishes; *lakerda* (salt-cured bonito), a true delicacy and requiring skill to prepare; along with a host of yogurt-based dips like *haydari* (garlic-yogurt dip) and *havuç tarator* (carrot yogurt dip); or other dishes like *humus* (creamy chickpea and tahini dip) and fava bean purée. Hot meze includes yummy treats like grilled or fried calamari, octopus or mussels and baby shrimp casserole (flavored only with butter & red pepper flakes). A salad is also ordered to share. Preferred salads are usually a sliced tomatoes and onions salad dripping in olive oil or mixed greens (leaf lettuce, romaine, arugula, parsley, dill, etc.) salad also seasoned with olive oil and lemon juice. The finale to the meal (if you still have room) is fresh fish of the season. Most restaurants also display the fish at the entrance to the restaurant stacked on ice for the customers to see. Depending on the type of fish selected;

it is usually simply grilled or fried and served with a side of boiled potatoes, slices of raw white or red onions and a few arugula leaves. Desserts are not a major feature at fish restaurants but include fresh fruit platters, sugary desserts such as *şekerpare* or *baklava* and *kabak tatlısı* (pumpkin dessert). After your *rakı-balık* feast, top off our meal with a cup of Turkish coffee and you are set! As we say in Turkish, *afiyet olsun* (bon appétit).

The following is a short list of some of the best fish restaurants in Istanbul. Almost all the traditional fish restaurants only use white tablecloths and white service plates and dinnerware. We wanted to give you a good mix and have included those that are traditional as well as those that step outside the boundaries of tradition.

ARNAVUTKÖY BALIKÇISI

Arnavutköy Caddesi No.4 Arnavutköy, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 257 05 25
Open daily noon–11:00pm

A favorite among Istanbulites, the restaurant is located across the street from the Arnavutköy promenade with a wonderful unobstructed view of the Bosphorus shoreline from its glass encased terrace with a retractable pergola and a modest-sized indoor section. The longstanding restaurant serves traditional meze and fish dishes along with some of their own special dishes; the food is very good and the service efficient and friendly.

AZUR YENİKÖY

Köybaşı Caddesi No.71 Yeniköy, Sarıyer
Tel: (0212) 299 97 98; www.azurrestaurants.com
Open daily noon–midnight

Off the top, Azur (which means royal blue in Turkish) is not a traditional Turkish fish restaurant; the only thing it has in common with its counterparts are the white tablecloths. Open since 2018, Azur is on the Bosphorus waterfront in Yeniköy, a residential area lined with cafes, restaurants and bakeries on the main Köybaşı street. The two-story Azur has an outdoor terrace and indoor dining areas. The concept at this restaurant is to offer classic meze and seafood dishes prepared with their chef’s innovative interpretations. For example, seabass is served with Hawaiian sauce; shrimp with quinoa; beetroots and almonds with tarator (walnuts & garlic) sauce; pasta with ricotta cheese & caviar; and lobster with pineapples and mango which you can top off with Tahini San Sebastian cheesecake! Definitely a different experience for adventurous foodies!

BALIKÇI ABDULLAH

Barbaros Caddesi No.18/B, Beykoz
Tel: (0216) 425 07 21; www.balikciapo.com
Open daily from noon to midnight

Open since 1996, Balıkçı Abdullah is located along the Bosphorus in Beykoz on the Asian shoreline, affording partial views of the Istanbul business district skyline. The restaurant promises discerning customers a relaxed atmosphere away from the hustle and bustle of the city. They pride themselves in offering all types of fish; from the small and juicy mullet (*tekir*) to the large and delectable grouper (*lagos*) cooked to perfection along with a variety of traditional delectable cold and hot meze. The restaurant offers a free boat shuttle service departing from İstinye on the European side every night starting at 7:00pm.

BALIKÇI KAHRAMAN

İskele Caddesi No.15 Rumeli Kavağı, Sarıyer
Tel: (0212) 242 64 47; www.balikcikahraman.com
Open daily from noon to midnight

After working for 18 years as a cook at other venues; chef and owner Kahraman Altun, from the city of Trabzon in the Black Sea region opened his restaurant in 1996. Moreover, his entire wait and kitchen staff are from Trabzon as well. The self-taught chef learned the tricks of the trade and cooking techniques of the Black sea region from his grandfather and father. Today, it is one of the most popular seafood restaurants primarily among affluent Turks and foreigners alike. The specialty of the house is whole grilled turbot (*kalkan*) cooked in a *tandır* (clay) oven. The restaurant is located in Rumeli Kavağı, at the edge of the northernmost point of the Bosphorus on the European side of the city.

BEBEK BALIKÇISI

Cevdetpaşa Caddesi No.26/A Bebek, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 263 34 47; www.bebekbalikci.com.tr
Open Monday–Friday 11:00am–11:00pm;
Saturday–Sunday 11:00am–11:30pm

Open since 1974, this highly popular upscale elegant and sophisticated fish restaurant is located on the Bosphorus waterfront in posh Bebek. The restaurant is divided into two sections and the glass encased terrace has a retractable roof. The service is impeccable and the menu includes a very wide selection of delectable meze and fish selections for its discerning Turkish and international clientele. Since 2017, owner Nizam Dursun's daughter Zeynep Petek Dursun has been at the helm of the kitchen after graduating from Yeditepe University, Gastronomy & Culinary Arts Faculty.

CALIPSO FISH

Küçükyalı Mahallesi
Cumhuriyet Caddesi No:2, Maltepe
Tel: (0216) 489 28 58; www.calipsorestaurant.com
Open Daily 11:00-midnight
Michelin Bib Gourmand

Nestled on the Anatolian side of Istanbul, Calipso Fish stands out as a delightful and spacious fish restaurant, renowned for its Aegean cuisine and impeccable service. The chef's expertise shines through in every dish, showcasing the use of fresh, seasonal ingredients. Traditional preparation methods further enhance the rich flavors of the exceptionally fresh fish and seafood. Calipso provides a serene escape from the city's hustle and bustle, offering an ideal location for family dinners and socializing with friends. The restaurant has been awarded the Bib Gourmand, solidifying its reputation as a culinary destination.

CHACHA BALIK

Kuleli Caddesi No.47 Çengelköy, Üsküdar
Tel: (0216) 321 03 62; www.chachabalik.com.tr
Open daily noon-1:00am

Chacha Balık, a contemporary seafood restaurant, carries on the legacy of the much-loved Beykoz classic, Uskumru Restaurant. Set against a backdrop of sparkling waters, its white-clothed tables create a serene ambiance ideal for enjoying fresh seafood and flavorful meze. Be sure to try their signature dishes, including sardines, lakerda (salt cured bonito), and kabak çiçeği dolması (stuffed zucchini flowers) all beautifully complemented by the stunning view.

CİBALİKAPI BALIKÇISI

Moda Caddesi No.163, Kadıköy
Tel: (0532) 163 55 20; www.cibalikapi.com
Open daily noon-1:00am

Opened 23 years ago by journalist Behzat Şahin in the Golden Horn, Cibalıkapi Balıkçısı Moda branch has become a local favorite. The restaurant offers a vast selection of nearly 200 mezes, each reflecting the diverse cultures of the region. From Cibalıkapi-style spicy Borani (yogurt mixed with a cooked vegetable) and Girit Ezme (Cretan cheese spread) to the royal fish pickles made with sea bass fillet marinated in saffron, honey, vinegar, and spices, the meze menu is a testament to extensive culinary research. The seafood is just as impressive, with fresh, seasonal fish prepared to perfection. Cibalıkapi Balıkçısı Moda offers a tranquil, green oasis with peaceful surroundings. Outdoor tables are nestled beneath trees and greenery, creating the feeling of dining in a secluded garden. For a dining experience steeped in history and taste, the restaurant's Golden Horn branch offers breathtaking views alongside its exceptional cuisine, making for a truly memorable gastronomic journey.

DEL MARE

Kuleli Caddesi No.45/1 Çengelköy, Üsküdar
Tel: (0216) 422 57 62; www.delmarerestaurant.com
Open daily noon-midnight

Perched on the shores of the Bosphorus, Del Mare offers a serene escape from the city bustle, providing breathtaking views of both the historic peninsula and the sparkling waterway. Housed in a historic building, the restaurant seamlessly blends traditional charm with modern elegance. With its award-winning à la carte menu, Del Mare is a haven for seafood lovers. Indulge in the freshest catches of the day, expertly prepared and served with an array of delectable meze and salads, all crafted with organic ingredients. For a truly unforgettable experience, arrive by boat – complimentary boat service is available to guests. Whether you're seeking a romantic dinner or a memorable meal with friends, Del Mare is the perfect choice.

KANDİLLİ BALIKÇISI SUNA ABLA

Kandilli İskele Caddesi No.4 Kandilli, Üsküdar
Tel: (0216) 308 45 12
Open daily from noon to midnight

Officially named the above, but known affectionately to its regulars as Suna Abla'nın Yeri (older sister Suna's place); this bare-bones but excellent longstanding fish restaurant is right on the Bosphorus waterfront at the Kandilli ferryboat pier; it is easily accessible by hopping on the ferry that runs to the Asian side from the Bebek pier on the European side. Don't expect luxurious surroundings, but be prepared to eat some of the best meze

and fish in the city sitting on wooden chairs in front of the pier or on the adjacent cobble-stoned street. In contrast to its other counterparts, rakı is served in cobalt blue rakı glasses. The meze selections are minimal but ever so delectable. Named after its owner Suna Türksezer who was born and bred in Kandilli; regulars go back again and again for the homey and laid-back atmosphere coupled with the excellent food and cheer just a few steps from the glorious Bosphorus strait.

KOÇO

Moda Caddesi No.171 Caferağa, Kadıköy
Tel: (0216) 336 07 95
Open daily noon-midnight

Located in the heart of Kadıköy's Moda neighborhood, Koço is a historic restaurant that has been serving locals and visitors alike for decades. Nestled along the waterfront, this charming spot offers stunning views of the Marmara Sea, making it a popular destination for both casual diners and those seeking a special meal. Known for its mezes and perfectly grilled seafood, Koço blends classic flavors with a warm, welcoming atmosphere. The outdoor terrace, shaded by trees, adds to the peaceful ambiance, providing the perfect backdrop for a memorable dining experience by the sea. Koço is also home to a small shrine in its basement, dedicated to St. Cathryn. According to local legend, a sacred spring (Ayazma) and the ruins of a church dedicated to St. Cathryn were discovered nearby, and Koço has since become the shrine's guardian, preserving this spiritual site within its walls.

KIYI

Haydar Aliyev Caddesi No.186/A Tarabya, Sarıyer
Tel: (0212) 262 00 02; www.kiyi.com.tr
Open daily from noon to midnight

Open for over 50 years, Kiyi is an Istanbul classic and located in a lovely 2-story building across the street from the Bosphorus shoreline in Tarabya. The elegantly decorated white tablecloth restaurant has floor to ceiling windows that are opened during the summer and their walls are adorned with contemporary paintings and photographs. Their regular local and international customers keep on coming back for the delectable meze, seafood and fish dishes prepared using traditional cooking techniques. Kiyi is especially known for their exceptional lakerda (salt cured bonito), çiroz (air-dried mackerel), çoban salatası (shepherd's salad) among many others.

LACİVERT

Körfez Caddesi No. 57/A Anadoluhisari, Beykoz
Tel: (0216) 413 37 53; www.lacivertrestaurant.com
Open daily 10:00am-midnight

Lacivert (which means navy blue) is located on the Bosphorus waterfront in a lovely historic mansion on the Asian side of the city in Anadoluhisari at the foot of the Fatih Sultan Mehmet Bridge. The menu includes a vast variety of fish and seafood dishes; however, it is not a typical traditional fish restaurant. The menu also includes mains such as lamb chops, beef tenderloin and yogurt kebab listed side by side with grilled sea bream, monkfish stew and grilled lobster among others. Open since 1999, Lacivert has spacious indoor and outdoor dining areas and accomplished Executive Chef Hüseyin Ceylan has been at the head of the kitchen since the beginning. Popular with Turks and foreigners alike, Lacivert has a free boat shuttle service: transfers begin at noon on weekdays and at 10:00am on the weekends from Rumelihisari on the European side of the city.

OUZO ROOF RESTAURANT

Fener Kalamış Caddesi No:38 Fenerbahçe, Kadıköy
Tel: (0216) 400 00 30; www.ouzorestaurant.com
Open Tuesday-Sunday 3:00pm- 2:00am
Closed Monday

Located on the rooftop of the Wyndham Grand Istanbul Kalamış Marina Hotel, Ouzo Roof Restaurant is a favorite among both locals and tourists, thanks to its stunning terrace views and Mediterranean-inspired menu. Named after Greece's traditional drink, ouzo, this elegant spot offers a harmonious blend of Turkish and international cuisines. Under the expert guidance of Chef Hüseyin Öztürk, the restaurant is renowned for its signature seafood dishes, including traditional mezes, seasonal fish, Aegean-style octopus, and calamari. Meat lovers will also find plenty to enjoy, alongside an extensive drink and wine selection. Live music four nights a week adds to the vibrant atmosphere at Ouzo Roof Bar.

PARK FORA

Muallim Naci Caddesi No.54/A Kuruçeşme, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 265 50 63; www.parkfora.com
Open daily noon-2:00am

Park Fora is an elegantly decorated white tablecloth fine-dining fish restaurant located inside the Cemil Topuzlu Park in Kuruçeşme on the Bosphorus waterfront with indoor and outdoor dining sections surrounded by the lush verdant park. Open since 1996, Park Fora has been serving an extensive list of traditional delicious cold meze such as salt-cured bonito (*lakerda*), fish roe (*tarama*); hot meze (fish soup, seafood crepe, fried mussels, etc.); and seasonal fish from the shores of the Black Sea, Marmara and Aegean seas. The delectable culinary delights also include a vast number of salads prepared with Aegean herbs, greens and seafood

along with other treats like paella, moules marinière, tartare and sashimi dishes among others. This distinguished restaurant also has live king crab and lobster tanks; imports Fine Claire oysters from France, and has an excellent wine list including Turkish and international wines. Park Fora is also IS 22000 and ISO 9001 certified.

POYRAZ ÇAPARI

Mendirek Yolu Kennedy Caddesi
No.12/1 Poyrazköy, Beykoz
Tel: (0216) 320 12 18
Open daily 08:00am-midnight

Known for serving an array of seafood caught fresh on the same day, this hidden gem provides a pleasant dining experience with indoor and outdoor seating. It's also a popular choice for breakfast, making it a versatile destination for any time of day. Beyond its culinary appeal, the romantic ambiance has made it the setting for countless surprise proposals, marking the beginning of many long-lasting love stories.

RUMELİHİSARI İSKELE

Yahya Kemal Caddesi No.1 Rumelihisari, Sarıyer
Tel: (0212) 263 29 97; www.rumelihisariiskele.com
Open daily 12:30pm -2:00am

Open since 1992, this restaurant with spacious terrace with floor to ceiling windows that open, is right on the Bosphorus and built on the no longer operational Rumelihisari ferry boat pier offering a spectacular panoramic view of the Bosphorus with the Fatih Sultan Mehmet Bridge as a backdrop. Besides the prerequisite tasty traditional cold and hot meze and fish dishes, their specialties include cheese & seafood crepe with cream sauce; white bean stew; poached sea bass with tomato or cream sauce; and salt-crusted sea bass among others.

SAİT

Galataport, Meclis-i Mebusan Sokak
O1 Blok No. 8 D.102 Tophane, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 401 06 33; www.sait.com.tr
Open daily 10:00am-midnight

Open since 2000, the ever-popular Yalıkavak, Bodrum based Sait now has a branch in Istanbul at Galataport Istanbul on the Bosphorus waterfront. Sait is a family-run restaurant with Sait Birtan Yılmaz and his wife Ferman at the helm. The modest-sized Istanbul branch is not a white tablecloth restaurant and has a modern décor with a large bar and floor to ceiling windows. The cold and hot meze varieties include all the traditional selections but also include stuffed courgette flowers; artichoke hearts; mussel soup; seabass stew, and smoked mackerel.

ŞAŞKIN BALIK EFKAN'IN YERİ

Noter Sokak No.8 Suadiye, Kadıköy
Tel: (0216) 357 43 43; www.saskinbalik.com
Open daily noon-midnight

With its blue-and-white checkered wooden tables and chairs, Şaşkın Balık Efkan'ın Yeri has built a loyal following over the years. This cozy spot evokes the feel of a seaside taverna on the Aegean coast, offering a relaxed yet charming atmosphere. While seasonal fish like sea bass, bream, anchovies, and mackerel are always on the menu, it's the mezes that truly steal the show. Freshly prepared every day, these mezes are what the restaurant is best known for. Don't miss their signature dish, "Nazik," made with fresh sea bass.

USKUMRU

Körfez Caddesi No.55 Anadoluhisari, Beykoz
Tel: (0216) 460 10 00; www.uskumru.com.tr
Open daily from 11:30am to midnight

Uskumru (meaning mackerel) is located in a spacious restored waterfront mansion with indoor and outdoor dining areas with a superb scenic view of the Bosphorus at the foot of the Fatih Sultan Mehmet bridge on the Asian side of the city. The elegantly decorated Uskumru offers a wonderful selection of traditional cold and hot meze as well as flawlessly cooked seafood and fresh fish of the season. Make sure to also order the sliced tomato and onion salad prepared with olive oil and lemon juice and soak up the juices with some homemade cornbread! We suggest you go for a late lunch or early dinner during the week (less crowded) so that you can delight in the colors and hues of the sunset over the Bosphorus. Open for over 30 years, the family-run restaurant's team has been working together since the start. Uskumru offers a free boat shuttle service throughout the day from Rumelihisari.

VILLA BOSPHORUS

Beylerbeyi İskele Caddesi No.18 A
Beylerbeyi, Üsküdar
Tel: (0216) 318 68 10; www.villabosphorus.com.tr
Open daily 10:00am-midnight

Beylerbeyi Palace's elegant neighbor, Villa Bosphorus offers a waterfront dining experience like no other. With panoramic views of both bridges, this historic mansion serves up a delectable array of fresh seafood and seasonal meze. Don't miss their signature dishes: grilled turbot (kalkan) salt-crusted sea bass, and stewed mackerel. And for dessert, indulge in a walnut dessert served with ice cream.

RAKİ: a.k.a. "LION'S MILK"

Rakı, one of the national drinks of Türkiye, is produced with twice-distilled grapes and flavored with aniseed. It is said that it was first produced in the 16th century during Ottoman times by non-Muslims living in Istanbul, but did not become popular until the 1800s. Rakı is also referred to as "*aslan sütü*" or "lion's milk" as it turns to a milky water color once water is added to the highly potent spirit that contains 40-50% alcohol. There are many brands of rakı sold in Türkiye and each has different alcohol levels. Just like wine, the "trial and error" method will lead you to your rakı brand of choice. At most venues, rakı is sold in 35cl or 70 cl bottles; but other sizes are available at supermarkets (20cl and 50cl). Other things to keep in mind: rakı is not just drunk any time, or with just anyone; it's a serious business in Türkiye. In fact, it is usually not sold at most conventional bars. It is the "go-to" spirit and a good reason to get together with good friends for some good cheer; for celebrations (birthdays, job promotions, family or friend reunions, etc.); or to drown out your sorrows after a bad break-up or losing your job. If this is the first time you are being introduced to "rakı", the following will make your experience more enjoyable and not turn into a "tragic mistake". Şerefe! (cheers)

Rakı is never consumed on its own and is always accompanied with food. It can be a massive feast of cold or hot meze that is shared by all at the table; or simply slices of white cheese & melon or roasted white chickpeas. In part, food serves to dampen the effect of the strong spirit.

As the alcohol content is quite high, it is commonly diluted with chilled water and/or ice cubes to make the taste more enjoyable (but mainly manageable!). It is served in traditional rakı glasses.

As a "first-timer" or unseasoned rakı drinker, a rakı glass (thin long glass) should only be filled with about one "tek" (about 4cl) shot of rakı, the same measurement of chilled water and some ice cubes. More seasoned rakı drinkers often order a double shot (8cl). Drinking rakı "straight-up" with no water is definitely not advised.

You should never gulp, but only "sip, sip and sip" rakı. Rakı is meant to be savored and enjoyed while socializing with friends. You will be less affected (but not totally unaffected) from the intensity of the alcohol content. So, don't be surprised if you transform into a "chatter-box" or a major giggler after a couple of glasses of rakı.

Some of the longstanding major rakı brands are: Yeni Rakı, Tekirdağ, Efe and Beylerbeyi. Under each brand there are sub-brands reflecting different alcohol contents, flavors and production methods. However, a brand new and unique "boutique" rakı popped up on the scene in 2021: Prototip. The formula for this rakı brand was developed by Mehmet Gürs, the chef/owner of Mikla Restaurant and Cemre Torun, a food writer, editor and consultant who has also published two coffee table cookbooks with co-writer Begüm Yaramancı. Only available in 70cl bottles, it was produced using Öküzgözü (see Turkish wines for details) grapes from the southeastern province of Elazığ at Mey Diageo's (Türkiye's largest rakı producer) and has a 45% alcohol content.

INTERNATIONAL

CAVIAR KASPIA ISTANBUL

Kuleli Caddesi No.43, Çengelköy, Üsküdar

Tel: (0549) 784 50 50; www.vakkohotelsumahanbosporus.com

Open Tuesday-Sunday 6.00pm-midnight

World-famous for offering top quality seafood and remaining faithful to its philosophy with a reputation for excellence in the selection of its products and service to its customers, Caviar Kaspia's latest outpost finds its way to Istanbul following the likes of Los Angeles, New York, and London. Opening at Vakko Hotel Sumahan Bosphorus, Caviar Kaspia is set to create an immersive home away from home for our guests. Caviar Kaspia offers a memorable journey for the senses, punctuated by unique flavors starring the Parisian restaurant's famously first-class caviar, perfectly paired with a glass of champagne or a shot of vodka.

Old-world elegance meets comfort with Parisian flavor inside the restaurant, harmonizing with Vakko Hotel Sumahan Bosphorus' own timeless aesthetic. Caviar Kaspia's iconic blue tablecloths are present, as are the wood-paneled walls, creating a warm and intimate atmosphere with the feel of a private club, accompanied by live Jazz and DJ performances.

Each dish at Caviar Kaspia, including the Parisian restaurant's signature twice-baked potato topped with caviar, is infused with exciting details and flavors for a truly unforgettable dining experience. Meanwhile the bar, a real jewel of the venue, serves magnificent craft cocktails accompanied by caviar in a unique environment that blends tradition and modernity.

DİVAN BRASSERIE FUAYE

Atatürk Cultural Center Mete Caddesi No.2/1 - 1 Gümüşsuyu, Beyoğlu

Tel: (0212) 952 19 56; www.divan.com.tr

Open daily 11:30am-midnight

Divan is a longstanding and prominent name in the hospitality industry in Türkiye and now they have opened a branch of their popular brasserie at the renovated Atatürk Cultural Center. The contemporary designed wood-paneled interior with floor-to-ceiling windows in some sections also has a large bar area and outdoor terrace with a magnificent view of the Bosphorus strait and 15 July Martyrs (Bosphorus) Bridge. A good choice for lunch or dinner, the menu includes a whole host of Turkish and international appetizing treats. You might want to try one of Divan's classic dishes: Yogurt Kebab, slow-cooked Beef Cheeks, or Chicken or Beef Schnitzel.



Caviar Kaspia Istanbul

HAKKASAN ISTANBUL

Muallim Naci Caddesi No: 62, Kuruçeşme
Tel: (0212) 349 88 88; hakkasan.com/istanbul

Situated within the Mandarin Oriental Bosphorus, the Michelin-starred Hakkasan Istanbul offers stunning panoramic views of the peninsula. Renowned as one of the world's most influential Chinese restaurants, Hakkasan's chefs not only showcase their expertise in crafting innovative dishes inspired by ancient recipes but also excel in presentation skills. Each dish, prepared with a commitment to tradition, presents a harmonious blend of modern and authentic impressions. A must-try classic at the restaurant is the crispy duck salad. Concluding your meal with a palate-cleansing dessert is an essential. Every visit to Hakkasan promises new flavors and a unique dining experience. Many dishes are designed for sharing, so you can enjoy the opportunity to explore a diverse range of offerings with your fellow diners.

MASA

İstinyePark No.486 İstinye, Sanyer
Tel: (0212) 345 53 23; www.masaistanbul.com
Open daily 10:00am–10:00pm

Masa (table in Turkish) opened at the then newly opened luxurious İstinyePark Shopping Mall in 2007 and is located on the fashionable concourse level which houses some of the most luxurious international retail brands. Popular since its opening with both Turkish and international food lovers; Masa is very spacious with a capacity for 220 at its pleasantly decorated interior which has very high floor to ceiling windows; an indoor u-shaped bar with seating for 20; and outdoor terrace for 151. The menu is extensive with many starters (i.e., shrimp dumplings), salads (i.e., grilled halloumi salad), brick-oven pizzas (i.e., pizza mix), homemade pasta and risotto (i.e., lasagna), and mains (Tenderloin of Beef, Grill Lamb Liver and Grilled Alaskan Salmon). A nice place to go and sip your wine and enjoy a relaxing meal before or after shopping at the mall.

MÜRVER

Kemankeş Caddesi No.57–59 Karaköy, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 372 07 50; www.murverrestaurant.com
Open for lunch: noon–3:00pm (weekdays), 12:30pm–3:00pm (weekends); dinner: 6:00pm–10:30pm (weekdays), 6:00pm–11:00pm (weekends); bar: noon–1:00am (weekdays); noon–2:00am (weekends)

The concept at Mürver is quite simple: by using different cooking techniques, regional recipes are re-interpreted using local in-season ingredients and cooked over an open flame in their wood-fired grill or brick oven. The mains include fish of the season, seafood and different cuts of meats that have been aged, dried or smoked in-house. The restaurant offers a variety of unique and intriguing starters and signature dishes include “ash-grilled octopus”, “slow-roasted lamb shoulder” and oven-baked “burnt rice pudding” served with ice cream. Located on the rooftop terrace of the Novotel Istanbul Bosphorus, Mürver opened in 2017 and the décor at this spacious venue is inviting and contemporary; materials such as wood, metal, sheet metal and copper were used in its design. The outdoor terrace has floor to ceiling windows with a retractable glass encased pergola offering fantastic views of the Bosphorus.

NOVIKOV ISTANBUL

Muallim Naci Caddesi No.62 Kuruçeşme, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 349 88 99; www.novikovistanbul.com
Open daily 7:00am–10:30am for breakfast; 12:30pm–5:00pm for lunch; 5:00pm–midnight for dinner

Russian born Arkady Novikov, an ex-chef turned restaurateur has been called the “brainchild” behind the Novikov brand and has been said to have changed the face of dining in Moscow: he has been called a “restaurant guru”, “blini baron” and even “Russia’s Gordon Ramsay”! Established in Russia in 1992, he added further fame to his name after opening his first branch of Novikov outside of Russia in London in 2011 and hasn’t stopped since with countless restaurants on several continents. Novikov Istanbul opened in 2021 and like all his other branches has been attracting the glitterati living in Istanbul and abroad. The spacious restaurant with indoor and outdoor seating is contemporarily designed and is located on the Bosphorus waterfront at the Mandarin Oriental Bosphorus, serving a wide selection of innovative dishes from Pan-Asian, Italian and Mediterranean cuisines. Their wine cellar includes a vast selection of fine wines from around the world. The restaurant has an open kitchen and all sorts of fish, seafood, Peking duck, fruits and vegetables are on open display for all to see. You can also stop by the elegant Lounge Bar for an aperitif before dinner and try one of their famous signature cocktails.

PARLÉ

Zorlu Center Shopping Mall Levazım, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 353 63 43; www.parleistanbul.com
Open daily noon–2:00am

Offering Southern French and Mediterranean cuisines, Parlé has been designed to resemble a modernized version of a French brasserie. The spacious indoor and outdoor dining areas have high ceilings, wood, metal and copper accents, an open kitchen and comfortable and elegant bar. Some of the appealing delicacies from the menu include: stuffed calamari with lentil stew; grilled quails with quinoa salad; warm date and goat cheese salad; grilled beef medallions with Café de Paris sauce; and French-style Peking duck. Open since 2013, Parlé is located at the Zorlu Center shopping mall concourse level surrounded with world-class luxurious retail brands which will definitely catch your eye.

SPAGO BY WOLFGANG PUCK

Mim Kemal Öke Caddesi No.35 Nişantaşı, Şişli
Tel: (0212) 368 08 08; spago.theregishotel.com
Open daily 3:00pm–2:00am

Open since 2015, Spago Istanbul is one of the branches of Wolfgang Puck, an internationally acclaimed iconic 2-Michelin star chef. The rooftop restaurant and lounge with indoor and outdoor dining areas at The St. Regis Istanbul is elegantly designed with contemporary design accents and signature details, affording splendid views of Maçka Park and the Bosphorus strait. The culinary delights on the menu change according to season and availability of local produce. The eclectic dishes are prepared with a fusion of American, Italian and Asian accents and features Chef Puck’s popular wood-oven pizzas (the highlight is the smoked salmon pizza), starters, handmade pastas, sushi, mains and desserts. Spago also has a bar menu with an extensive list of scrumptious snacks.

ITALIAN CUISINE

Just like the rest of the world, there is an influx of Italian restaurants in Istanbul; in fact, some of them have Italian chef-owners (see section on chef-owner restaurants for details); others are branches of internationally acclaimed brands; while some opened in Istanbul for the first time. Below is a short-list of some of the best Italian restaurants in different districts of the city. All are excellent and worth trying for lunch or dinner.

AIDA VINO E CUCINA

Caferağa Mahallesi
Ressam Şeref Akdik Sokak No.10, Kadıköy
Tel: (0544) 851 51 51; www.aidavinoecucina.com
Open Monday-Saturday 5.00pm-midnight

Aida Vino e Cucina, offers a taste of Italy without the fuss. Known for its simple yet delicious dishes, the place features classic Italian flavors with a modern touch. Enjoy dishes like homemade salsiccia with celery puree and an inventive take on vitello tonnato. Don't miss the beetroot risotto with cheese and squid stuffed with eggplant and mint. Spanning three floors, the restaurant provides a welcoming atmosphere with a focus on quality ingredients. Aida Vino e Cucina has been awarded the Michelin Bib Gourmand, recognizing its exceptional quality and value.

CECCONI'S

Meşrutiyet Caddesi No. 56 Asmalimescit, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 377 71 80; www.cecconistanbul.com
Open Monday-Saturday for lunch noon to 6:00pm;
dinner 6:00pm-11:30pm; Sunday Brunch 11:30am-3:00pm; dinner 6:00pm-11:30pm

The London-based Cecconi's branch is located in the lovely courtyard of the restored 19th century Palazzo Corpi Building (once home to the US Consulate; but now the private club Soho House), Cecconi's, a member of the Soho House family since 2004, is also open to Soho House non-members. Set among the garden's olive trees, there is also an indoor dining area. Open since 2015, Cecconi's offers a good selection of dishes from Northern Italy.

CIPRIANI ISTANBUL

Park Hyatt Istanbul-Maçka Palas
Bronz Sokak No:4 Teşvikiye Nişantaşı, Şişli
Tel: (0212) 296 99 50;
www.cipriani.com/cipriani-istanbul
Open daily noon-01:00am

A great dining alternative that is very close to Vakko Hotel & Residence, the world-famous Cipriani's Istanbul branch is nothing short of exceptional. You can enjoy a light lunch or Italian-style carb-filled delicious dinner in the vintage décor of Cipriani Istanbul, reflecting 20th century Italian elegance. Home to the iconic dish Carpaccio and the refreshing Bellini, Cipriani Istanbul's must tries also include their signature Martini as well as everything on their white truffle menu, prepared with white truffles imported from Alba, Italy.

COTTO GASTRO

Kazım Özalp Sokak No.29 Suadiye, Kadıköy
Tel: (0533) 478 72 88; www.cotto.co
Open daily 9:00am-2:00am

A classic Italian restaurant perfect for hosting celebrations or enjoying a meal with special guests. The menu features signature Italian dishes like Osso Buco, Lasagna Ragu, and Risotto Alla Zucca, all prepared with care and tradition. Be sure to finish your meal with their must-try tiramisu!

DA MARIO

Dilhayat Sokak No. 7 Etiler, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 265 15 96; www.damario.com.tr
Open daily noon-midnight

The modest-sized white tablecloth fine dining Da Mario is located on a quiet street in a charming 2-story villa with a floor to ceiling glass-encased outdoor terrace set surrounded with foliage while the wood-paneled interior is adorned with framed photographs depicting Da Mario through the years. Da Mario is one of the first (and still one of the best) Italian restaurants in Istanbul and opened in 1993. With a very long list of Turkish and international regular customers; mouthwatering fresh homemade pastas, pizzas cooked in a wood-fired oven; antipasti to include Prosciutto di Parma, their menu will definitely entice your tastebuds. Da Mario also has a branch at the posh İstinyePark shopping mall.

DIECI MODA

Yoğurtçu Parkı Caddesi No.70-72/A Moda, Kadıköy
Tel: 0540 164 10 10
Open daily 9:00am-midnight

Located in the heart of Moda, Dieci offers a delightful array of Italian dishes in a cozy, inviting setting. The menu features a wide selection, from flavorful starters like Melanzane, Fried Seafood with Aioli, and Grilled Artichoke to handmade fresh pastas such as Penne Alla Norma, 4 Cheese Gnocchi, and Porcini Mushroom Pappardelle. For pizza enthusiasts, their wood-fired pizzas deliver authentic Italian flavors.

FAUNA

Işıklar Caddesi No:9 D:B, Ataşehir
Tel: (0545) 572 11 30; www.fauna.com.tr
Open Tuesday-Saturday noon-2:00pm
Michelin Bib Gourmand

Opened its doors in 2003 as a small 5-table restaurant, and since 2014, Fauna has evolved into a 22-seat neighborhood eatery in Ataşehir with an open kitchen—a place dedicated to creating delicious dishes. Fauna isn't your typical dining spot—it's only open during lunch hours and specific times, so reservations are essential due to limited capacity. This ensures freshness, offering a truly unique gastronomic experience. Chef İbrahim Tuna's attention to detail is exceptional, creating a taste reminiscent of Italy. With Chef Emrah Coşkun joining Fauna, the culinary experience has become even more robust. The daily menu, displayed on a blackboard above the open kitchen, adds to the charm of this intimate space. Despite its size, Fauna's warmth comes from the experience itself. We recommend visiting Fauna with friends, share dishes, and revel in the culinary joy. Standout favorites like lamb shank pasta, mixed Aegean cheese and tomato ravioli, and seasonal fruit sorbets await your palate. Fauna proudly holds a place in the Michelin Guide's Bib Gourmand category.

GINA GALATAPORT

Galataport, Meclis-i Mebusan Sokak No.10/1E M
Blok Tophane, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 401 03 87-88; www.gina.com.tr
Open daily noon-midnight

Gina is tucked away in a quiet corner of the newly opened Galataport İstanbul, a distance away from the cluster of restaurants on the main promenade. The décor is eclectic and designed differently than its main branch at the posh Kanyon Shopping Mall which has been open since 2009. Although the menu includes classic Italian dishes, some not so classic choices like "Vitello Tonnato"; "Parmigiana Di Melanzane"; and Napoli-style "Tartufo & Provolone" pizza stand out among the rest. After you order your food, enjoy the "amuse bouche" served to all Gina customers.

IL BOCCALINO 34

Operatör Cemil Topuzlu Caddesi
No.35 Fenerbahçe, Kadıköy
Tel: (0542) 352 63 86
Open Tuesday-Sunday 5:00pm-11:00pm;
closed on Mondays

Il Boccialino 34 is a charming Italian restaurant that has quickly become a local favorite. The menu offers classic Italian dishes like homemade porcini pasta, pesto gnocchi, pizza margherita, and tiramisu, all prepared with care and authenticity. Its cozy ambiance and welcoming vibe make it a go-to spot for anyone craving a true taste of Italy in the neighborhood.

IL CORTILE GALATA

Galata Kulesi Sokak No.14 Galata, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 244 26 74
Open daily noon to midnight

Steps from the Galata Tower and located in a charming gated courtyard (hence its name, Il Cortile means courtyard in Italian), at a historic building which was once an elementary school and monastery, Il Cortile opened in May 2021 and became an instant hit. The spacious courtyard was once the garden of the monastery; built in 1842, the historical building was recently restored maintaining its original form and is now home to the Ecole St. Pierre Hotel. Also, there is a tastefully decorated indoor bar/lounge with brick walls and high ceilings. Besides classic Italian dishes, the other recommended dishes are asparagus and white truffle oil risotto; and gnocchi and seafood lasagna. For dessert you can try the chestnut soufflé or cannoli. The menu also includes a separate section with delicacies from the Liguria (northwestern Italy) region and includes among others "Trippa Alla Genovese" (tripe cooked with shallots, tomatoes and parmesan cheese), a local favorite from Genoa. Il Cortile has a Turkish executive chef: Nihat Sancar has been in the restaurant industry for over 25 years and has gained experience at some of the better restaurants in the city (Vogue, Wan-na, Zuma, etc.)

IL SUD

Sarrafi Ali Sokak No.15 Kadıköy
Tel: (0532) 564 00 73; www.ilsudistanbul.com
Open daily 2.30pm-midnight

The restaurant's warm and stylish atmosphere, combined with its diverse pizza menu, has made it a popular choice among locals and visitors alike. With their thin crust and fresh ingredients, Il Sud's pizzas are a must-try. Alongside their pizzas, they also offer a variety of homemade pastas made fresh daily

to cater to all palates. The basil pesto tagliatelle and black spaghetti with shrimp are favorites among guests. For dessert lovers, the crème brûlée and tiramisu are the perfect way to end a meal.

MARCELLO TEŞVİKİYE

Teşvikiye Caddesi No:41A Kat:8, Nişantaşı
Tel: (0532) 200 90 25; marcelloilristorante.com
Open Tuesday-Thursday noon-midnight;
Friday-Saturday noon-1:00am

Located on the top floor of The Stay Boulevard Nişantaşı, Marcello offers an ideal escape from the city on a terrace overlooking the Bosphorus. Marcello draws inspiration from the iconic actor Marcello Mastroianni. Helmed by Napolitan Executive Chef Luigi Mariconda and Genoese focaccia chef Massimiliano Nardo, Marcello is renowned for its exclusive Focaccia Tipo Recco. Chef Mariconda's daily handmade pastas, parmesan and porcini mushroom risotto, and lasagna are culinary highlights. The extensive wine cellar offers a diverse selection of local and international wines. Marcello's signature vegan cocktails, enhanced with greens from vertical farming, add a refreshing touch. Designed by Autoban, the restaurant's inviting atmosphere captures the essence of Italian charm, making it a unique culinary destination.

NELLO'S

Halay Sokak No.10 Suadiye, Kadıköy
Tel: (0552) 683 34 80
Open daily noon-10:00pm

A charming Italian restaurant where delightful aromas fill the air. Whether you stop by for lunch or dinner, accompanied by a glass of wine, you're in for a treat. The burrata pizza is a standout, while the freshly made gnocchi served every Monday will leave a lasting impression on your taste buds.

PAPER MOON

Ahmet Adnan Saygun Caddesi

Akmerkez Residence Entrance No.224 Etiler, Beşiktaş

Tel: (0212) 282 16 16; www.papermoonrestaurants.com

Open daily noon to midnight

A sophisticated design, lively ambiance, meticulous and welcoming service and outstanding culinary delights. This perfectly defines the upscale and chic fine dining white tablecloth restaurant Paper Moon to a tee. And, it hasn't skipped a beat since the Milan-based popular venue opened in Istanbul in 1996; it is still one of the hottest spots in Istanbul frequented by affluent and influential Istanbulites and foreigners alike for a casual lunch, fancy dinner, important business meeting or just for drinks and snacks at Paper Moon's stylish lounge bar. The spacious restaurant is separated into 3 sections with floor to ceiling wood-paneled windows with an outdoor terrace. Since it opened, Paper Moon's professional staff has been managed by the highly accomplished and expert Executive Chef Giuseppe Pressani who prepares mouthwatering authentic delicacies from Italian cuisine. All of the dishes on the menu are high-quality, palate pleasing and prepared only using fresh ingredients in season. Let's not forget their excellent extensive wine list and perfectly prepared cocktails by their expert bartenders. If you want, you can move over to the bar or the spacious lounge for cocktails after dinner for more fun and cheer.

RISTORANTE UMBERTO

Prof. Dr. Hulusi Behçet Caddesi No.8/A

Caddebostan, Kadıköy

Tel: (0533) 290 10 10; www.ristoranteumberto.com

Open daily noon-11:00pm

From classic Italian starters like burrata to a variety of pastas, risottos, and main dishes, Ristorante Umberto offers a delightful selection of favorites. Unique starters such as cozze alla marinara or Prosciutto e Melone bring something special to the table. However, one of the standout features of Ristorante Umberto is their pizzas. The pizzas here are a hit with a variety of options to suit every preference, from classic to creative toppings. A perfect choice for any pizza lover looking for great flavor.

THE ORDINARY

Silahşörler Caddesi NOW Bomonti Blok

No.75/A Bomonti, Şişli

Tel: (GSM) 0537 562 38 78

Open Tuesday-Sunday noon-midnight

A member of the successful team that owns and manages Batard, a pub/bistro also in the same neighborhood. The Ordinary has an open kitchen and wood-burning oven used to prepare delectable and sometimes unusual pizzas like their pizza topped with lamb meat, red onions and hot peppers. With indoor and outdoor dining areas, reminiscent of an Italian trattoria to some, it is located on the garden floor of the NOW Bomonti complex. Warm focaccia bread is served while diners peruse the menu. Other recommended dishes include Marinated Sardines with tomatoes, garlic, olive oil and capers as a starter and Ragu Bolognese with Pappardelle among the mains.



Paper Moon

ASIAN CUISINE

BANYAN

Salhane Sokak No.3 Ortaköy, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 259 90 60; www.banyanrestaurant.com
Open Tuesday 3:00pm–2:00am; on all other days,
noon–2:00am

If you do nothing else, make sure to go to Banyan right before sunset on a sunny day; sit on one of the high stools at the modest-sized bar and order a cocktail (maybe a Vodka Martini with 3 olives; shaken not stirred) at this delightful and refined Asian-fusion restaurant and lose yourself in the breathtaking view of the Bosphorus, with the Ortaköy mosque and 15 July Martyrs Bridge (Bosphorus) on one side and glimpses of the Historical Peninsula on the other side! Talk about a major stress-reliever! Then you can continue your night at the bar ordering from the snack menu; or move to your reserved table with your friends or family and enjoy an incredible feast of Asian fusion delectable delights from their a la carte menu (great for sharing) or order the Tasting Menu (with alternative cold and hot appetizers, main courses and desserts with wine-pairing). Banyan is also a good choice for a casual lunch while sightseeing in the neighborhood. Banyan has been at their current location since 2004 (previously in Nişantaşı for 2 years) and more than lives up its motto “food for the soul” ever since! Located on the 2nd floor of a historic building on a quiet side street steps from the Ortaköy pier, the bar and dining area are encased with floor to ceiling windows that open and there is also a retractable canopy.

ÇOK ÇOK PERA

Meşrutiyet Caddesi No. 54/A Asmalımescit, Beyoğlu
Tel: (GSM) 0539 301 24 20; www.cokcokpera.com
Open Monday – Saturday 5:00pm–midnight

When Çok Çok opened in 2006, it was located in a modestly sized two-story building steps from the Pera Museum; now, they have moved to larger quarters at the annex building of the restored Palazzo Corpi building (once home to the American Consulate), but independent from Soho House. The new venue is airy with high ceilings and only a short walk from its original spot. What has also changed is that instead of “classic” Thai cuisine, the a la carte menu features “contemporary” Thai dishes. Upon entering Çok Çok, Ernest’s Bar is to the left and Agatha’s Room, the main dining room, to the right decorated with 18th and 20th century tropical botanical illustrations that signify the main ingredients used in preparing Thai food. Undoubtedly the names of the bar and dining room were inspired by Ernest Hemingway and Agatha Christie. Royal Chef Khun Nuch (once chef to Thailand’s royal family) has prepared a delightful and tasty menu using typical Southeast Asia herbs and spices, so hope you like spicy food!

DRAGON

Cumhuriyet Caddesi No.50
Hilton Hotel Exhibition Hall Harbiye, Şişli
Tel: (0212) 231 62 00; www.dragonrestaurant.com.tr
Cevdetpaşa Caddesi No. 34 Bebek, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 265 39 39
Open Tuesday–Sunday 6:30pm–11:30pm

Serving an excellent selection of Cantonese, Szechuan and Indochinese cuisines, Dragon has been open since 1987. The restaurant in Harbiye was specifically decorated with furnishings from Taipei giving it its refined authentic setting. All the tables have a lazy Susan (rotating tray) as guests usually prefer to share the dishes. This location also has an outdoor

terrace which affords panoramic views of the Bosphorus strait. Meanwhile, their new branch which opened on the Bosphorus waterfront in Bebek in late 2019 has sweeping views of the Bosphorus from its location at the Bebek Hotel by the Stay. The sophisticated décor is modern with accents from Chinese Art Deco. The a la carte menus are the same at both locations, and also include a set menu. You will definitely have an incredible meal no matter which location you choose.

INARI OMAKASE

Nispetiye Caddesi No. 89 Etiler, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 216 35 35; www.inariomakase.com
Open daily noon–midnight
Michelin Bib Gourmand

Inari Omakase first opened in Kuruçeşme in 2012, introducing Asian cuisine with a local touch. Renowned for its exquisite flavors and stunning Bosphorus views, it quickly became a favorite. With locations in Kuruçeşme, Vadistanbul, and Etiler Piku, Inari has expanded its presence, including its first branch outside Istanbul at The Bodrum Edition Hotel. Inari is a sushi lounge and bar offering a selection of sushi rolls, nigiri, sashimi, teppanyaki, rice dishes, and more. The name “Inari” holds a special place in Japanese mythology, symbolizing the god of harvests, fertility, rice, agriculture, foxes, industry, and worldly success. Inari has been awarded the Michelin Bib Gourmand for two consecutive years, recognizing its high quality and value.

KEN SUSHI AND MORE

Kazım Özalp Sokak No.60/C Suadiye Kadıköy
Tel: (0216) 356 48 49; www.kensushiandmore.com
Open daily noon–11:00pm

A diverse menu that showcases the best of contemporary Far Eastern cuisine awaits at Ken Sushi and More. While the sushi varieties are highly recommended,

the extensive selection of starters, like edamame, corn tempura, and spring rolls, also stands out. Main courses such as noodles, rice dishes, and flavorful shrimp, chicken, and meat options are equally impressive. Be sure to try the unique “Crunchy Berry Cheese” sushi, featuring a delightful combination of salmon and strawberry. This sweet and savory dish is perfect for refreshing your palate.

KONOKA

Bağdat Caddesi No.474/A Bostancı, Kadıköy
Tel: (0216) 213 07 07; www.konoha.com.tr
Open daily 11:00am–11:00pm

An inviting Far Eastern restaurant named after the village from the popular manga character Naruto. Loved for its unique ambiance and flavors, Konoha brings together the best of Chinese, Japanese, and Thai cuisines, crafted by expert chefs. The diverse menu has something for every palate, with standout dishes like asparagus beef and the delightful almond roll.

MACHI

Müzeyyen Sokak No.2 Suadiye, Kadıköy
Tel: (0216) 464 10 00
Open Tuesday–Sunday 4:00pm–1:00am,
closed on Mondays

A stylish blend of Japanese-Peruvian fusion known as Nikkei cuisine awaits at this popular restaurant. Machi offers a unique sushi menu alongside flavorful ceviche and tiradito. The standout dish, leche de tigre-marinated ceviche, bursts with tangy and bold flavors, while other favorites include scallops, seabass, and tacos, providing a delightful variety. Don’t miss the opportunity to indulge in their exquisite cocktail selection.

MIYABI SUSHI & JAPANESE GRILL BAR

Zeytinöğlü Caddesi Yaren Sokak No.6 D. 14-15
Akatlar, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 352 02 22; www.miyabisushi.com.tr
Open daily noon to 11:00pm

The décor gives it away that Miyabi is a typical and classic Japanese restaurant. The minimalist and quaint venue with indoor and outdoor dining areas is located on a quiet street in the residential Akatlar neighborhood about a 15-minute walk from the Akmerkez Shopping Mall. All of their dishes are absolutely delicious and not only appeal to the palate but also to the eye, prepared at the hands of skilled Japanese chefs (who you can watch at work at the open sushi station). Some suggestions include Black Tiger Shrimp Tempura and Maguro Tataki appetizers, Chef's rolls Crazy Roll and Dangerous Roll and Scallop Teppanyaki among many other delicious and delectable choices on offer.

NOBU ISTANBUL

Süzer Plaza Askerocağı Caddesi No. 6 Elmadağ, Şişli
Tel: (0212) 334 30 34; www.noburestaurants.com
Terrace & Upper Dining Room: Sunday-Wednesday 6:00pm-11:00pm; Thursday-Saturday 6:00pm-11:30pm Bar & Lounge: Sunday-Thursday 6:00pm-1:00am; Friday-Saturday 5:00pm-1:30am

While today there are nearly 60 Nobu restaurants around the world, the first Nobu opened in Tribeca, New York City in 1994. Nobu Istanbul opened in July 2021 at the Ritz - Carlton Istanbul hotel serving a wonderful selection of Chef Nobu Matsuhisa's renowned Japanese-Peruvian cuisine dishes. The appetizers on the a la carte menu are listed separately to indicate "classic" and "now" cold and hot dishes served. What's more, it is said that Nobu serves one of the best Omakase in Istanbul and in general, Nobu is one of the few restaurants that accommodates vegetarians. The elegantly decorated upscale fine dining restaurant affords a stunning scenic view of the Bosphorus and is only open for dinner.

ORORO SUSHI BAR

Fındıklı Sokak No.17 Caferağa, Kadıköy
Tel: (0216) 345 01 81; www.ororo.com.tr
Open Tuesday-Friday 1:30pm-10:00pm, closed on Mondays

Ororo Sushi Bar offers a fusion of Japanese and Pacific-inspired dishes in a stylish setting featuring raw wood panels and sleek stone accents. Tofu tempura, available in both spicy and sweet chili variations, is a vegan favorite, while seafood enthusiasts can treat themselves to shrimp tempura and octopus takoyaki. The bao buns, filled with options like caramelized mushrooms or marinated cabbage, are another highlight.



Nobu Istanbul

PERA THAI

Meşrutiyet Caddesi No.94 Asmalimescit, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 245 52 25-26; www.perathai.com.tr
Open Monday-Saturday noon-midnight;
Sunday 1:00pm-9:00pm

Open since 2001, Pera Thai is the oldest Thai restaurant in Istanbul and has indoor and outdoor dining areas. The minimalist, yet chic and intimate ambiance is a meeting point for local and foreign Thai food lovers in Istanbul. The menu includes homemade curry dishes and other traditional delectable (and spicy) delights prepared by women chefs only. Pera Thai is the proud recipient of the Thai Select award in 2021 given by the Department of International Trade & Promotion of the Ministry of Commerce Thailand.

ROKA

Galataport, Meclis-i Mebusan Sokak No.14/2E
Tophane, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 401 02 60; www.rokerestaurant.com
Open Monday-Thursday 5:30pm-midnight;
Friday-Saturday 2:30pm-1:00am;
Sunday 12:30pm-midnight

Rainer Becker, the “brainchild” behind Roka (but first Zuma) is a German chef who has created some of the world’s most stylish and acclaimed Japanese restaurants. The first Roka opened in 2004 on Charlotte Street in London; in early 2022 its Istanbul branch opened with a bang, bringing its authentic Robatayaki style of dining to our city. All the menus at Roka are prepared by Executive Chef Hamish Brown and separated into 4 categories: Sashimi & Maki, Salads & Tempura, the pièce de résistance Robata dishes, and desserts. In Japanese cuisine, robatayaki refers to a method of cooking, similar to a barbecue, where different foods are cooked at varying speeds over hot charcoal. At Roka, dominated by a

centrally located robata grill, meats, fish, poultry and vegetables are prepared in full view of diners at the surrounding counter and tables. Moreover, talented Turkish chef Suna Hakyemez is at the helm of the kitchen in Istanbul; appointed to this post after years of experience she gained at Zuma and Roka in London. The sophisticated interior is decorated in earth tones and natural textures conceived by Japanese interior designer Noriyoshi Muramatsu and also boasts a spacious wrap-around terrace with a superb unobstructed view of the Bosphorus strait. This is the place to go if you’ve never tried robata dishes!

SANKAI BY NAGAYA

Cevdet Paşa Caddesi No:34 Bebek
Tel: (0532) 379 19 97; sankai.com.tr
Open Monday-Saturday 6:30pm-midnight
Michelin One Star

Nestled in the Bebek Hotel by The Stay, Sankai by Nagaya is a Michelin-starred omakase restaurant curated in collaboration with renowned Chef Yoshizumi Nagaya, celebrated for his three Michelin-starred restaurants. The restaurant’s motto is clear: fewer guests, the finest local ingredients, and a personalized experience. Under the guidance of Masterchef Nagaya and edo-mae sushi chef Hiroko Shibata, Sankai serves as a gateway to explore the delicacies of Japanese cuisine and immerse in the exquisite hospitality. The restaurant offers a unique journey by seamlessly blending Japanese authenticity with European influences. Sankai By Nagaya presents two seasonal tasting menus, featuring daily delicacies. “Sankai Sushi” leans towards a sushi-oriented experience, while “Nagaya Signature” narrates the story of kaiseki cuisine. Whichever option you choose, you’re in for an incredible meal.

ZUMA

İstinyePark Shopping Mall İstinye, Sarıyer
Tel: (0212) 236 22 96; www.zumarestaurant.com
Open Sunday-Thursday noon-1:00am;
Friday-Saturday noon-2:00am

First came Zuma for German chef Rainer Becker before Roka. Zuma was established in 2002 in London and today has many locations in different parts of the world. Zuma Istanbul opened in 2008 but was at the Bosphorus waterfront in Ortaköy before it moved to the posh İstinyePark shopping mall in February 2016. Located on the upper floor of a shop on the fashionable concourse level, the beautifully decorated and refined Zuma offers “Izakaya” style dining. The menu includes a wide variety of tasty dishes from modern yet authentic Japanese cuisine served with an emphasis on simple presentations but full of intense flavors with quality ingredients. Zuma has 3 kitchens: the main kitchen, sushi counter and robata grill. Izakaya style means that the dishes are meant to be shared which is a sophisticated twist on the informal eating and drinking habits of the Japanese. Just a few popular dishes from their menu include roasted lobster with chili ponzu butter, marinated black cod wrapped in hoba leaf, and Japanese mushroom rice hotpot.

CASUAL FARE... YET CHIC & TRENDY

ARALIK

Ressam Şeref Akdik Sokağı
No.6/A Caferağa, Kadıköy
Tel: (0533) 427 58 89
Open Monday-Friday 5:00pm-midnight;
Saturday-Sunday noon-midnight

A peaceful atmosphere with its minimalist décor, Aralık's success lies in its unique interpretations of classic dishes, showcasing innovative flavors and presentations. In addition to its delicious food, the restaurant offers a cocktail and alcohol menu, making it a great spot to enjoy a drink with friends.

BATARD

Silahşörlü Caddesi Gökkuşluğu Caddesi No.15D
Bomonti, Şişli
Tel: (GSM) 0532 620 85 57
Open daily 9:00am-1:00am

Batard is a typical French bistro/café right in the heart of Istanbul with indoor and outdoor dining areas. In fact, batard means a French bread, similar to a baguette but smaller and rounder. Serving all-day dining "Eclectic Cuisine" dishes as stated on their menu, it includes the classics like Croque Madame and Croque Monsieur; Omelets, French Toast; Waldorf Salad; Reuben Sandwich; and mains such as Spare Ribs and Duck.

BEBEK TERRACE RESTAURANT

Cevdetpaşa Caddesi No.34 Bebek
Tel: (GSM) 0538 487 18 46; www.thestay.com.tr
Open daily 9:00am-10:00pm

Located at the lobby level of the Bebek Hotel by The Stay, a breathtaking view of the Bosphorus greets you as you step out onto the terrace of this beautifully yet casually decorated venue. It is perfect for a casual breakfast or lunch; or to watch

the sunset during an early dinner. The à la carte menu includes a nice selection of international fare; some suitable for sharing. Breakfast is served from 9:00am to noon on weekdays and from 9:00am to 2:00pm on weekends.

BECA ISTANBUL

Zeytinolu Caddesi Yeşim Sokak No.3
Akatlar, Beşiktaş
Tel: (GSM) 0535 823 22 45
Open daily from 9:00am-1:00am

Beca, a brasserie-bar opened with a bang in March 2022, started drawing trendy Istanbulites from all over the city just by word of mouth. Bahadır Gürceer, a longtime manager at Lucca is at the helm at Beca so it was undoubtedly going to be a great new place "to see and be seen" while enjoying great food and cheer in a relaxed yet chic ambiance. Unquestionably, Beca has already lived up to expectations. But, definitely be prepared for more exciting surprises to come! Most importantly, you can have a wonderful dinner and then continue your night at the bar with DJ performances or check out the "Living Room" section for other lively activities that will be organized from time to time. The spacious brasserie is on a side street a short distance from the Akmerkez Shopping Mall in a lovely villa with indoor and outdoor dining areas, a nice-sized bar, an open kitchen, wood-fired oven, floor to ceiling windows, and a glass and wood trimmed rooftop surrounded with lots of plants with an eclectic yet minimalist décor. The à la carte menu which changes according to season and includes international fare: from spring rolls, sashimi, beef tataki and cauliflower with cheese and jalapeno sauce to brick oven pizzas and pastas to smoked meatballs with yogurt to jumbo shrimp and Beca Entrecôte which is prepared in a Jospier charcoal oven. Don't forget to try their signature cocktails. Also, breakfast treats are served between 9:00am and noon on weekdays and from 9:00am to 3:00pm on weekends.

CANTINERY

Zorlu Center Shopping Mall Zincirlikuyu, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 353 63 65; www.cantinery.com
Open daily 10:00am-11:00pm

Open since 2014 at the fashionable concourse level at the posh Zorlu Center Shopping Mall, Cantinery is the ever-popular Lucca's "younger" sister and owned by Cem Mirap, a name well-known and respected in the restaurant industry in Türkiye. Cantinery defines themselves as a "Gastro Canteen and Eatery" and has tastefully decorated indoor and outdoor dining areas, modest-sized indoor bar and open kitchen. All day dining is available serving high-quality gastronomic delights that are prepared only with in-season fresh and local products. The menu includes some Turkish treats along with other starters, pizzas & pastas, mains and bowls with options for vegans. Cantinery also has a kid's menu and yummy desserts. Add an exclusive wine list, beer selections and cocktails to enhance your dining experience in a lively, yet casual ambiance.

COZY

Dilhayat Sokak No.15 D.1, Etiler
Tel: (0530) 289 82 93
Open: Tuesday-Sunday 6:00pm-2:00 am;
closed on Mondays

Cozy, Istanbul's newest culinary gem, delivers a warm and inviting atmosphere that perfectly embodies its name. Designed to evoke the feeling of an expansive living room, the restaurant welcomes guests with comfort and relaxation. Upon entering through a grand, high door, you're met by a soft curtain; parting it reveals a cozy, dimly lit ambiance, as intimate and welcoming as promised. A stylish bar stands before you, where guests sip cocktails and casually survey the room while awaiting their tables. Helmed by Hüseyin Kılıç, former head chef of Lucca, Cozy presents a menu inspired by Mediterranean and South American flavors. The highlight is the wood-fired dishes, which impart a smoky, authentic

touch to each bite. Especially during the weekend bustle, the bar transforms into the heart of the venue as the evening progresses. Cozy plans to expand in the near future, opening a lively club on the upper floor.

DELICATESSEN

Tepecik Yolu No. 18 Etiler, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 257 07 71
Open Tuesday-Saturday 9:00am-1:00am;
Sunday 9:00am-10:00pm

Thanks to "hands-on" owner and chef Elif Yalın, Delicatessen has been going strong since 2007 and in fact, getting better every year! A major foodie, she cooks for customers from time to time, socializes with her customers and is there for her team in whatever they may need. The first branch in Nişantaşı has closed, but fortunately, their Etiler branch, set in a charming villa with a spacious garden where you can dine under the trees, remains open. As a point of reference, it is only a short 5-minute walk from the Akmerkez Shopping Mall.

To say the least, the menu is incredible! All day dining is available so you can start your day with a typical Turkish breakfast platter or opt to have pancakes, omelets, eggs benedict, etc.; or lunch with a long list of hearty unique salads, quiches, burgers, open sandwiches, etc.; or enjoy the dinner menu which includes duck confit, organic chicken stew, beef or pork frankfurters, and so much more. In fact, you can just go and order a deli meat-cheese platter with a bottle (or 2) of wine and have a relaxing afternoon or evening with friends or family. Make sure to check out the goodies at the entrance which include a mouthwatering assortment of homemade breads and jams, savory pastries and desserts, Turkish and international cheeses and deli meats available for take-away.

DÜN

Lütfü Bey Sokak No.42/6 Moda, Kadıköy
Tel: (0216) 969 63 58
Open daily 10:00am-11:00pm

From the creators of Arkaoda, Dün is the perfect spot for those seeking a cozy atmosphere with delicious, fresh offerings. Whether you're stopping by during a visit to Moda or simply in need of a warm, inviting break, it's a great choice!

EFENDY

Nispetiye Caddesi No:13, Levent
Tel: 0530 289 80 39; www.efendyistanbul.com
Open Tuesday-Friday 5:00pm-midnight;
Weekends noon-midnight
Michelin Bib Gourmand

The renowned judge of the MasterChef culinary competition, Somer Sivrioğlu is known for his Efendy Restaurant in Sydney. The second branch in Istanbul offers a delightful fusion of old and new recipes. Traditional Anatolian cuisine undergoes a modern reinterpretation here, as ancient techniques, such as open fire cooking, converge with innovative ideas to create exciting dishes. The menu is crafted using seasonal products, ensuring a dynamic and ever-changing culinary experience. A perfect example is the sea bass—crispy on the outside, succulent on the inside. When you pay a visit, don't miss the opportunity to indulge in their exquisite cocktail selection. Efendy has been honored with the Michelin Guide's Bib Gourmand award, further attesting to its culinary excellence.

FERİDA CADDE

Nater Sokak No.11-13 Suadiye, Kadıköy
Tel: 0539 555 61 34; www.ferida.com.tr
Open daily 10:00am-1:00pm

With the expertise of renowned chef Murat Bozok (Alaf Restaurant), Ferida Cadde offers something for everyone while highlighting authentic Bosnian cuisine. Signature dishes like eggs with meat, Ferida burger, and ravioli are crowd

favorites. Alongside these specialties, you'll find a wide variety of options including breakfast, salads, pasta, and burgers. The cocktail menu is equally impressive.

FOXY NİŞANTAŞI

Mim Kemal Öke Caddesi No. 1D Nişantaşı, Şişli
Tel: (GSM) 0531 484 38 91
Open Monday-Saturday noon-1:00am;
Sunday noon-midnight
Michelin Bib Gourmand

What happens when an innovative chef and a renowned wine connoisseur join forces? Foxy Nişantaşı, opened in the fall of 2020 by Chef Maksut Aşkar and wine expert Levon Bağış, offers a unique dining experience. The menu is thoughtfully crafted to pair perfectly with an impressive wine list curated by Mr. Bağış, featuring exclusively Turkish wines—so extensive that it surpasses the food menu in length! Highlights from the menu include Neolokal's (Chef Aşkar's Michelin-starred restaurant) shrimp and zucchini fritters, mortadella, smoked bacon with aged yellow cheese, lamb and potato croquettes, fried lamb brains with parsley and tahini sauce, chicken liver pâté, goose terrine, and topik—a traditional Armenian dish made with a chickpea-based paste mixed with potatoes or flour, filled with onions, nuts, and currants, and flavored with herbs, spices, and tahini. A selection of cocktails and beers is also available. With both indoor and outdoor seating, Foxy is conveniently located just a three-block walk from the Vakko Hotel & Residence. Recognized with a Michelin Bib Gourmand, it's a must-visit spot in Nişantaşı for wine and food lovers alike.

GÜN LOKANTASI

Asmalı Mescit Mahallesi Gönül Sokak
No.8/A Beyoğlu
Tel: (0533) 921 36 88
Open Monday-Saturday noon to 11:00pm

One of the newest additions to Asmalı Mescit's culinary scene, Gün Lokantası has quickly gained recognition

for its fresh take on traditional Turkish cuisine. With a focus on combining local ingredients and modern techniques, the restaurant, led by Zeki Kulaç and Chef Kerem Küçükkinacı, offers a menu that honors classic flavors while incorporating a contemporary twist. The open kitchen provides an interactive experience, allowing guests to watch as their dishes are prepared. The design of the space is warm and inviting, with natural tones and elegant details that create a comfortable atmosphere. The menu features a variety of dishes rooted in tradition, such as hearty lamb stews, alongside lighter seafood preparations with a modern flair. Don't miss their delectable selection of meze (tapas). Pair your meal with a craft beer or a carefully curated wine list. The cocktail menu offers a selection of well-crafted options to complement your dining experience.

HIEMA

Fatih Sultan Mehmet Mahallesi
Atatürk Caddesi No.1 Armutlu, Sarıyer
Tel: (0535) 018 72 24
Open Tuesday-Saturday 6.00pm-2.30am

Hiema Kitchen & Bar brings a fresh take on social dining to the vibrant neighborhood of Sarıyer. Founded by İlyas Güngör and Anıl Kumur—well-known names in the food and beverage scene—this stylish venue offers a seamless blend of modern elegance and inviting comfort. The spacious interior, featuring soft-toned decor, a cozy fireplace, and a charming garden, creates a warm and sophisticated atmosphere perfect for both intimate dinners and lively gatherings with friends. The menu showcases a variety of globally inspired dishes. From sushi and creative starters to hearty pastas and standout mains like salmon, every plate reflects a commitment to freshness and seasonality. Hiema Kitchen & Bar is the ideal spot for those seeking quality food and a relaxed ambiance in one of Istanbul's most dynamic areas.

LUCCA

Cevdetpaşa Caddesi No. 51 Bebek, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 257 12 55; www.luccastyle.com
Open daily 11:00am-1:00am

Lucca said a big "hello" to the Istanbul trendy restaurant scene in late 2004 and hasn't looked back since! It has lost nothing in its popularity with discerning Istanbulites "in the know", international foodie loyal followers, and regulars dating back 18 years! So, what's this success attributed to? First and foremost, Cem Mirap, the owner and insightful entrepreneur behind this small empire that also includes Cantinery located at Zorlu Center and Lucca By The Sea in Bodrum. Mr. Mirap loves good food and cheer and travels the world seeking new trends and ideas. He created an excellent professional and friendly team of managers, kitchen and waitstaff; and Lucca never stops re-inventing itself to keep up with the times. The décor is updated from time to time as well as the menu. Located on a corner on the main street in the upscale Bebek neighborhood, Lucca has indoor and outdoor dining areas and a modest-sized bar with DJ performances nightly. The menu is influenced by Mediterranean cuisine and is chock full of goodies from small plates, tacos and salads to robata grills, sushi and sashimi to tasty mains and desserts. Some examples include: Foie Gras and Pot sticker Prawn Dumpling, BBQ pulled Chicken Taco, Nori-wrapped Salmon Tataki (robata), and mains such as Steak Tartare and the Lucca "classic" Lemon Sea Bass. Lucca also has a good wine list with local and international selections, and a wonderful cocktail menu including their classic and highly popular signature cocktail Vodka Satsuma. Lucca also has an extensive breakfast menu (including a kid's menu); from pancakes, avocado toast, omelets and breakfast bowls to healthy fruit salads and a fit plate. Just like the "others", once you start going to Lucca, you too will become a "regular" in no time.

MANGERIE BEBEK

Cevdetpaşa Caddesi No.69 3rd floor Bebek, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 263 51 99; www.mangerie.bebek
Open daily 8:00am–midnight

Also owned by chef Elif Yalın (see Delicatessen), Mangerie Bebek is located on the 3rd floor of a building on the main street in Bebek. After you huff and puff as you walk up the 3 floors, you will be greeted with a compact-sized casually decorated interior with floor-to-ceiling windows and a small outdoor terrace affording a partial view of the Bosphorus. Ms. Yalın opened Mangerie in 2004. Mangerie has retained its popularity all these years because of the ambiance it has created and the excellent food served. The menu includes classic cafe fare such as starters (prosciutto, melon & gorgonzola), salads (grilled calamari salad), burgers, noodles, bruschetta, sandwiches and toasts to mains. If you just want to have snacks and wine, you can order from their “charcuterie and cheese” section (to share, minimum 2–4 people). Also, there is a whole host of typical breakfast treats as well, served daily until 3:00pm. If you still have room, visit the “Mangerie patisserie” section on the menu.

MEZKLA

Akat Mahallesi Zeytinoglu Caddesi
Yeşim Sokak No.7, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0549) 641 24 07; mezklaistanbul.com
Open Monday–Thursday 6.00pm–11.30pm;
Friday–Saturday 6.00pm–1.00am;
Sunday 5.00pm–10.00pm

Where Turkish and Mexican flavors meet, Mezkla offers a fresh dining experience in the heart of Etiler. The name, meaning “fusion” in Spanish, reflects its concept, blending the rich culinary traditions of both cuisines with modern techniques. The result is a menu that’s both creative and approachable, featuring dishes made from carefully selected local ingredients. Upstairs, a Hi-Fi Bar designed for music lovers features a custom-made sound system and a diverse playlist, from soul jazz to Latin and funk, creating a laid-back yet vibrant atmosphere. Regular events like

tastings, live performances, and workshops add to the appeal, making it more than just a place to eat.

MSA’S RESTAURANT

Sakıp Sabancı Museum Emirgan, Sarıyer
Tel: (0212) 323 30 30; www.msarestorani.com
Open Tuesday–Sunday 8:00am – 11:00pm

Located at the privately owned Sakıp Sabancı Museum, MSA’s restaurant is the training restaurant of The Culinary Arts Academy of Istanbul (MSA), one of the best international culinary schools that was founded in 2004. The restaurant is open to all food lovers and not limited to those visiting the museum. At the restaurant, MSA students work side by side with MSA’s professional chefs in the kitchen and with the waitstaff in the dining room. This way, as chefs of the future, they have a chance to perfect their culinary skills with real-time restaurant experience. They assist the chefs in preparing the meals and then assist the waitstaff in serving the dishes to the customers. Open at this location since 2017, the spacious and elegantly decorated restaurant has high ceilings with floor to ceiling windows, an indoor bar, and a lovely spacious terrace with an enchanting view of the Bosphorus strait. The menu includes a good selection of international cuisine prepared with a twist of different flavors. For example, the breakfast menu includes “MSA’s Breakfast Plate” which is prepared with poached eggs, baked fries, smoked ribs, sautéed spinach, burrata cheese and herbed cherry tomatoes! Or try the beetroot ravioli prepared with cashew cheese (non-dairy cheese spread prepared with softened cashews) and pureed tomatoes, fish sandwich prepared with crispy john dory, curry sauce and crab, or maybe octopus and mango maki roll with sriracha and tempura crisps! These dishes are just the tip of the iceberg of the different and unique dishes on MSA’s menu (updated according to season) which you can enjoy with wine from their wine list or different cocktails prepared by their skilled bartenders.



MSA's Restaurant

MEYHANE TURKISH TAVERN

Still existing to this day, the first *meyhanes* date back to the Byzantine period. A derivative of the Persian word *meykhaneh*; in Turkish “mey” means wine and “hane” means house. First only serving wine, raki came on the scene in the mid-1800s. In short, a *meyhane* is a traditional Turkish restaurant serving alcoholic beverages with a wide selection of cold and hot *meze* (tapas) to be shared along with mains and desserts that reflects a drinking culture and a set of customs that go along with it. Older and more traditional taverns are places of gathering for local groups of friends getting together to socialize, drink, share their happiness. Some even have live music featuring classical Turkish folk songs. There is a wonderful article prepared by Tan Morgul & Yavuz Sac titled “Joie de Vivre–A History of Istanbul Meyhanes” for *Gastromondiale* which is a good (and detailed) read for those interested in the topic.

Lately, *meyhanes* have started changing “face” and have become more inviting for a wider audience of clientele. The following are a few examples of *meyhanes* where you will enjoy excellent food in a traditional or modern setting accompanied with raki or wine.

ASMALI CAVIT

Asmalimescit Caddesi No.16/D Asmalimescit, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 292 49 50
Open Monday–Saturday 5:30pm–11:45pm

Asmalı Cavit opened in the beginning of the 2000’s and is owned by Cavit, (hence the name) and his family after he left his partnership with another popular *meyhane* in the neighborhood. The 2-story *meyhane* has a spacious 2nd floor while the main floor is cozier and small. All *meyhanes* pretty much serve the same types of *meze*; however, the eggplant salad, *tarama* (a salted and cured fish roe), brain salad, *muska böreği* (triangle-shaped savory pastry stuffed with minced beef), pan-seared liver and *meyhane*-style meatballs here come highly recommended.

ELEOS BEYOĞLU

Şahkulu, İstiklal Caddesi, No:231, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 244 90 90; www.eleosrestaurant.com
Open daily 2.30pm-midnight

Michelin-recommended Eleos seamlessly blends Istanbul’s traditional *meyhane* charm with the flavors of the Aegean coast. Originating in Yeşilköy, Eleos Restaurant has expanded to the historic Hıdivyal Palas in Beyoğlu, offering a mesmerizing view and a space adorned with blue and white decor. Eleos specializes in seafood, featuring Aegean-inspired dishes that highlight fresh fish, seafood and classic Greek and Armenian specialties, all complemented with special sauces. The seasonal menu includes a variety of tasty cold and hot classic *meze* options that you can choose according to your taste. The special grilled octopus is a favorite, cooked to perfection. The restaurant creates an ideal setting for celebrations and social gatherings, allowing guests to savor authentic flavors.

İSMET BABA

Kuzguncuk Çarşısı Caddesi No.1 Kuzguncuk, Üsküdar
Tel: (0216) 341 33 75; www.ismetbaba.com.tr
Open daily noon-midnight

İsmet Baba, founded in 1951 by İsmet Dökmeci, is a classic Istanbul *meyhane* that has been serving fresh seafood for three generations. Located right on the Bosphorus in the picturesque Kuzguncuk neighborhood, the restaurant offers stunning views from all angles. Known for its authentic Turkish *meze*, İsmet Baba draws crowds for signature dishes like *pilaki* (olive oil braised cannellini beans) and eggplant appetizers, along with beloved mains such as grilled liver kebab and shrimp stew. This family-run establishment exudes a timeless, welcoming atmosphere, making it a must-visit for anyone seeking an authentic Istanbul dining experience.

KARAKÖY LOKANTASI

Kemankeş Caddesi No. 57 Karaköy, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 292 44 55; www.karakoylokantasi.com
Open Monday–Saturday Lunch: noon–4:00pm;
Dinner: 5:00pm–midnight; Sunday 4:00pm–midnight
(closed for lunch on Sunday)
Michelin Bib Gourmand

As a family-run restaurant opened in 2000, Karaköy Lokantasi has moved around a bit and is now located at the Novotel Istanbul Bosphorus. The spacious and airy white tablecloth restaurant is beautifully decorated with sparkling light blue ceramic tiles. It has floor to ceiling windows and angled hardwood ceiling. Open for lunch and dinner, the menu includes typical one-pot dishes common in Turkish cuisine and served at tradesmen (*esnaf*) restaurants. In the evening, the eatery transforms into a modern tavern with tasty cold *meze* selections showcased in a glass-encased display. Some favorites include humus, boiled tongue, lakerda (salt-cured bonito), seabass marinated with mustard, *çiroz* (salted and dried mackerel). Moreover, the pan-seared lamb liver is said to be the best in town. In

general, most regulars (and they have quite a few) enjoy almost all the tasty dishes offered. Karaköy Lokantasi was awarded the Michelin Bib Gourmand in 2023 and continues to hold the recognition.

KİVA GALATAPORT

Galataport, Meclis-i Mebusan Sokak No.10/4G
Tophane, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 801 74 90; www.kivarestoran.com
Historical Bomonti Beer Factory, Birahane Sokak No. 1/A Bomonti, Şişli
Tel: (0212) 296 20 08
Open daily noon-midnight

Kiva was established in the Galata neighborhood in the Beyoğlu district in 2008. Afterwards, Kiva moved to Bomonti in 2015 and in 2022 opened a branch along the newly opened Galataport promenade with a lovely view of the Bosphorus and historic peninsula. The 2-story venue has indoor and outdoor seating areas and serves an exquisite and distinctive assortment of regional dishes, staying true to authentic recipes from Anatolia dating back thousands of years. The menu also includes unique dishes such as *soka* (ricotta cream stuffed pickled peppers), *lütənitsa* (roasted vegetable mash) and hot *meze* such as charcoal grilled intestines stew with thyme and caramelized onions, and hand-rolled crispy meat stuffed *mantı* (dumplings). As with the other *meyhanes*, the dishes are meant to be shared while socializing and enjoying good cheer with friends or family.

STRADA

Bağdat Caddesi No:459 Suadiye, Kadıköy
Tel: (0216) 464 10 00; stradasuadiye.com
Open Monday-Friday noon-midnight;
Weekends 10:00am-1:00pm

A versatile menu that caters to every meal of the day makes Strada a perfect choice for breakfast, lunch, dinner, or a night out at the bar. Offering delectable small plates, refreshing salads, juicy burgers, stone-baked pizzas, and freshly made

pasta, the menu is thoughtfully divided into various categories, ensuring something for everyone. Additionally, a selection of vegan options caters to diverse dietary preferences. The restaurant's spacious setting, complete with a beautiful garden, creates an ideal venue for gatherings and special occasions.

TACOROLL

Kadirağa Sokak No.51 Caddebostan, Kadıköy
Tel: (0553) 477 24 89
Open Tuesday-Sunday noon-10:00pm;
closed on Mondays

Located in the charming Caddebostan neighborhood, Tacoroll serves authentic Mexican cuisine with a menu featuring classic dishes done right. Tacos filled with minced meat, chicken, and hot dogs, alongside a variety of burritos, quesadillas, and signature nachos, are the highlights.

TERSHANE

Arap Cami, Tersane Caddesi No.24, Karaköy
Tel: (0212) 292 30 10; www.tershanerestaurant.com
Open daily 1.00pm-11.00pm
Michelin Bib Gourmand

Tershane, recognized with a Michelin Bib Gourmand since 2023, is a cozy spot located on the eighth floor of Hotel Momento in Karaköy, offering a modern twist on Turkish cuisine. The stylish decor and friendly atmosphere make it perfect for any occasion. The menu focuses on Turkish classics like mezze and expertly grilled kebabs, served with a creative touch. The welcoming interior, combined with an open kitchen where you can watch the chefs in action, creates a memorable dining experience with stunning views of the city.

TOWNHOUSE

Plaj Yolu Sokak No.13 Suadiye, Kadıköy
Tel: (0216) 463 14 15; www.thetownhouse.com.tr
Open daily noon-midnight

A vibrant brasserie bar known for its inviting atmosphere and spacious layout, Townhouse offers pub-style dishes. Guests can enjoy a delightful range of options along with an extensive selection of beer and whiskey. Don't miss the chance to try their signature cocktails, making it the perfect spot for a casual night out or a gathering with friends.

VAKKO LE SPECIALITÀ

Kuleli Caddesi No.43, Çengelköy, Üsküdar
Tel: (0549) 784 50 50;
www.vakkohotelsumahanbosphorus.com
Open daily 7.00am-midnight

One of the standout dining experiences at Vakko Hotel Sumahan Bosphorus, Vakko Le Specialità serves authentic dishes that celebrate the rich and diverse culinary heritage of Italy, where food is about much more than meals. Signature dishes include the Robespierre with mustard sauce, fresh tonnarello alla carbonara, and what could become the best pizza in the city. With a focus on high-quality ingredients and a welcoming atmosphere, Vakko Le Specialità offers an evolving dining experience right by the Bosphorus – from business lunches to sunset aperitivos with friends, and romantic dinners that celebrate la dolce vita. It's a restaurant that embodies the essence of luxury living.

YER

Ferit Tek Sokak No. 5/A Moda, Kadıköy
Tel: (0216) 450 16 70
Open daily 9:30am-1:30am

Yer is a sister spot to local favorites like Arkaoda, Bina, and Dün. Known for its welcoming atmosphere, it offers a delicious menu focusing on fresh, seasonal ingredients. From breakfast through dinner, the standout features are their vegetable-based plates and delightful desserts. Definitely worth a stop during your Moda visit.



Vakko Le Specialità

TURKISH CUISINE

BORSA RESTAURANT

Adile Sultan Sarayı, Vanıköy Caddesi No:12
Kandilli, Üsküdar
Tel: (0216) 460 03 04; www.borsarestaurants.com
Open daily noon–12:00am

Borsa is one of the oldest fine-dining restaurants in Istanbul serving an incredible selection of Turkish and Ottoman cuisine. Borsa's long and illustrious history dates back to 1927. With many branches operating all around Istanbul, Borsa Restaurant in Kandilli is the best known and has the best view, offering the opportunity to dine within the historical Adile Sultan Palace. Located in the Vanıköy district, crème de la crème of historic and newly built beautiful estates in the Anatolian side of Istanbul, Borsa Restaurant has a great and undisturbed view of the Bosphorus. It also has a very large wine cellar and an impressive art collection adorning the walls.

HACI ABDULLAH

Atif Yılmaz Caddesi No.9/A Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 293 85 61; www.haciabdullah.com.tr
Open daily 11:00am–11:00pm

Traditional Ottoman Turkish cuisine is served in a setting that takes you back 100+ years to Ottoman times. There are 4 different dining halls, each with an Ottoman name and all decorated with Ottoman-style ambience. At the entrance to the restaurant there is a display showcasing the mouthwatering homemade pickled vegetables and compotes. The restaurant has an open kitchen where guests can see some of the dishes on offer to make their selections easier. Their repertoire includes 500 different dishes and at least 150 dishes are prepared daily. Opened in 1888 and then called Abdullah Efendi in Karaköy, Sultan Abdülhamid II personally gave the restaurant its trading license. Alcohol is not served.

HÜNKAR NİŞANTAŞI

Mim Kemal Öke Caddesi No.21 Nişantaşı, Şişli
Tel: (0212) 225 46 65; www.hunkarnisantasi.com
Open daily noon–10:30pm

Chefs and owners Feridun and Galip Ügümü come from a family of chefs. Their grandfather and father were chefs and the 3rd generation owners of Hünkar (means Sultan in Turkish) have been successfully carrying the flag since a young age. Their father opened Hünkar in 1950 in the neighborhood of Fatih. In 2000 they moved to the fashionable and upscale Nişantaşı neighborhood and have a long list of regulars to include local and international entrepreneurs, diplomats, dignitaries and celebrities. Today, their sons are also in the kitchen. Only a 5-minute walk from the Vakko Hotel & Residence, Hünkar has a modestly sized indoor dining area and storefront terrace. It is a place where guests can go for a relaxing lunch or casual dinner in a cozy ambience to enjoy their tasty and appetizing selections from Ottoman Turkish cuisine. The menu changes daily based on availability of fresh ingredients in season, and includes a good choice of meat, vegetarian, vegan dishes as well as staple dishes traditionally served in Turkish cuisine. Some favorites are paça çorbasi (trotter soup); mantı (Turkish-style ground beef stuffed dumplings); Hünkar Beğendi (Sultan's delight), a lamb stew served on a bed of eggplant puree and karniyarik (ground beef stuffed eggplants). Guests can also choose their dishes from the open display. Hünkar received "Best Restaurant" Award in 2007 given by Restaurant Magazine.

KANAAT LOKANTASI

Selmanipak Caddesi No.9 Üsküdar
Tel: (0216) 341 54 44; www.kanaatlokantasi.com.tr
Open daily 7.30am-10.30pm

Kanaat Lokantasi is a beloved Istanbul restaurant that has been delighting diners with its authentic Turkish and Ottoman cuisine since 1933. With a rich history dating back 150 years, this family-run restaurant continues to thrive, offering a diverse menu featuring over 100 variations of sweets, appetizers, hot meals, ice cream and yogurt. Each dish is prepared using only the freshest and highest quality ingredients. The extensive menu showcases the restaurant's commitment to culinary excellence, offering a wide range of options to satisfy every palate. Don't miss the opportunity to try the delectable elbasan tava (baked lamb with rice) or hünkar beğendi (Sultan's delight), two of the restaurant's most popular dishes. And be sure to save room for dessert!

LOKANTA 1741

Prof. Kazım İsmail Gürkan Caddesi No. 34
Cağaloğlu, Fatih
Tel: (GSM) 0533 145 17 41; www.lokanta1741.com
Open Monday–Saturday noon–midnight

Does dining at the almost 300-year-old historic Cağaloğlu Hammam (established in 1741, hence the name of the restaurant) sound intriguing? Opened in 2019, the restored and airy 2-story elegantly decorated white tablecloth restaurant is brimming in history. You can pretty much dine under the stars in all parts of the restaurant which has floor to ceiling windows and a charming courtyard with a bar area. The eatery has separate lunch and dinner menus as well as lunch and dinner tasting menus serving a variety of appetizing Turkish dishes from different regions in Türkiye.

SADE BEŞ DENİZLER MUTFAĞI

Akkavak Sokak No:36, Nişantaşı
Tel: (0212) 234 01 34
Open Monday-Saturday noon-midnight
Michelin Bib Gourmand

In the bustling streets of Akkavak in Nişantaşı, Chef Deniz Şahin guides the culinary journey of Sade Beş Denizler Mutfacı (translates to Simple Five Seas Cuisine). Chef Şahin encapsulates the restaurant's purpose as a quest for self-discovery, the realization of values, and the rightful acknowledgment of the treasures we hold. This dining establishment aims to unfold the extraordinary richness of Anatolian cuisine. Dishes such as spicy veal tongue salad, kokoreç (stuffed intestines) served with potatoes and yogurt, and mantı (dumplings) are celebrated here. The elegantly decorated white tablecloth restaurant is a favorite among locals for both a quick snack or a lavish dinner but we recommend you to take your time and savor every bite. The Restaurant has been awarded the Bib Gourmand in the latest Michelin Guide.

TARİHİ LİMAN LOKANTASI

Galataport Meclis-i Mebusan Sokak O2 Blok No. 8
D. 102 Tophane, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 877 09 48; www.limanistanbul.com
Open daily noon-midnight

With a deep-rooted past and previously just called Liman (which means harbor or port) Istanbul, the restaurant opened in 1947 on the top floor of the Karaköy Port passenger terminal. It quickly became popular for its food and service and was the first choice for business lunches and dinners. It changed hands many times throughout its long history. No longer a traditional Turkish restaurant, it re-opened in late 2021 at the Galataport İstanbul, a short distance away from its original location and was renamed Tarihi (Historical) Liman Lokantasi. They serve Turkish and international cuisine dishes, which they define as “contemporary presentation of traditional Turkish culinary culture with a touch of world cuisines”, in a sophisticated ambience with a contemporary décor overlooking the Bosphorus and historical peninsula. You can start your meal with a classic Lamb Trotters Soup; try the lakerda (salt cured bonito) served with almond tarator and garden greens; continue with Galician-style octopus served with potatoes and caper flowers; and end your meal with pideli köfte (Turkish style meatballs served on a bed of pide flatbread). On the international side, the menu includes a wide selection of soups, hot & cold appetizers, salads, pastas, mains (prepared over an open-flame or in a wood-burning stone oven) and fish. However, almost all the desserts are typical Turkish delights so leave room! The restaurant also has an extensive wine list including Turkish and international wines.

ZEVK LOKANTA

General Asım Gündüz Caddesi No.86 Kadıköy
Tel: (0216) 336 00 02; www.zevklokanta.com.tr
Open daily 4:00pm-midnight

Founded by the creative minds behind Arkaoda, Zevk Lokanta, offers a unique dining experience that blends contemporary ideas with traditional regional cuisine from Turkey, Greece, and the Levantine. Located on the main drag in Moda, this charming restaurant features faded walls, amber lighting, and candlelit tables, creating a nostalgic atmosphere. The spacious second-floor balcony provides a picturesque view of the bustling neighborhood. The menu offers a distinct focus on meze. Indulge in a variety of delicious meze options, including hummus, kabak borani, şakşuka, and fava. The restaurant creates an ideal setting for celebrations and social gatherings.



Tarihi Liman Lokantasi

KEBABS & MEAT

While doing some research to prepare one of the hardest sections of the wining and dining section, we found out that there are at least 110 different types of kebabs in Türkiye and each one has its own unique flavor and taste. Almost every city in Türkiye prepares its own version of kebab (even the same type of kebab) and most are served on a bed of (or on the side) lavash bread with grilled tomato, green peppers and sliced onions lightly sprinkled with sumac.

The most commonly known among all the kebabs is Döner Kebab which has been around since the Ottoman Empire. It is prepared with meat (usually lamb or a mix of lamb and beef) which is stacked vertically around a cone-shaped spit that slowly rotates with charcoal heat coming from below. Upon serving, döner is sliced at different thicknesses to retain its tenderness. All of the other juicy and succulent beef or lamb kebabs are first marinated with different ingredients and cooked to order over an open flame on skewers.

It is a known fact that Turks love meat! In fact, Istanbul has some of the best steakhouses in the world. Different cuts of steaks are marinated to bring out their flavors and then usually cooked over an open flame.

The following is a short list of some of the best meat and kebab restaurants in Istanbul. Typically, their menus include a short or long list of soups, salads, cold and hot starters, and desserts. While some only serve kebabs or steaks, other serve both. No matter which you choose to go to, you won't be disappointed.

ADANA İL SINIRI

Mim Kemal Öke Caddesi No.14 Nişantaşı, Şişli
Tel: (GSM) 0544 916 01 01; www.adanailsiniri.com
Open daily noon–1:00am

As its name suggests, the specialty of the house here is authentic Adana Kebab, served mild or hot with a side of the prerequisite grilled tomato, green peppers and onions with sumac. It also includes watercress, radishes, mint leaves, parsley, rutabaga and pide flatbread. The menu offers a short list of other meat dishes and popular hot starters like lahmacun and skewered liver kebab. The kebab restaurant moved to its current location in posh Nişantaşı in 2018 and is located in a villa with a contemporary décor with spacious indoor and outdoor dining areas.

AFFAN OCAKBAŞI

Dr. Faruk Ayanoğlu Caddesi
No.1/D Fenerbahçe, Kadıköy
Tel: (0530) 661 23 31; www.affanocakbasi.com
Open Tuesday-Sunday 3:00pm-1:00am;
closed on Mondays

Affan Ocakbaşı offers an authentic taste of Antakya. The menu showcases the region's most beloved dishes, starting with flavorful appetizers like broken olive salad, fella meatballs, and hummus with buttered pistachio. Signature mains include tray kebab, Affan wrap, and Belen kebab, all prepared with traditional techniques. Don't miss the sesame-free bagel and warm, garlic-infused tile cheese, local specialties that add a unique touch to the dining experience.

WHAT HEALTHY BEVERAGES GO BEST WITH KEBABS?

Ayran, a healthy and delicious beverage is simply prepared with plain yogurt, chilled or iced water and salt! One of the national drinks in Türkiye, the refreshing ayran has a slightly tart and sour taste. It is a thirst quencher and best served ice cold. Most kebab restaurants prepare their own ayran while others may be store bought. Ayran is also a remedy for tummy aches, packed with electrolytes and is useful to prevent dehydration. It contains probiotics, the good bacteria found in many yogurts and is a good source of calcium and Vitamin D. Turks usually drink ayran with döner kebab; but it also goes well with other kebabs too, especially spicy kebabs.

Şalgam (pronounced SHAAL'-gahm) or turnip juice is especially a very popular vegetable-based fermented beverage commonly consumed in the southern cities of Adana, Hatay, Tarsus and Mersin among others and a good accompaniment to kebabs (i.e., Adana kebab) from this region. Although the word "şalgam" means turnip in Turkish, the traditional drink is made with the sour and salty brine of purple carrot pickles. Then, it is salted, spiced and flavored with aromatic turnip that was fermented in barrels with ground bulgur wheat and rock salt. It sounds complicated and odd, but it is absolutely delicious and lip-smacking salty and tart. Depending on your tolerance for "heat" it is prepared mild or very spicy and served ice cold in large drinking glasses. Şalgam also has some health benefits: it cleanses the body (detox effect), reduces risk of kidney stones, and is a diuretic and cleanses the lungs and bronchi. Moreover, şalgam is a great "chaser" and sometimes served when drinking rakı, dubbed "lion's milk".

LAHMACUN & PIDE

The most popular hot starters at kebab restaurants are lahmacun and varieties of pide.

Lahmacun is a thin crust flatbread topped with finely ground meat (beef or lamb or both) that has been combined with minced vegetables and herbs (onions, garlic, tomatoes, peppers, parsley). It is flavored with spices (paprika, chili peppers, salt, black pepper), pepper paste and vegetable oil. It is round and usually the size of a dinner plate (some kebab restaurants also prepare “mini” lahmacun about the size of the palm of the hand). After the mixture is thinly and entirely spread over the flatbread, it is short-cooked in a super-hot wood-fired or stone oven. Besides the “standard” lahmacun, some kebab restaurants also have “Antep” lahmacun on the menu. The major differences between the two: standard lahmacun must include 35% minced meat while an “Antep” lahmacun must include 55–50% cleaver minced lamb and the meat filling ingredients do not include onions. Traditionally, lahmacun is immediately served hot with a side of a mix of sliced onions and parsley and a wedge of lemon. The mix is then distributed over the lahmacun by the customer before squeezing fresh lemon juice over the lahmacun. It is then folded to resemble a wrap and is meant to be eaten by hand.

Pide can be meant to be just a flatbread, eaten as a side with a meal and highly popular during the Ramadan holiday. In this case, pide is an oval-shaped and usually open-faced savory pastry prepared with leavened dough and stuffed with a vast variety of ingredients. The “standard” pide ingredients include but not limited to white cheese, fresh yellow cheese, deli meats (salami, frankfurters), cured meats (sucuk, pastırma), minced or chopped meats (beef, chicken, and vegetables (tomatoes, peppers, mushrooms, spinach, roasted eggplants, onions, zucchini). Then your scrumptious pide of choice is cooked in a very hot wood-fired or stone oven and served piping hot! Pide is so popular in Türkiye that there are eateries that only prepare and offer pide.

DEVELİ

Tepecik Yolu No.22 Etiler, Beşiktaş

Tel: (0212) 263 25 71

Abdi İpekçi Caddesi No.61A Nişantaşı, Şişli

Tel: (0212) 514 83 83

Open daily noon–1:00am

The family-owned Develi’s journey began in 1912 in the city of Gaziantep in southeastern Anatolia. Then in 1966 Arif Develi (the owner’s son) opened Develi’s first branch in İstanbul in Samatya and pursued a successful business. Today, Develi has 12 branches in İstanbul and Arif Develi’s two sons Ali and Nuri Develi are at the helm. Develi offers a good selection of luscious kebabs from the southeastern Anatolia along with other delicacies from the region in spacious elegantly decorated surroundings with indoor and outdoor dining areas. The Nişantaşı branch is just a few steps away from the Vakko Hotel & Residence.

ELBET STEAKHOUSE

Zeytinolu Caddesi Yaren Sokak No.6 D. 21

Akatlar, Beşiktaş

Tel: (0212) 351 03 44; www.elbetsteakhouse.com.tr

Open daily noon–10:00pm

The secret to the success of the 16-year-old Elbet is the “hands-on” approach of co-founders Ibrahim Çolak and Elvan Şahin: from overseeing the kitchen staff and selecting the top-quality meats to the seamless service provided by the waitstaff to discerning customers. The meats are exclusively purchased from grass-fed cattle breeders located in the Thrace region. Over 100 cuts of meat are available and served with a variety of tasty homemade sauces... from T-bone, Rib-eye to Porterhouse steak to the classics such as tenderloin of beef, burgers, cuts of lamb to a whole bunch of starters like beef carpaccio, meat sushi, homemade frankfurters, Turkish-style meatballs, steak tartare to a rich selection of sides and salads to yummy desserts.

Resembling a typical steakhouse, Elbet is located on a quiet street in Akatlar and is about a 10-minute walk from the Akmerkez Shopping Mall.

FİKO OCAKBAŞI

Köybaşı Caddesi No.80/A Yeniköy, Sarıyer

Tel: (0212) 223 28 58; www.fikooacakbasi.com

Open daily noon–midnight

The ultra-modern white tablecloth Fiko Ocakbaşı was founded by brothers Fikret (aka Fiko) and Uğur Aydoğdu, who learned the business from their father who moved to İstanbul in 1996 and opened his restaurant Adana Yüzeyler in 2000. The goal of the sons was to raise the bar of the understanding of “classic” kebab restaurants and have definitely been successful evidenced by the high number of upscale local and foreign regulars. With the most extensive menu among all the other restaurants in this category, mouthwatering regional kebabs as well as some signature dishes named after owner “Fiko” are prepared over an open flame at their “ocakbaşı”. The word literally means “grill side” and at these types of restaurants kebabs and meats are cooked on a very large wood-fired grill located in the dining area with a counter for seating for a limited number of diners. They also have a stone oven where they prepare lahmacun and pide varieties. The fancy eatery also has a nice sized bar with seating where guests can enjoy Fiko’s signature cocktails.

GÜNAYDIN

Vişnezade Mahallesi Bayıldım Caddesi No.2, Maçka

Tel: (0212) 258 12 03; www.gunaydinet.com

Open daily 11:00am–11:00pm

We came across an article about Günaydin that says “whoever came up with the ingenious idea of combining a butcher shop with one of the most amazing steak restaurants is a genius”. This genius is no other than

Erzincan-born Cüneyt Asan, who built an empire in the restaurant industry after he purchased the small butcher shop (on the Asian side of the city) where he learned the tricks of the trade after returning from military service in 1984. In his 5th year, he established a meat production plant/farm in Tekirdağ – Malkara with his partner and sold raw meats on the retail and wholesale markets.

Deciding to enter the restaurant industry, he opened his first Günaydın Restaurant in the neighborhood of Etiler in 1992 and the rest is history! Today, he has 37 branches of Günaydın in Türkiye, built on 3 different concepts, and has expanded crossing Türkiye's borders with branches in Dubai and Baku. The Günaydın group concepts are Butcher-Steakhouse, Kebab Restaurant, and the more casual Turkish Meatballs & Diner corners found at most shopping malls in Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir.

The Maçka branch of Günaydın Kebab & Steakhouse stands out for offering the finest examples of traditional Turkish cuisine in a modern, stylish setting. Renowned for its top-quality meats and carefully crafted kebabs, this location also features an elegant outdoor terrace, making it especially popular during the warmer months. As with all Günaydın branches, ingredients are sourced from local purveyors in Southeastern Anatolia, ensuring authenticity and freshness in every bite.

ISKENDER

Şakayık Sokak Park Palas Apt. No.67 Nişantaşı, Şişli
Tel: (0212) 241 02 41; www.iskender.com.tr
Open daily 11:30am-9:00pm

It is said that the döner kebab was created back in 1867 in a small neighborhood called Kayhan in Bursa, a city in the Marmara Sea region. Iskender Efendi, a member of the Iskenderoğlu family of meat experts, was the first to invent the cooking method used to prepare *döner kebab*.

(The word “döner” means “to rotate” as the name of the dish because the kebab is cooked on a rotating spit.) He opened his first restaurant in 1930 in Bursa which was then moved to a different location by Cevat and Nurettin Iskenderoğlu, two of his three sons. It is still open today and referred to as the “Köşe Mavi Dükkan” (corner blue store). Today, Iskender is managed by the 3rd generation family members with a total of 3 branches in Bursa and one in Istanbul. The casually decorated cozy Istanbul branch, like all the other branches, only serves delicious döner kebab using their great grandfather's secret recipe. The short menu also includes plain yogurt, Mediterranean salad, French fries and roasted eggplant with tomato sauce, *syrupy Kemalpaşa* (a local Bursa dessert prepared with flour, unsalted cheese, semolina, eggs and water), *sütlü tel kadayıfı* (syrupy shredded wheat with milk), and non-alcoholic beverages.

KİMYON

Kadife Sokak No.17 Kadıköy
Tel: (0216) 330 48 45; www.kimyon.com.tr
Open Sunday-Thursday 9:00am-5:00am;
Friday-Saturday 9:00am-7:00am

Kimyon is a late-night staple for kebab lovers and nocturnal diners. The restaurant serves a variety of kebabs alongside more adventurous dishes like *ışkembe* (garlic-infused tripe soup) and *beyran*, a fiery Gaziantep specialty with tender lamb strips and rice in a spicy red pepper broth. For dessert lovers, don't miss the opportunity to try traditional desserts like *künefe* (shredded wheat and cheese dipped in sugary syrup and served warm) and *katmer* (pistachio pastry dessert).

KÖŞEBAŞI/LEVENT

Çamlık Sokak No:15 Levent
Tel: (0212) 270 24 33; www.kosebasi.com
Open daily noon-11:00pm

Founded in 1995, Köşebaşı has 14 branches in Türkiye, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan. Located in one of the busiest business districts, Köşebaşı's Levent branch offers its guests the opportunity to enjoy the traditional Adana kebab and other authentic dishes from Adana and Tarsus regions in the heart of Istanbul. An advocate for clean and ethically sourced ingredients and minimizing food waste, Köşebaşı also has a strict transparency policy for you to enjoy your food without a worry.

Due to its location, making reservations if you wish to visit Köşebaşı during lunch hours is strongly recommended. You can enjoy your food in the spacious and cozy restaurant or in the outdoor space in the back of the restaurant. Köşebaşı also offers valet parking.

NUSR-ET STEAKHOUSE

Nispetiye Caddesi No.87 Etiler, Beşiktaş
Çarşıkapı Nuruosmaniye Caddesi Sandal Bedesteni
Çarşısı Beyazıt, Fatih
Tel: (0212) 568 77 38 www.nusret.com.tr
Open daily noon to midnight

Erzurum-born Nusret Gökçe (a.k.a. Salt Bae) dropped out of school after completing his elementary school education out of necessity setting the stage for his future. He started to apprentice at a butcher shop at the age of 12 in Istanbul and by the time he turned 25 he had traveled to Argentina and the USA to further perfect his butchering, cooking and presentation skills. With a partner, he opened his first Nusr-Et restaurant in Etiler in 2010 with only 10 tables and 10 staff members, a close

distance away from his current flagship restaurant. It immediately became an instant hit among affluent diners, not only due to the mouthwatering and juicy steaks but also due to Nusret himself. It didn't take long for him to become a global brand after his partnership with the D.ream group, (a major restaurant and entertainment company) in 2012. He quickly spread his wings and opened his first restaurant abroad in Dubai in 2014. Then came branches in Abu Dhabi, Doha, Miami, New York, Dallas, Mykonos, Boston, Beverly Hills, London and Riyadh. Today, the chain has 30 branches in Türkiye and abroad. 39-year-old Gökçe is not only an internationally acclaimed restaurateur but also a savvy businessman with an entrepreneurial spirit. In 2017, he was nicknamed “Salt Bae” for the flair with which he affectionately prepares and sprinkles salt on the meat before serving, which transformed him into a popular icon in the social media world. His “a crazy menu” (as he calls it) includes Golden Steak, Golden Tomahawk, and Golden Sirt. Signature dishes include New York Steak, Amado, and Nus-ret Special among many other delectable dishes.

TATBAK

Akkavak Sokak No. 38B Nişantaşı, Şişli
Tel: (0212) 248 04 25; www.tatbak.com
Open Monday-Saturday 11:00am-9:00pm
Michelin Bib Gourmand

Open since 1960, the modestly decorated 2-story Tatbak specializes in dishes from the Gaziantep region. It offers a few versions of mild or spicy Urfa (beef or chicken) kebabs, Tatbak Beyti Kebab, skewered chicken kebab along with other longtime favorites such as *ıçlı köfte* (meat stuffed kibbeh), *bulgur pilaf*, *lahmacun*, pide selections and typical Turkish desserts such as *tel kadayıfı* (syrupy shredded wheat pastry) and *baklava*. Tatbak was awarded the Bib Gourmand by Michelin Guide 2025 edition.

THE SALAŞ

Aşık Veysel Mahallesi 3022. Sokak No.3, Ataşehir
Tel: (0553) 834 33 46
Open Tuesday-Sunday noon-9.30pm
Closed Monday

The Salaş in Ataşehir, which means “rustic” or “unpretentious,” stays true to its name by offering a relaxed yet high-quality kebab dining experience. Run by Hasan Söğüt, an architect with a deep knowledge of grilling and meat preparation, The Salaş combines craftsmanship with top-tier ingredients. The menu is filled with delicious hot and cold starters, and the meat dishes—especially the kebabs—are prepared with care. For those looking for something unique, their paça çorbası (trotter soup) is often praised as one of the best in Istanbul. It’s an unassuming spot but provides an exceptional dining experience.

TIKE BEYLERBEYİ

İskele Caddesi No.19/A Beylerbeyi, Üsküdar
Tel: (0216) 422 69 37; www.tike.com.tr
Open daily 10:00am-11:00pm

Founded in 1998 by four cousins from Adana, Tike is a culinary gem that proudly showcases the rich and diverse flavors of Adana cuisine. Situated on the historic İskele Caddesi in Beylerbeyi, the restaurant offers a unique dining experience with an extensive menu of regional kebabs and signature dishes. Each plate is a testament to the deep-rooted traditions of Turkish culinary culture, providing an authentic taste of Adana. Tike has 10 branches across Turkey. Visit their website for more information.

ZÜBEYİR OCAKBAŞI

İstiklal Caddesi Bekar Sokak No.28 Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 293 39 51; www.zubeyirocakbasi.com.tr
Open daily 11:00am-midnight

A favorite among Istanbulites “in the know”, Zübeyir Ocakbaşı opened in 2006 due to the combined efforts of brothers Hamit and Zübeyir who began their career in the restaurant industry in 1986. The restaurant has a small outdoor tiered terrace and a 2-story modestly decorated indoor dining area with the “ocakbaşı” (here with a copper-hood) center stage surrounded with dining tables and seating grill side, which is recommended for first-timers. The menu includes a variety of succulent lamb, meat, chicken and liver kebabs perfectly prepared at the hands of masters in their trade. There is also a good selection of starters such as creamy zucchini dip, roasted eggplants or onions, shepherd’s salad and olive oil braised cannelloni beans (pilaki) among others. If you still have room, try one of their Turkish desserts like Quince dessert with clotted cream or the baklava, syrupy layered pastry. There is also a wide selection of name brand rakı to enjoy with your meal.



Nusr-Et Steakhouse

OTHER CUISINES

1924İSTANBUL

İstiklal Caddesi Olivya Geçidi No.7, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 243 83 60; www.1924istanbul.com
Open Monday-Saturday 3:30pm-midnight
Eastern European Cuisine

1924İstanbul was first called Turkuaz and then renamed Rejans. It was founded in 1924 by Russians who fled the Bolshevik revolution and wanted to recreate the urban life they left behind. A long list of noted guests—from Royals and spies to politicians and celebrities such as Mata Hari, Greta Garbo and Agatha Christie rubbed shoulders at the wood-paneled dining room. In fact, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, founder and first president of the Republic of Türkiye was a loyal customer and to this day there is a table set-up commemorating and honoring Türkiye's great leader. The table is adorned with fresh flowers, a bowl of white chickpeas (Atatürk's favorite snack) and a metal table plaque that reads "Reserved for Eternity". Rejans closed in 2011, but re-opened under new management as 1924İstanbul in 2016. Today, the venue's décor, which has remained the same, is packed with nostalgic memorabilia collected during the past 98 years. Homemade bread, pickles and salmon flavored butter is served while guests peruse the menu which includes a good selection of dishes from Eastern European cuisine. Some of the traditional dishes are Borscht Soup, Russian Salad, Beef Piroshk, Imperial Iranian Beluga Caviar, Beef Stroganoff, Chicken Kievsky, and Chocolate Faberge dessert. A tasting menu (minimum 2 people) is also available. Let's not forget their choices of vodka; from the popular lemon-vodka to others such as saffron-vodka and cinnamon-vodka. Moreover, authentic Russian music fills the background and the musicians playing the harp, piano and accordion further entertain customers as they dine.

JASH ISTANBUL

Cihangir Caddesi No. 9 Cihangir, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 244 30 42; www.jashistanbul.com
Open daily noon-2:00am
Armenian & Istanbul Cuisine

When you go to Jash (means food in Armenian) you feel like you are in your grandma's living room for Sunday dinner. The venue is decorated with antique paintings, timeworn tables, objects and a piano. It is located in a lovely 2-story villa in the bohemian Cihangir neighborhood with a small outdoor dining area in front of the restaurant. Dayk Miricanyan opened Jash in 2010 to reach a larger audience of diners to taste the delectable delights of Armenian-Istanbul cuisine in the style prepared by his grandmother Lusia. He is the grandson of Agop Şirinyan who established Şirin in 1930 serving dishes prepared by his mom Lusia. The menu is quite extensive and tasty soups, salads, olive-oil braised dishes, hot starters, mains and more are on offer to foodies interested in trying different flavors from these cuisines.

OFF THE BEATEN PATH

Istanbul is a very large cosmopolitan city and divided into 39 districts spread over the European and Asian sides of the city. Since we cannot include information about all of them, we picked the more popular districts frequented by visitors to our city. However, there are a few excellent Turkish restaurants that are worth visiting and only a taxi ride away from the Vakko Hotel & Residence in the heart of the fashionable Nişantaşı neighborhood located in the Şişli district.

BEYTI

Orman Sokak No.6-8 Florya, Bakırköy
Tel: (0212) 663 29 90; www.beyti.com
Open daily 11:30am-11:00pm

Born in 1929, Crimean descent Beyti Güler has been in the restaurant industry for the past 67 years and still going strong at the age of 93! The family moved to Türkiye in 1934 and the father first opened a bakery/market before opening a restaurant in Küçükçekmece in 1945. It became so popular in the 1950s that even back then was frequented by not only prominent Turks (top executives, high-ranking politicians, etc.) and foreign dignitaries but also scores of local residents with their families and foreign guests. In 1983, Beyti moved to its spacious and final home in Florya, an upscale residential neighborhood about 28 km from Nişantaşı. Located on 3-acres of land, the 3-story fine dining restaurant has a capacity for 450 diners with 5 kitchens, a lush verdant garden, 3 dining terraces and 10 indoor dining sections. The minute you walk through the door, you know that you are somewhere special and rich with old Turkish traditions and values. The highly skilled kitchen staff and professional waitstaff continue the years long tradition of using only top-quality products and

ingredients, offered with superior service to perfection. Undoubtedly the food is truly delicious. In fact, the original and famous “Beyti Kebab” was created by and named after Mr. Güler. Beyti is also renowned for their döner (seasoned meat stacked in the shape of an inverted cone on a slowly turning vertical rotating rotisserie or spit) and grilled köfte (Turkish meatballs). The menu also includes a good selection of cold and hot starters, perfectly cooked meat, poultry and lamb grills, and luscious desserts. Some recommended dishes include eggplant rice pilaf; su böreği (a savory pastry prepared with white cheese and layered dough, first boiled in water and then baked in the oven), quince dessert topped with clotted cream; and künefe (shredded wheat and cheese dipped in sugary syrup and served warm). Mr. Güler will greet you at the entrance as he does with all his guests!

ÇİYA SOFRASI

Güneşlibahçe Sokak No.44 Kadıköy
Tel: (0216) 330 31 90; www.ciya.com.tr
Open Sunday-Thursday 11:30am-10:00pm;
Saturday-Sunday 11:30am-10:30pm

This no-frills modest 2-story restaurant with a small outdoor dining area has been serving home-style Turkish dishes since 1998 and is located at the Fish Market in Kadıköy on the Asian side of the city, about 15 kms from Nişantaşı. Talented owner and chef Musa Dağdeviren collects recipes from all over the country to the delight of local and foreign aficionados interested in experiencing the diverse delectable delights that Turkish cuisine offers. The menu changes daily according to the season and availability of products and the dishes are displayed and served from the open display counter at the entrance to the restaurant. Moreover, steps away from each other on the same street Çiya has two other restaurants that specialize in kebabs and fittingly called Çiya Kebab and Çiya Kebab 2.

SERAF

Peyami Sefa Caddesi No.38/D Mahmutbey, Bağcılar
Tel: (0212) 445 55 05; www.seraf.com.tr
Open weekdays noon-10:00pm; weekends 10:00am-10:00pm

When you are an “off the beaten path” restaurant, you have to be pretty successful and “word of mouth” is also very important. Open since 2015, Seraf is an upmarket restaurant that has been attracting diners from all walks of life for its excellent selection of healthy and tasty traditional Anatolian cuisine dishes. All dishes are prepared daily using only fresh and organic ingredients in season; some dishes change daily based on availability of products. They offer homemade sour dough breads (baked in a wood-fired brick oven), jams, pickled vegetables, sauces, and more and you can purchase them from the Seraf Market to take home. The market also includes a selection of regional soups, cheeses, meats, and more. The menu is quite extensive and some of the more popular tasty dishes include kibbeh (ıçlı köfte), lahmacun, lamb shank with kashkek (keşkek) and stuffed rack of lamb (kaburga dolması). Also, Seraf serves an extensive spread of traditional breakfast treats from around the country on weekends. Alcohol is not served. Self-taught Executive Chef Sinem Özler has been at the helm of the kitchen from the beginning; she is also the co-founder and General Manager of Seraf. After working in the Advertising & Promotion field and then 10 years in the Food & Beverage industry, she found herself in the kitchen at Seraf. Ms. Özler is today one of the best woman chefs in Türkiye. The white tablecloth restaurant is quite spacious with floor to ceiling windows and a terrace with a retractable roof. There is another branch at the Vadiistanbul Shopping Mall.

WORTH MENTIONING

AHALİ TEŞVİKİYE

Av. Süreyya Ağaoğlu Sokak No.33 Teşvikiye, Şişli
Tel: (GSM) 0546 202 44 50; www.ahalitesvikiye.com
Open daily 2:00pm-midnight

Ahali (one meaning of the word is “communal” in Turkish) is a suitable name for this meze or tapas bar that opened in 2017. The seasonal menu includes a variety of tasty cold and hot classic meze which have been cleverly re-interpreted and presented with modern accents that are meant to be shared. The menu also includes a couple of salads and desserts. The spacious eatery has an open kitchen with seating at the counter for dining as well as a pleasantly decorated indoor seating area with a retractable glass encased pergola. Ahali also offers a good selection of rakı (an aniseed-flavored drink), one of the best accompaniments to Turkish meze. Ahali is a great place to go with a group of friends or family to socialize in a relaxed setting accompanied with good conversation, food and cheer because there is no loud music to drown out your conversations.

LOKANTA KRU

Av. Süreyya Ağaoğlu Sokak No.13 Teşvikiye, Şişli
Tel: (0212) 230 25 00;
www.kruvasanistanbul.com.tr
Open Monday-Friday noon-10:00pm;
Saturday 2:00pm-10:00pm

Owner and chef Ufuk Ügümü graduated from the Le Cordon Bleu Madrid in Spain with a Grand Diplôme (culinary arts and pastry school) and is the nephew of Feridun Ügümü, the distinguished chef-owner of Hünkar, a longstanding Turkish-Ottoman cuisine restaurant, so it's in the genes! He first opened Kruvasan (see Breakfast section) and

then Lokanta Kru, which specializes in “new-age” esnaf lokantası (tradesman restaurant) Turkish-Ottoman cuisine. However, most of the dishes are primarily prepared with vegetables and herbs from the Aegean region. The warm and cozy white tablecloth restaurant is decorated with green, turquoise and blue ceramic tiles with an open kitchen and seating area for 30 customers. The menu changes daily as Ügümü only offers healthy dishes with fresh ingredients he sources daily. Usually, 6 mains and 10 olive-oil braised innovative dishes (served warm) are prepared. The daily menu selections are posted on a chalkboard for all to see or you can select the dishes from their open display. If you were unable to make a reservation, you can make a reservation at Kruvasan and order your meal from Kru.

RESTAURANT MARKUS

Atatürk Oto Sanayi Sitesi 3. Sokak No:42, Maslak
Tel: (0544) 429 34 34; www.markusribs.com
Open Monday-Saturday 5:00pm-midnight

Situated in Istanbul's sprawling Atatürk Oto Sanayi (one of the city's industrial sites), Restaurant Markus offers a distinctive culinary experience with its modern approach to ribs and diverse flavors. The unique location enhances the restaurant's charm. Founded in 2017 by gastronomy enthusiasts Emirhan Parali and Sinan Büdeyri, Restaurant Markus stands out from typical rib joints. Going beyond exceptional ribs, it provides a contemporary setting for art and design experiences. As a community-driven space, Restaurant Markus caters to more than just your taste buds, addressing sight and soul. Whether you opt for a portion of beef ribs or a burger, Restaurant Markus ensures a memorable culinary journey. To complement your dining experience, the restaurant features an enticing selection of cocktails crafted with creativity and precision.



Restaurant Markus

NIGHTLIFE FINE DINING & CLUBBING

There are a number of wonderful & elegant fine dining restaurants in the city that also have spacious bar/lounges (with DJ performances) where you can hang out after your dinner to socialize, have cocktails, listen to some great music or make new friends! Although “clubbing” is usually synonymous to a “nightclub”; this notion too has evolved with nightclubs passé or “out” and bar/lounges “in” and popular. The following are some examples:

29

Ahmet Adnan Saygun Caddesi Ulus Park No. 71/1
Ulus, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 358 29 29; www.29.com.tr
Open weekdays noon to 2:00am; Saturdays 7:00pm–3:00am; Sundays 7:00pm–1:00am

After driving up a short but very steep road and walking through the doors of 29, a spectacular Bosphorus view will greet you as you enter the bar/lounge to the left or the spacious, elegantly decorated main dining room leading to an outdoor terrace. To party at the trendy Club 29 nightclub with DJ performances, hang a right at the entrance. The venue is located on a tiered hilltop at Ulus Park, in the affluent residential neighborhood Ulus on the adjacent hill from Sunset Grill & Bar and is frequented by upmarket Turks and foreigners. The menu at this upscale white tablecloth fine dining restaurant includes a refined variety of Turkish and international delectable treats and the bar/lounge has a separate bar menu. Another long standing venue, 29 has been open since December 1993.

ARKAODA

Kadife Sokak No.18/A Kadıköy
Tel: (0216) 418 02 77; www.arkaoda.com
Open daily noon-02:00am

Since its opening in December 1999, Arkaoda has been a cultural pioneer in Istanbul. From the outset, it has set itself apart from the mainstream, driven by a passion for music, art, and innovation. Arkaoda’s ever-evolving calendar—featuring concerts, DJ sets, festivals, themed parties, and unique pop-up markets—keeps the space dynamic and fresh, continuously pushing the boundaries of Kadıköy’s creative scene. Whether you’re drawn by the music or the atmosphere, Arkaoda remains a cornerstone of Kadıköy’s cultural fabric and is a must-visit for anyone seeking something beyond the ordinary. Arkaoda’s visionary creator has also expanded this cultural spirit to other venues, such as Bina, Dün, and Yer, further shaping the city’s culinary and nightlife landscape.

FRANKHAN

Kemankeş Caddesi No:73, Karaköy
Tel: (0533) 043 56 19

Located by the Karaköy harbor, this versatile venue boasts a state-of-the-art sound system, sleek modern interiors, and an impressive capacity of 1,000 music lovers. Frankhan has hosted acclaimed artists like Kamaal Williams and Sudan Archives. Keep an eye on their ever-evolving calendar for exciting new gigs featuring top local and international talents across various genres.

FRANKIE ISTANBUL

Galataport Meclis-İ Mebusan Sokak No.14
Tophane, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 401 05 57 www.frankieistanbul.com
Open daily 5:00pm–2:00am

A major player in the restaurant and nightlife scene in Istanbul since 2012, Frankie has joined forces with D.ream (Doğuş Restaurant and Management) and the “new and revamped” Frankie is back in action at Galataport since late 2022. The 2-story Frankie is located on the promenade at Galataport and has a spacious terrace with an exclusively designed, chic bar/lounge/dining area where you can enjoy a panoramic view of the Bosphorus in a glorious setting while sipping a Frankie’s signature cocktail with nightly DJ performances. The elegant décor is posh and sleek with floor to ceiling windows, among many other elegant accents and features. The new and unique menu includes an excellent selection of gastronomic treats from Mediterranean cuisine. The essence of the fresh and in-season ingredients from the Mediterranean region are combined with cooking techniques and spices used in Asian cuisine. However, the menu is

not just limited to Chinese and Japanese dishes, but also includes dishes from Indian, Thai, Vietnamese and Korean cuisines. The innovative and original dishes were created by Head Chef Aykut Doğanak, a Le Cordon Bleu “Diplôme de Cuisine” graduate and his team.

NITE ISTANBUL

Dereboyu Caddesi No:10, Ortaköy
Tel: (0549) 692 64 83; www.niteistanbul.com
Open daily 1:00pm-2:00am

Nestled in Ortaköy, Nite Istanbul offers a combination of panoramic view, vibrant music, and a diverse menu representing world cuisine, accompanied by an extensive selection of beverages. Menu features an eclectic mix of flavors, standout dishes include the warm hummus with seafood and breaded crispy shrimp. The cocktail menu promises a delightful experience. Even the spacious venue is perfect for larger groups, take some “me” time and enjoy the stunning Istanbul skyline.

SUNSET GRILL & BAR

Yol Sokak No. 2 Ulus Park Ulus, Beşiktaş

Tel: (0212) 287 03 57; www.sunsetgrillbar.com

Open daily noon-midnight

By far, Sunset Grill & Bar is one of the top representatives of the “white tablecloth fine dining” restaurants in Istanbul. Located on a tiered hilltop at Ulus Park, it affords breathtaking views of the Bosphorus strait from its spacious and elegantly decorated outdoor terrace, indoor dining areas with floor to ceiling windows and its separate bar/lounge which has a great bar menu. Sunset has come a long way and has maintained its excellence in service and gastronomy since 1994; for the most part, the managers, waitstaff and sommelier have remained the same since the beginning, creating an excellent synergy to the advantage of Sunset’s long-list of discerning clientele which includes renowned celebrities, diplomats and other notable public figures. Well-known executive chef Fabrice Canelle has been at the helm of the kitchen since 2015 and the menu selections include a wonderful array of Mediterranean, Turkish and Japanese cuisines, changing according to season. Moreover, from time-to-time Chef Canelle prepares exceptional tasting menus (paired with wines) that shouldn’t be missed! Sunset has the most incredible wine cellar with very rare wines; it is a member of the La Confrérie de la Chaîne des Rôtisseurs (an international gastronomic society founded in Paris in 1950) since 1999 as well as being the recipient of a number of local and international culinary awards. If you want to continue your evening after dinner, have drinks at Sunset’s spacious bar/lounge with live DJ performances to further extend your fine dining experience.



Sunset Grill & Bar

LIVE MUSIC

ANY CAFE & BAR

Bebek Arnavutköy Caddesi No.71/B

Arnavutköy, Beşiktaş

Tel: (0212) 265 32 69

Open Tuesday–Sunday noon–1:00am

As incredible as it may sound, just on the 2–3 block narrow Arnavutköy Street, there are fish restaurants, cafes and bars not counting a green grocery and several bakeries! Any, open since 2014, is located on a corner of this street and has a small outdoor seating area and a modest-sized interior with high floor to ceiling paned windows, a bar and a small stage for DJ and live performances. Usually packed on the weekends and spilling out onto the street, it is a popular cafe & bar frequented by upscale Istanbulites of all ages as well as expats. Any has a typical cafe menu for a casual lunch or dinner, but kicks up the volume with DJ performances on Wednesdays and live music on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays with performances of popular Turkish bands. Since music is universal; you won't feel at odds at Any!

DIVINE BRASSERIE & JAZZ CLUB

İhlamur Yolu Sokak No.34/B, Topağacı, Şişli

Tel: (0212) 231 84 69

Open daily 9:00am–2:00am

DiVine is an all-day dining brasserie with the added bonus of also being a live jazz club featuring different artists on different nights throughout the week (programs are announced on their Instagram profile). The main dining area is homey and casually decorated, while the jazz club is in a separate area with a small stage and seating area with tables. DiVine has a very extensive menu of international cuisine as well as a yummy breakfast menu.

MINİBAR

Kuruçeşme Caddesi No:19C, Kuruçeşme

Tel: (0533) 296 75 19

Open Monday to Thursday&Sunday

6:00pm–2:00am

Friday–Saturday 6:00pm–3:00am

A vibrant new spot for live music and delightful cocktails, Minibar lives up to its name, nestled in a tiny space yet promising a fun time. This neighborhood bar offers eclectic cocktails, small sharing plates, and finely tuned live music. Given the limited space, it can get a little crowded.

NARDIS JAZZ CLUB

Kuledibi Sokak No. 8 Galata, Beyoğlu

Tel: (0212) 244 63 27: www.nardisjazz.com

Open Monday–Saturday 8:30pm–12:30am

Open since October 29, 2002, this classic and highly popular live jazz music club is steps from the Galata Tower and a must visit for all jazz lovers! Nardis has a maximum capacity for 120 people and usually hosts local jazz musicians and bands but has also featured and continues to feature internationally acclaimed jazz artists. Set in a cozy ambiance, Nardis has a bar & snack menu too. Nardis has also been home to the “Young Jazz Vocal Competition” annually since 2015 and continues to support young musicians and bands by inviting them to perform. Check their website to see the incredible line-up of musicians that perform nightly. All concerts begin at 9:30pm.

PERA 77

Meşrutiyet Caddesi No:15 Asmalı Mescit, Beyoğlu

Tel: (0534) 576 99 94; www.themarmarahotels.com/

tr/pera/restoranlar/pera77

Open daily 7:00am–2:00am

Pera 77, the city's newest jazz club, comes to life on the ground floor of The Marmara Pera. This dedicated venue features a stage hosting diverse performances by renowned local and international jazz musicians. Operating from Wednesday to Saturday, Pera 77's event schedule showcases both local and international figures in the jazz music scene. The carefully curated program solidifies its position as a potential cornerstone for jazz and live performances in the city. Beyond its dedicated schedule, Pera 77 captivates on other days with its menu and atmosphere. The meticulous service, combined with delectable meals and tasty cocktails, reflects the vibrant world of jazz throughout the week. You can check the schedule from their website.

THE POPULIST

Galataport, Meclis-i Mebusan Caddesi Block L5

No.8/2D Tophane, Beyoğlu

Tel: (0212) 401 04 57; www.thepopulist.com.tr

Open weekdays noon to midnight;

weekends noon–2:00am

The Populist's motto is “Good food, music and cheer”. This very spacious 550 square meter eatery/bar has an eclectic and unique décor with indoor & outdoor seating areas as well as a rooftop terrace affording great views of the Bosphorus to enjoy in a casual setting. Their menu includes an extensive list of pub/comfort foods: spicy chicken wings, nachos, burgers, hotdogs, tacos, salads, stone oven pizzettas, juicy spare ribs and more. The Populist also offers a good selection of draft beers and turns into a lively bar with live DJ performances on Friday– Sunday nights! Events are organized on these days featuring different music genres from pop, rock, and alternative music to reggae, hip-hop, funk and disco to a step back to the 70s–80s–90s on alternative nights. The Populist first opened at Yapı Kredi Bomontiada about 6 years ago before opening this branch.

TRENDY BARS

ALEXANDRA COCKTAIL BAR

Bebek Arnavutköy 1. Caddesi No.50

Arnavutköy, Beşiktaş

Tel: (0212) 287 58 48; www.alexandrabar.com

Open Monday–Thursday 3:00pm–1:00am;

Friday–Saturday 3:00pm–2:30am;

Sunday 5:00pm–1:00am

This popular, elegantly decorated bar with a terrace affords a spectacular view of the Bosphorus from its perch on the top floor of a building in the trendy Arnavutköy neighborhood. The bar has a modest-sized snack menu of goodies which you can enjoy while sipping one of their signature and unique cocktails in a lively ambience with DJ performances.

ALLEN KITCHEN & COCKTAIL

Bağdat Caddesi No.477/B Suadiye, Kadıköy Tel:

(0216) 483 36 83; www.allensuadiye.com

Open Monday–Thursday noon–1:00am; Friday–Saturday

noon–02:00am Sunday noon–midnight

Allen Kitchen & Cocktail has quickly gained a loyal following thanks to its refined atmosphere and signature drinks. The cuisine is simple yet satisfying, with shareable dishes perfectly complementing the cocktail menu. Standout drinks include the ‘Rojo,’ crafted with mezcal, the spicy ‘Pimenter,’ infused with Mexican chili liqueur, and the ‘Era,’ featuring salted caramel vodka. On the food side, popular favorites include crispy jumbo shrimp, mini burgers, mac ‘n cheese balls and nachos—perfect for enjoying with friends over cocktails.

BİNA

Kadife Sokak No.26, Kadıköy Tel: (0216) 330 84 66

Open daily 1:00pm–2:00am

Launched in 2016 by the minds behind Arkaoda, Bina quickly established itself as a go-to in Kadıköy, drawing crowds with its eclectic mix of talks, screenings, performances, and events curated by indie magazine Bant. Nestled in a historic building with a generous garden space, Bina’s laid-back yet stylish vibe makes it the perfect hangout for unwinding over drinks with friends. As night falls, the ground floor comes alive with DJ sets that keep the crowd going. The menu is just as inviting, offering everything from pizzas, pastas, and burgers to lighter, healthier bites, making it a spot you’ll want to settle into for the long haul.

BISTRO 33

Zincirli Köşk Sokak No.10 Caddebostan, Kadıköy Tel:

(0216) 478 65 50; www.bistro33.com.tr

Open daily 10:00am–1:00am

Bistro 33 is one of the most well-known spots on Bağdat Caddesi, consistently drawing crowds with its modern ambience and stylish decor. The menu has maintained its quality over the years, offering delicious food and drinks that keep regulars coming back. From breakfast to lunch, dinner, and late-night bar service with a live DJ until 1 a.m., Bistro 33 provides a captivating, chic atmosphere that welcomes guests at any hour of the day.

BRASSERIE NOIR

Bağdat Caddesi No.455/1 D Suadiye, Kadıköy Tel:

(0216) 380 00 05

Open Monday–Friday 2:00pm–

midnight; Saturday noon–midnight; Sunday 10:00am–

midnight

Set in a chic, modern setting, Brasserie Noir captivates with its sleek, black-dominated decor, creating an atmosphere of elegance and sophistication. The menu offers a delightful array of international cuisine, including flavorful appetizers, pastas, and hearty meat and chicken dishes, alongside healthier options. Favorites include the hot noir rigatoni and pasta with truffle parmesan sauce. The cocktail menu is equally impressive, and the live music sets a lively tone, making it a standout in the area. Be sure to visit Noir Patisserie next door for a taste of their delicious desserts.

FAHRİ KONSOLOS

Dr. Esat Işık Caddesi No.30 D:C Caferağa, Kadıköy

Open Tuesday–Sunday 5:30pm–1:30am; Closed

Monday

Fahri Konsolos is a tiny but mighty cocktail bar that’s not to be missed. This intimate spot offers expertly crafted signature cocktails. While Fahri Konsolos doesn’t serve food, its focus on cocktails is unparalleled.

GOOSE NO.25

Kuruçeşme Caddesi No.25B Kuruçeşme, Beşiktaş

Tel: (GSM) 0537 443 82 99

Open Tuesday–Thursday & Sunday 3:00pm–

1:00am; Friday–Saturday 3:00pm– 3:00am

Open since 2020, the modestly sized and pleasantly decorated Goose has indoor seating (check out the interesting artwork that covers the ceiling), a few tables in the storefront and a lovely courtyard decorated with Marrakech-style accents. An assortment of delectable tapas is on the menu which you can enjoy while trying one of their signature cocktails.

LELABBO COCKTAIL BAR

Moda Caddesi No.159/B Caferağa, Kadıköy www.

lelabbo.co

Open daily 5:00pm–02:00am

LeLabbo Cocktail Bar stands out with its stylish decor and experienced team, offering a top-notch cocktail experience. The bar’s unique cocktail menu features their own carefully crafted recipes, showcasing a blend of skill and creativity. Among the most popular are the Ispahan and Smoked Fiesta, made with roasted red pepper or strawberry—both must-tries.

MONKEY ISTANBUL

Sadi Konuralp Caddesi No.5 Şişhane, Beyoğlu

Tel: (GSM) 0532 605 81 56

Open Sunday–Wednesday 6:00pm–2:00pm;

Thursday–Saturday 6:00pm–3:00am

Located on the rooftop terrace of the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (IKSV) building, this trendy cocktail bar offers breathtaking views of the Golden Horn and Historic Peninsula and not surprisingly has a long list of loyal and affluent regular patrons. Like all the other popular bars around town, Monkey also has its own signature cocktails. So, while sipping your delicious cocktail, soak up the incredible view (especially during sunset) while you are entertained with lively tunes from various genres by different talented DJs who perform on alternating nights. A snack menu is also available.

OLEA & THE BAR

Muallim Naci Caddesi No.62 Kuruçeşme, Beşiktaş
Tel: (GSM) 0533 073 78 78
Open everyday
Olea 08:00am–11:30pm
& The Bar 06:00pm–11:30pm

Emre Ergani, a well-known old-hand in the restaurant, bar and nightclub scenes, opened Olea & the Bar at the Mandarin Oriental Bosphorus hotel earlier in 2022. Olea, the restaurant specializes in Italian cuisine; while & the Bar is where you can go to enjoy unique cocktails and delectable snacks set in super-elegant surroundings with a stupendous panoramic view of the Bosphorus tucked in between the two bridges. Located right on the waterfront, the menu includes luscious cocktails served with unique presentations. Signature cocktails include Lovely Lavender, Whisky Tango Foxtrot, Something New, Passion and Promises and Salty Kiss among others prepared by highly skilled mixologists. Visit & the Bar and taste them for yourself while you hobnob with guests from all over the world for a unique experience in Istanbul! On the subject of snacks, & the Bar has an absolutely mouthwatering snack menu which includes such goodies like Fritto Di Calamari and Gamberi (deep-fried calamari and prawns with spicy mayo), Seabass Ceviche (Peruvian-style lime-marinated seabass with fresh coriander, red onions, avocado, yellow and red bell peppers), and Beef Tataki (seared tenderloin of beef slices with sesame seeds; horseradish salad) to name just a few.

PIGALLE SUADIYE

Plaj Yolu Sokak No.12A Suadiye, Kadıköy Tel: (0539) 411 28 89 Open daily 10:00am-1:00am

Tucked away on Bağdat Caddesi, Pigalle Suadiye stands out with its bold cocktail and dining menu, created by the team behind Kuruçeşme's beloved Goose No.25. As soon as you step inside, you're greeted by a bright and inviting space with light-toned decor that draws you in, offering a cozy atmosphere perfect for unwinding after a long day. Quickly becoming a local favorite for dinner, standout dishes include the crispy buckwheat hummus and tender beef fillet—both must-tries.

THE RUA SUADIYE

Ulus Sokak No.6A Suadiye, Kadıköy Tel: (0532) 484 37 82; www.theruasuaide.com Open daily noon-1:00am

The Rua Suadiye is a stylish and upscale restaurant and cocktail bar situated on the vibrant Bağdat Caddesi. With its chic and elegant ambiance, it's the perfect spot for a sophisticated night out. Known for its expertly crafted cocktails, the White Peach—featuring a refreshing blend of white peach flavors—is a standout. The menu focuses on lunch and dinner, offering a variety of international dishes, including salads, pasta, risotto, pizza and burgers. The rib steak paired with risotto is highly recommended.

UPPERIST

Osmanlı Sokak No.3 Gümüşsuyu, Taksim
Tel: (0534) 575 31 75; www.upperist.com.tr
Open daily 06:00pm-01:00am

Situated atop The Marmara Taksim, Upperist, on the hotel's newly utilized rooftop, provides an impressive view from every angle, establishing itself as the prime location to immerse in the vibrant colors of Istanbul at night. With a lounge-style seating arrangement, the venue offers a unique and comfortable setting to enjoy the iconic views of Istanbul. Founded by the Desert Group, known for establishments like Topaz, Escale, Colonie, and Pandeli, Upperist is active from 6:00pm every day of the week. Indulge in their signature, crafted cocktails while exploring the city's nightlife. Don't forget to peruse their bar menu, which offers a delightful selection. Also, within The Marmara Taksim, there is a restaurant founded by the same group; Okra, which is highly recommended.

ZİHNİ NİŞANTAŞI

Vali Konağı Caddesi No:39 Nişantaşı
Tel: (0554) 025 70 79
Open Monday-Thursday 05:00pm-02:00am Friday-Saturday 05:00pm-04:00am

What a pleasure for the Istanbul nightlife to witness its return! Zihni Bar's revival in Nişantaşı seamlessly merges gourmet dining with lively late-night entertainment, resurrecting the allure of this iconic bar that has been a symbol of Istanbul's nightlife since the 1980s. Zihni is located on the first floor of a magnificent historic building designed as a home by Vedat Tek, one of the first architects of the Republic of Türkiye. The venue has been modernized, blending a more stylish and contemporary atmosphere while preserving its classic essence. The menu, featuring starters, salads, pizzettes, and standout main courses like king crab and truffle orzo risotto, beef tenderloin with morel mushroom sauce is exceptionally delightful. Live music events are held until 2 am on weekdays and 4 am on weekends (check the schedule for these events on their Instagram). Zihni Nişantaşı is the perfect place to feel like a local in the city.

NEIGHBORHOOD BARS

GEYİK

Akarsu Yokuşu No.22/A, Cihangir, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0532) 773 00 13
Open Daily 16:00pm-2:00am

Geyik in Cihangir transitions from a third-wave cafe during the day to a bustling cocktail bar at night. Enjoy signature cocktails like the Old Fashioned or Whiskey Sour, either seated indoors or standing outside among regulars. Weekends are especially lively, with conversations flowing from bar stools onto the sidewalk. Enjoy the vibrant atmosphere and exceptional music selection.

GROTESK

İhlamur Yolu Sokak No. 30 Topağacı, Şişli
Tel: (0212) 231 79 06
Open daily 1:00pm-2:00am

Opened by the same team that established Hunhar, also nearby in Topağacı, Grotesk is a typical lively neighborhood “hang-out” bar with an extensive gastro pub menu with “street food” treats that are good for sharing and signature cocktails that you can enjoy in a casual atmosphere with seating spilling out into the storefront.

SOCRATES BISTRO

Fınn Sokak No. 6/A Teşvikiye, Şişli
Tel: (0212) 260 12 60
Open Sunday-Thursday noon to 1:00am; Friday-Saturday noon-2:00am

Socrates is a popular neighborhood bistro/bar frequented for its relaxing atmosphere, good comfort food selections (some with a twist), selection of classic and signature cocktails and long list of other alcoholic beverages. The seasonal menu includes beef, chicken and falafel burgers, beef frankfurters, homemade currywurst, bao buns, luscious desserts and more. Socrates is so-named as one of the co-founders publishes the monthly Socrates sports magazine (Can Publishing Co.) and the other co-founders are graduates of the Yeditepe University Gastronomy and Culinary Arts Department, so they know a thing or two about cooking up good food. Also, this trio are an ex-basketball player, ex-national team swimmer and amateur football player.

CAFES

BACKYARD

Bebeköy Sokak No.4 Bebek, Beşiktaş
Tel: (GSM) 532 131 7404; www.backyard.com.tr
Open Monday-Saturday 10:00am-midnight;
Sunday 10:00am-10:00pm

Located in the spacious verdant and lush gardens (moves to a cozy winter garden in the fall/winter seasons) of the historic French Orphanage on a hilltop between Arnavutköy and Etiler overlooking the Bebek Bay, Backyard is a wonderful spot for a casual get-together with friends for a bite to eat, glass of wine or cocktails. All-day dining is available and breakfast and brunch selections include a wide variety of egg dishes, traditional Turkish breakfast platters, bowls, pancakes, cereals and more, accented with a modern twist. Lunch and dinner selections (which changes according to the season and availability of fresh ingredients) include some healthy and tasty starters and salads, pastas, appetizing mains (seabass bouillabaisse, confit lamb shank, grilled köfte (Turkish meatballs) and yummy desserts (lemon mille-feuille, crème brûlée, etc.). Backyard has a wine list with a good choice of Turkish and international wines, some available by the glass.

EMEK CAFE

Köybaşı Caddesi No. 57 Yeniköy, Sarıyer
Tel: (0212) 223 77 28
Open daily 7:00am-10:00pm

The longstanding Emek Cafe has been open since 1967 and is located on the Bosphorus waterfront with indoor and outdoor dining areas set in a casual ambiance. Emek has an extensive breakfast menu along with cold & grilled sandwiches, savory pastries, burgers, salads and desserts. Alcohol is not served.

GIZIA BRASSERIE

Abdi İpekçi Caddesi No.20 Nişantaşı, Şişli
Tel: (0212) 219 22 92
Open Monday-Saturday 8:30am-midnight;
Sunday 10:00am-11:00pm

Gizia opened in September 2020 and is managed by the popular fashion brand with the same name. The 2-story brasserie with modern décor has indoor and outdoor dining areas. The emphasis of the menu is on Italian cuisine, but it also has a vast breakfast menu with tasty delights such as Eggs Benedict, sourdough bread grilled sandwiches and a typical Turkish breakfast platter. Gizia also offers a variety of pizzas cooked in a wood-burning oven, pasta dishes, fit salads, burgers and mains such as Gizia Köfte (Turkish meatballs), steamed or grilled salmon and beef schnitzel. They also have many signature cocktails and a nice wine list.

HOUSE CAFE

Atiye Sokak No.10 Nişantaşı, Şişli

Tel: (0212) 259 23 77; www.thehousecafe.com

Open daily 10:00am–midnight

The House Cafe's first branch was opened in 2002 in a typical long-standing Nişantaşı apartment building on Atiye Street. In February 2012, the venue was renovated and the interiors were totally renewed. A cozy fireplace was added along with a beautiful new dessert bar. The cafe has a capacity of 160 guests in its spacious winter & summer garden. The menu (including vegan/vegetarian dishes) is quite extensive and includes breakfast treats, soups, starters, salads, pizzas, pastas, burgers and desserts for all-day dining. There is also a wine list and other alcoholic beverages are served.

JUNO (EAT DRINK CHILL)

Mim Kemal Öke Caddesi No.15 Nişantaşı, Şişli

Tel: (0212) 291 57 23; www.junojuno.com

Open Monday–Saturday 11:00am–midnight

This colorful casual cafe invites all to come to “eat, drink, chill” in their lovely garden or in their indoor seating area which has a separate bar. Open since 2011 with a décor that is eclectic and inviting, Juno is frequented by Istanbulites and foreigners alike. Besides serving breakfast and typical cafe fare, the menu includes seasonal specials, a fit menu with gluten-free and vegan dishes, and a ketogenic menu for those on special diets. They pride themselves for their signature Juno burger, wood-burning oven pizzas and homemade pastas.

MONOCHROME BRASSERIE

Galataport Meclis-i Mebusan Caddesi

L Block Tophane, Beyoğlu

Tel: (0212) 877 09 49; www.monochrome.com.tr

Open Monday–Friday; Sunday 9:30am–10:00pm;

Saturday 9:00am–midnight

Monochrome, with its charming spot on the promenade, offers a beautiful view of the Bosphorus to accompany your day. Start your morning with a leisurely “No Rush” breakfast, treat yourself to a relaxing lunch with options like baked beetroot carpaccio, or unwind in the late afternoon with a cheese platter and a glass of beer or wine. As the day winds down, indulge in a delightful gastro dinner, perhaps the flavorful spicy sea bass with herbs or the rich white truffle mushroom fettuccine.



Monochrome Brasserie

VEGETARIAN, VEGAN & HEALTHY CHOICES

Those who are vegetarian, vegan or just prefer to follow a regiment of healthy eating habits are finding it easier to discover restaurants to accommodate their nutrition behaviors. In fact, more and more restaurants have started to include dishes that appeal to this dining segment. Istanbul has its share too and the following are just some examples of restaurants that appeal to those on a plant-based diet.

BI NEVİ DELİ

Dilhayat Sokak No.10/1 Etiler, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 358 60 32; www.binevideli.com
Open daily 10:00am–9:30pm

Open since 2014, this whole foods plant-based restaurant only serves vegan dishes using in season ingredients sourced from organic and local purveyors. Open for breakfast, lunch and dinner; Bi Nevi Deli has a children's menu as well.

MINOA-VE

Akkavak-Şakayık Sokak No: 47/2
Tunaman Shopping Mall, Lower Ground Floor,
Nişantaşı
Tel: (0212) 291 00 31
Open daily 11:00am–8:00pm

One of Istanbul's best-independent bookstores, Minoa was opened in Akaretler in 2014. The branch within the Mudo Concept store in Nişantaşı introduces a unique vegan and vegetarian menu. All of the dishes on the menu are palate pleasing. To begin a refreshing day try vegan-fit breakfast, tantalize your taste buds with starters like mücver (zucchini fritters) and hummus, and delve into main courses such as Fırık Wheat and Roasted Aubergine. MinoaVE seamlessly combines literature and gastronomy, creating a haven for book enthusiasts and food lovers alike.

OVERDOSE

Dilhayat Sokak No. 10 Etiler, Beşiktaş
Tel: GSM (0537) 457 07 48
Open daily 9:00am–10:00pm

Located in a 3-story house with a quaint garden, Overdose is a perfect spot for health-conscious, sports-minded individuals. The menu includes a selection of smoothies, protein drinks, healthy bowls and each dish is listed with its calorie content and indicates whether it is gluten-free. It also has homemade gluten-free breads and homemade sugar-free jams.

TAHİN

Vali Konağı Caddesi Kodaman Sokak No.1
Nişantaşı, Şişli
Tel: (0212) 240 10 61; www.tahin.com.tr
Mumhane Caddesi No.41/A Karaköy, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 292 96 80
Open daily 11:00am–10:00pm

Your "non-plant-based-eating" friends will gladly go with you to Tahin! Besides a wide selection of vegan and vegetarian dishes like their incredibly delicious "best in town" falafels, hummus, tabbouleh salad, muhammara, vegan kibbeh and more; this Lebanese Grill restaurant also serves a variety of meat and chicken dishes.

TELEZZÜZ

Koç Topluluğu Spor Kulübü Kuşbakışı Caddesi.
No.16 Kuzguncuk, Üsküdar
Tel: (0216) 576 76 71; www.telezuz.com
Open daily noon–4:00pm and 6:00pm–11:00pm
Michelin Green Star

As Turkey's first vegan fine dining restaurant, Telezüz is guided by a culinary philosophy deeply rooted in respect for nature and sustainability. Led by Chef Bahtiyar Büyükduman, the restaurant offers an exquisite menu that celebrates seasonal, locally sourced ingredients while embracing zero-waste principles. Every dish is a reflection of the natural

world, with fresh produce from Telezüz's own vegetable garden, creating a vibrant and evolving menu that sets a new standard in gastronomy. Telezüz aims to provide a multi-sensory dining experience, not only through its food but also with its carefully curated ambiance, which features original artworks from Ömer Koç's collection. Desserts and cocktails are also masterfully crafted, blending innovative techniques with natural ingredients to create refreshing and sophisticated flavors that perfectly round out the meal. In its first year, "Telezüz" received the prestigious Michelin Green Star for its commitment to sustainable gastronomy.

VEGAN ISTANBUL

Türkücü Caddesi No.51 Cihangir, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 249 00 08; www.veganistanbul34.com
Open Monday–Saturday 9:00am–6:30pm

Serving only vegan dishes, Vegan is a restaurant, cafe and market in the bohemian neighborhood Cihangir. The menu includes cold and grilled sandwiches, savory Turkish pastries, salads, cold olive-oil braised vegetables, hot vegetable dishes, mains and desserts. At their market, you can purchase their homemade jams, vegan cheeses and more.

ON THE RUN STREET & FAST FOOD

There are times when we just don't have time to have a sit-down meal and just wish to grab a bite to eat while on the run. In short, we just want to fill up on yummy "comfort foods" that are high in calories and carbs. The following places fit the bill!

2 BITES

Dalga Sokak No.10A, Kadıköy
Tel: (0541) 637 30 45 Open daily noon-9:30pm

Specializing in oak-smoked burgers, 2 Bites delivers rich, flavorful bites. Their impressive sides, homemade lemonade, and unique cold teas complete the experience, making every meal memorable.

AKALI

Yıldızçiftliği Sokak No.3A Etiler, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 263 20 64
Dibekçi Sokak No.11 Maçka, Şişli
Tel: (0212) 227 42 42
Open daily noon-10:00pm

Only serves a variety of gourmet juicy beef or veggie burgers with a whole host of different toppings; French fries and onion rings.

ARCA BURGER

Köşeli Sokak No:3 Beşiktaş
Tel: (0530) 675 95 13; menum.co
Daily open noon-9:00pm

Arca Burger stands out in town for its distinctive feature—the bread they use. The addition of arugula in the burger enhances the overall taste, providing a smoother experience. If you're in the mood for a different burger, the Pluvia Burger with its spicy flavor, smoked pickles, and arugula, all topped with a smoky spiced sauce, is highly recommended. Capparis is another excellent choice for those looking to indulge in a unique burger experience.

B.O.B

Kağı Sokak No.2 Kadıköy
Tel: (0216) 330 01 02; www.bestofburger.com.tr
Open daily noon-11:00pm

Stands out for its unique use of Kashkaval cheese in its burgers. Paired with perfectly seasoned fries and soft buns, this place serves some of the best burgers in town.

BRONCO by İSMET SAZ

Vadistanbul Shopping Mall Ayazağa, Sarıyer
Tel: (0850) 888 6 111 www.bronco.com.tr
Open daily 10:00am - 10:00pm

Yummy gourmet burgers served on homemade brioche burger bread, Philly cheesesteak sandwiches, smoked brisket, tacos, Buffalo wings and cookie dough dessert prepared with re-interpreted recipes are served. The "American-style" menu was created by renowned Turkish chef İsmet Saz.

DIRTY HANDS

Zeytinolu Caddesi No: 9A Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 352 22 83
Open Daily noon to 01:00am

Born from the creators of Any, one of Arnavutköy's popular spots, Dirty Hands brings a unique touch to the scene. Influenced by street foods from different countries, the menu reflects the expertise of chefs Cihan Kıpçak and Üryan Doğmuş. The menu features finger foods, sandwich delights and delicious cocktails that you can enjoy.

FIREROOM

Cevdetpaşa Caddesi No. 20/A Bebek, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 287 12 56; www.fireroom.com.tr
Open daily noon-10:00pm

Includes renowned Chef Hazar Armani's re-interpreted signature dishes from the street food world: beef, chicken & vegan burgers, tacos, nachos, hummus, hot dogs, kokoreç (stuffed intestines), Philly cheesesteak sandwich, falafels and chicken fingers.

GRILLIN'GUYS

Kazım Özalp Sokak Kazım Kulan Çarşısı
No.22 Şaşkınbakkal, Kadıköy
Tel: (0543) 621 92 32
Open daily noon-10:00pm

The place may be small, but it's known for serving up some seriously tasty burgers. The double cheese burger and beef bacon are among the top favorites on the menu.

HOUSE OF B.

Bağdat Caddesi No.435/A Kadıköy
Tel: (0216) 384 27 47; www.houseofturkey.com
Open Sunday-Thursday 11:30am-10:30pm; Friday-Saturday 11:30am-midnight

Inspired by Bronx culture, House of B offers a unique dining experience with its vibrant atmosphere. Known for its classic burgers served with delicious sweet potato fries and other side options, the menu also features an extensive selection of chicken dishes.

J BURGER

Operatör Cemil Topuzlu Caddesi
No.36/A Caddebostan, Kadıköy
Tel: (0216) 369 49 70; www.jburger.com.tr
Open daily 11:30am-10:30pm

Founded in 1977, J Burger has been delivering quality burgers with the same commitment to taste and tradition since the beginning. Everything is homemade, from the bread to the mayonnaise and sauces, ensuring a consistent flavor over the years. Their standout menu items include the jumbo burger, egg burger, and rib burger.

KABURGACI CABBAR

Atatürk Oto Sanayi Sitesi 33. Sokak Maslak, Sarıyer
Tel: (GSM) 0544 669 30 01
Open Monday-Saturday 10:00am-9:30pm

Kaburgacı Cabbar is famous for their lamb spare ribs, Adana kebab, skewered lamb kebab and more.

MINI EATERY

Moda Caddesi No.55 Kadıköy Open Monday-Thursday 1:00pm-11:00pm; Friday-Saturday 1:00pm-2:00am; Sunday 1:00pm-11:00pm

With just six mini burgers on the menu, it's easy to try them all and pick your favorite. The open kitchen and constant flow of customers create a lively, fast-paced atmosphere.

PRİMİTİF

Bilgiç Sokak No. 25/A Pangaltı, Şişli
Tel: (GSM) 0541 637 68 85; www.primitif.com.tr

A selection of gourmet beef and chicken burgers with unusual toppings (truffle, pineapple, etc.) chicken wings, hotdogs and pizzas.

SALEPEPE

Karakolhane Caddesi No.81 Rasimpaşa, Kadıköy
Open Tuesday-Sunday 2:00pm-9:00pm
Monday closed

This five-stool pizza bar offers a unique twist on Tokyo-style Neapolitan pizza, the first of its kind in Istanbul. Despite its small size, it delivers big flavors, with favorites like the mushroom bianca" and real beef standing out for pizza lovers seeking something different.

SHAKE SHACK

İstinyePark Shopping Mall İstinye, Sarıyer
Tel: (0212) 345 51 84; www.shakeshack.com
Open daily 10:00am-10:00pm

American-style classic burgers, hotdogs, plain and cheesy French fries and of course milkshakes! Check their website for other locations throughout the city.

SNOB STREET FOOD

Bağdat Caddesi No.292, Caddebostan; Kadıköy
Tel: (0216) 359 79 99; www.snobstreetfood.com
Open daily noon-10:00pm

Snob Street Food combines the world of fine dining with street food culture. Using local, natural, and high-quality ingredients sourced from boutique producers, their menu offers a unique twist on traditional flavors like hummus and muhammara, served in street food style wraps. A delicious fusion of gourmet and casual eats, it's an experience worth seeking out. Be sure to check their website for additional locations across the city.

THE GRUNGY

Hüseyin Gerede Caddesi No:72 Teşvikiye, Nişantaşı
thegrungy.com/
Open daily noon-8:30pm

Delighting in simplicity and flavor, The Grungy is a place entirely centered around burgers and fries. The venue boasts 7 different burgers and 4 fries options, all accompanied by the special Grungy sauce.

ZULA

Çayırı Sokak No.101/1 Harbiye, Şişli
Tel: (GSM) 532 570 52 75
Kanyon Shopping Mall Levent, Beşiktaş
Tel: (GSM) 0533 429 77 64
Open daily noon-10:00pm

Hearty and juicy burgers and hotdogs.



Salepepe

TYPICAL STREET FOODS

When it comes to popular street foods the Italians have their zeppole and arancini, the French have crêpes and croissants, the English have Chips, Cheese & Gravy, and the Germans have bratwurst and brezel (pretzel). Turks too have a wide selection of street foods and they are highly recommended for the adventurous foodies who like to try different delicacies during their travels. It is totally safe to eat street food in Istanbul because the municipality issues permits and certifications (certified sellers certification numbers are displayed on their carts or stands) to street vendors and they are regularly monitored.... So, eat away and enjoy! Below is just a small example of some of the tastiest treats you can enjoy on the streets of Istanbul!

The most popular and easily accessible street food in Istanbul is **simit**. For years simit has been compared to a bagel, but the cooking techniques and tastes are very different. Simit is shaped like a ring like the bagel, it is round with a hole in the center. However, it's dipped in grape molasses, coated with sesame seeds, and baked in a wood-burning or stone oven. It has a mildly firm and crispy texture, but is soft and chewy on the inside. You can purchase simit from a simit trolley or from sellers who sell simit from a tray that they carry on their head. You can eat it on its own, accompanied by a glass of brewed tea or by cutting it in half and filling it with soft cheese triangles sold by simit trolley vendors.

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Roasted chestnuts, called **kestane kebabı** in Turkish, are roasted "on the spot" on food carts equipped with a grill for the enjoyment of customers who are attracted to the wafting aromas as they walk down some of the main streets in the city during fall and winter. A healthy snack to tide you over!

Another popular street food is **Balık-ekmek** or grilled fish sandwich; prepared with grilled mackerel and typically stuffed with lettuce and onions in a half-loaf of Turkish bread or sandwich roll. These delectable sandwiches are cooked and sold from boats lined up along the Eminönü pier or can also be purchased from fish vendors lined up underneath the Galata Bridge.

Kokoreç or Stuffed Lamb Intestines are definitely an acquired taste, but loved by Turks and considered more of a delicacy than just a street food. The intestines are finely chopped and mixed with different herbs and spices

and grilled on a rotating horizontal spit and then sliced and served in half a loaf of Turkish bread or sandwich roll. A good neighborhood to find kokoreç sellers is Ortaköy, in the Beşiktaş district close to the Bosphorus waterfront.

Loaded baked potatoes or **kumpir** is another highly popular street food. High in calories and carbs, it is quite filling and hearty. The standard fillings for the huge baked potato are fresh yellow cheese (taze kaşar) and butter, but then you can further add other fillings such as pickles, olives, American salad, grated carrots, red cabbage, corn, peas, sliced beef frankfurters, ketchup, mayo, etc.

Mussels are abundant coming from the Black and Marmara Seas. Cooked in a variety of ways, **midye dolması** or stuffed mussels are favored as a street food. The mussels are steam-cooked and stuffed with rice, cinnamon, onions, black pepper, allspice and browned pine nuts and can be mild to spicy. They are sold at all hours of the day and the best way to eat it is with freshly squeezed lemon juice. Be careful, once you start, you won't be able to stop eating them and will most definitely over-indulge! White rice is also one of the most favorite Turkish dishes cooked at home or at Turkish restaurants and usually served as sides to main dishes.

One particular favorite, **tavuk pilav** (chicken and rice) is sold on many street corners from glass-encased food cart vendors. The lip-smacking rice is cooked with chickpeas and served topped with shredded boiled chicken breast. Make sure to sprinkle some black pepper and if available, order a glass of pickle juice! The combination of flavors is incredible.

FOR BREAKFAST

Typical and traditional Turkish breakfasts are truly a symphony of flavors and it is different from other breakfasts served around the world. The staples or basics include brewed Turkish black tea, white and yellow cheese, eggs, butter, jam or honey, black or green olives, tomatoes, cucumbers, green peppers and bread. More lavish Turkish breakfasts can also include different types of deli or cured meats, dried fruits and nuts, regional cheeses, savory pastries, a larger selection of fresh vegetables and fruits, clotted cream and more. Breakfast is a very important meal for Turks but unfortunately, a leisurely and lavish breakfast spread is not possible during the week as everyone is running off to work. However, most make up for it on the weekend by either preparing a breakfast spread at home or going out to eateries known for their breakfast treats. Below are some places worth visiting.

Editor's Note: For an "off the beaten path" traditional Turkish breakfast or "kahvaltı" feast go to "Kahvaltıcılar Sokağı", a street lined with breakfast eateries at the lively Beşiktaş open market for a taste of Turkish culture. Just walk up and down the street and see which eatery catches your eye!

A BIT OF EGGO

Abdülhak Molla Sokak No.26 Arnavutköy, Beşiktaş
Tel: (GSM) 0532 636 63 10
Open daily 9:00am–6:00pm

Besides traditional breakfast treats, a very wide selection of dishes prepared only using organic eggs are served.

BOTER KALAMIŞ

Rüştüye Sokak No.30A Kalamış, Kadıköy
Tel: (0216) 346 43 73

A paradise for dessert lovers, Boter also shines with its healthy breakfast choices. Standouts include the focaccia sandwich and spinach-mozzarella roll for breakfast. For dessert, the tahini blondie, lemon curd, and espresso brûlée tart are rich in flavor and leave a lasting impression on the palate.

BREKKIE

Yoğurtçu Parkı Caddesi No.24/1 Kadıköy
Tel: (0216) 345 03 45
Open daily 9:00am–6:00pm

Brekkie is a favorite among locals, often drawing a crowd by late morning. Though you might have to wait in line on weekends, it's definitely worth it! The warm croissants, served in generous portions with options like eggs and avocado, are a must-try. Pair your meal with their delicious cookies or explore the variety of coffees on offer for a perfect breakfast experience.

ÇEŞME BAZLAMA KAHVALTI

Osman F. Seden Sokak No.8 Teşvikiye, Şişli
Tel: (0212) 951 06 91; www.bazlamakahvalti.com
Open daily 9:00am –5:00pm

Incredible selection of breakfast delights prepared by mother–daughter duo Nurten and Sinem Tuncer. Some unique dishes include potato scramble with caramelized onions, hazelnut tahini mix and pan–roasted çökelek (similar to cottage cheese) cheese. Also, all the jams are homemade by the mom, Nurten. Moreover, the brewed tea served is prepared with a blend of 6 different teas from Rize, a tea–growing province in the Black Sea region. Established in Çeşme, İzmir in 1992, the eatery has a few branches across Istanbul.

ETHEMEFENDİ KAHVALTI

Ethem Efendi Caddesi No.50
Erenköy, Kadıköy
Tel: (0541) 229 52 82
Tütüncü Mehmet Efendi Caddesi
No.1/1 Göztepe, Kadıköy
Tel: (0542) 180 52 82 Open: 8:30am–5:00pm

This beloved breakfast spot is a local favorite, especially for those craving a traditional Turkish breakfast. Known for its lavish spread, the breakfast here features everything from freshly baked bazlama (flat baked bread) and handmade local jams to gözleme (Turkish pancakes) and homemade jams, particularly the milk jam. With no reservations allowed, early arrival is recommended—especially on weekends, when lines tend to form. It's the perfect place to savor a hearty, authentic meal in a welcoming setting.

GRANDMA BAKERY & CAFE

Ahmet Fetgari Sokak No.38 Teşvikiye, Şişli
Tel: (0212) 234 74 20; www.grandma.com.tr
Open daily 8:30am–9:30pm

All-day breakfast service available as well as quiches, galettes, savory Turkish pastries, homemade jams, breads and a choice of regular, sugar–free and gluten–free desserts. Available for take–out as well.

GRÖN COFFEE COMPANY

Şerafettin Sokak No.2/A Caddebostan, Kadıköy www.groncoffee.com Open daily 9:00am–midnight

A local favorite, Grön Coffee in Caddebostan offers expertly brewed coffee paired with fresh pastries and light meals like avocado toast and healthy bowls. The Erenköy branch shares the same laid-back atmosphere, perfect for enjoying a coffee or casual work session, while both locations maintain their high standards and welcoming vibe.

KAHVE 6

Akarsu Caddesi Anahtar Sokak No.13/A, Cihangir, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 293 08 49
Open daily 8:15am–9:00pm

Located in the vibrant neighborhood of Cihangir, Kahve 6 is a charming place that provides a cozy escape, making it an ideal destination for breakfast. True to its name, (Kahve 6 meaning breakfast in Turkish with a simple word play) the place offers a variety of breakfast options. With a serene courtyard tucked away in the back, you can enjoy your meals in a tranquil setting, surrounded by lush greenery. Kahve 6 takes pride in offering fresh and flavorful food, with vegan options also available to cater to different dietary preferences.

KRUVASAN

Av. Süreyya Ağaoğlu Sokak. No.10 Teşvikiye, Şişli
Tel: (0212) 296 86 56; www.kruvasanistanbul.com
Open Monday-Saturday 8:00am-11:00pm; Sunday
8:00am-5:00pm

Known for its freshly baked croissants (*kruvasan* in Turkish), it offers a delightful selection of gastro breakfast treats (omelets, eggs benedict, etc.) among many other delicacies daily between 8:00am and 5:00pm. Lunch and dinner menus are also available (Monday-Saturday only) with dishes prepared at Lokanta Kru, their sister eatery located across the street.

NOU BREAKFAST CLUB & COFFEE

Kerime Hatun Cami Sokak
No.11/A Çengelköy, Üsküdar
Tel: (0535) 831 72 73
Open Tuesday-Sunday 9:00am-8:00pm

A cozy spot known for its wide variety of croissants, alongside a classic breakfast menu. Though small in size, the warm and inviting atmosphere makes Nou Breakfast Club a comfortable place to relax. Try their sandwiches or flavorful bowls for a fresh take on breakfast.

NØRRE

Bostanbaşı Caddesi No:20/A Fırzağa, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0535) 651 49 38
Open Tuesday-Sunday 10:00am-7:00pm

Experience the minimalistic charm of the Scandinavian world and indulge in the 'hygge' philosophy at Nørre Istanbul, a café exuding an effortless, simple, and flavor-centric ambiance. The menu is thoughtfully prepared based on seasonal fruits and vegetables, ensuring a taste that aligns with the time of the year. Don't miss out on popular delights like "God Morgen" a classic Danish breakfast plate and "Hej Avokado" at Nørre.

ÇENGELKÖY TARİHİ ÇINARALTI

Çengelköy Caddesi Çınarlı
Cami Sokak No.4 Çengelköy
Tel: (0216) 422 10 36 Open 7/24

A beloved spot nestled along the Bosphorus, perfect for those looking to enjoy a traditional Turkish breakfast with a view. Its outdoor seating, right by the sea, offers a serene atmosphere where you can savor a leisurely meal while watching boats glide by. There is a varied menu with classic Turkish breakfast staples like menemen, eggs, and sausages, as well as lunchtime offerings of soups, salads, and grilled meat or fish. It is open all day, and ending the day in such a great place is a blessing.



Nørre

TURKISH TEA

Turkish tea or *çay* (pronounced like chai) is one of the most popular hot beverages in Türkiye. The black tea (*Camellia sinensis*) is brewed from leaves grown on the steep, verdant mountain slopes in the Eastern Black Sea Region. About 66% of the tea plantations are located in the Rize province with the remaining in the provinces of Artvin, Trabzon, Ordu and Giresun. Moreover, agricultural pesticides are not used in the cultivation of Turkish tea. Low in caffeine, it is natural and healthy as no additives or chemicals are added during the production process. According to statistics from the Ministry of Trade, more than 215,000 tons of black tea is consumed annually in Türkiye.

The tea is traditionally served in a tulip-shaped glass (ince belli bardak), a design that dates back to the Ottoman Empire. To be quite frank, it is near to sacrilegious for “true” Turkish tea drinkers to drink tea in a porcelain tea cup or drink black tea that is not traditionally brewed! Turkish tea is known for its rich crimson red color, referred to as “tavşan kanı” meaning “blood of the hare” in Turkish. Unlike counterpart tea drinkers in the UK and most other European countries, Turks do not drink tea with milk; however, most add sugar (loose or sugar cubes) according to personal taste. Some

also add a bit of honey instead of sugar especially if they feel a bit under the weather for its soothing effect. What makes the taste and flavors of Turkish tea different is that the tea has a long steeping process and is brewed with boiled water for about 15–20 minutes. It is brewed in a dual stacked teapot (called *çaydanlık*) on the stovetop or in a Turkish electric tea maker. First, the water is boiled in the bottom or larger teapot. Loose tea leaves or, the modern version, special “steeping” tea bags are placed in the smaller top teapot (called *demlik*). Once the water has come to a boil, a portion is transferred to the small teapot to brew the tea. The tea–water ratio varies according to personal tastes; but usually less water for a darker, rich flavor and more for a smoother, lighter brewed tea is used. Then more water is added to the bottom pot as it’s used to dilute the tea while serving.

Turkish tea is consumed throughout the day by Turks and not just as a breakfast beverage. Most Turkish homes have a pot of tea brewing and ready for unexpected guests, and some prefer a glass of tea after a meal (instead of Turkish coffee). In short, a glass of brewed aromatic hot Turkish tea is available at every turn and considered as one of the small pleasures of the Turkish lifestyle!

COFFEE HOUSES

CUP OF JOY

Şair Nigar Sokak No.11 Meşrutiyet, Şişli
Tel: (0212) 231 48 31; www.cupofjoy.com.tr
Open Monday–Thursday 9:00am–11:30pm; Friday–
Sunday 10:00am–11:30pm
Cevdetpaşa Caddesi No.53/5 Bebek, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 263 00 66
Open daily 7:00am–6:00pm

Cup of Joy, a boutique coffee shop, is one of the pioneers of the third-wave coffee culture in Istanbul and opened its first shop in 2013 in Bebek. Today, COJ has several branches throughout Istanbul (check their website for details). All branches (except Bebek and Vadi İstanbul where an extensive all-day breakfast menu is available) only serve coffee and over 30 varieties of healthy gluten-free, sugar-free, vegetarian, raw and vegan baked goods. Moreover, since 2018 COJ has been sourcing green coffee beans from farms throughout Türkiye and roasting their own blend. Besides COJ's special blend of espresso-based coffees, "single-origin" coffees brewed with different techniques such as cold drip, AeroPress and V60 are available.

FEDERAL

Küçük Hendeck Caddesi No.7 Galata, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 245 09 03; www.federal.com
Yol Sokak No. 34 Teşvikiye, Şişli
Tel: (0212) 241 48 75
Open daily 8:00am–midnight

Federal Coffee opened its flagship coffee house steps from the Galata Tower in 2015–two years later they opened a branch in Teşvikiye. A delicious variety of coffees are available at any time of day as their coffee menu is divided into 4 categories: Espresso Bar, Aussie Bar, Master Roaster's and Ice Bar. Federal uses only 100% Arabica green coffee beans sourced from various coffee farms worldwide and the beans are then "micro

roasted". Also, besides the standard green beans used, GrainPro beans sourced from micro lot farms and organic production certified farms are roasted at their production facilities while all single-origin coffee beans are separately roasted as they all have different roasting periods and heat requirements. Federal also has a wonderful all-day dining menu with items from breakfast treats, salads, sandwiches and burgers to yummy desserts.

KRONOTROP COFFEE BAR & EATERY

Prof. Dr. Orhan Ersek Sokak No.18C Topağacı, Şişli
Tel: (0212) 234 82 26; <https://www.kronotrop.com.tr>
Firuzağa Cami Sokak No. 2/B Cihangir, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 249 92 71
Open weekdays 7:00am–11:00pm;
weekends 8:00am–11:00pm

Serving coffee lovers since 2012, Kronotrop is also one of the oldest third-wave coffee shops in Istanbul. Today they have 32 branches in major cities throughout Türkiye with an extensive selection of top-quality coffee blends made with roasted coffee beans sourced from sustainable coffee farmers from the 4 corners of the world which are then prepared by highly skilled baristas. The menu also includes delicious baked goods (including healthy, gluten-free and sugar-free pastries) and sandwiches.

MOC (MINISTRY OF COFFEE)

Şakayık Sokak No.4/A Teşvikiye, Şişli
Tel: (0212) 234 44 65; www.moc.com.tr
Open daily 7:30am–11:30pm
Zorlu Center Shopping Mall Levazım, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 970 16 52
Open daily 10:00am–10:00pm

One of the most popular coffee houses in Istanbul, MOC coffee beans are sourced from micro lot producing farmers from El Salvador, Costa Rica, Colombia, Guatemala and Honduras among other major coffee bean producing countries. Besides selling small packages of coffee beans to take home, MOC's menu consists

of classic coffee blends as well as an "Exotic" coffees section. Other beverages on the list include an assortment of teas, smoothies and frozen beverages along with sandwiches, salads and desserts!

PETRA ROASTING CO.

Hoşsohbet Sokak Selenium Residence D:
Store 1 Gayrettepe, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 356 10 57; www.petracoffee.com
Open weekdays 8:00am–8:00pm; weekends
10:30am–7:00pm
Küçükbebek Caddesi No. 38 Bebek, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0850) 372 53 55
Open Tuesday–Friday 7:30am–10:00pm;
weekends 10:00am–10:00pm

Petra's owners' vision was to open a timeless and lasting coffee house. At their flagship coffee house in Gayrettepe they roast imported green coffee beans and have an on-site laboratory and production facility. Petra also has a shop where you can purchase coffee beans and other products to take back home. On the other hand, the Bebek branch is a typical and traditional neighborhood coffee house with a charming garden. At their 6 branches throughout the city, only single-origin delicious coffees are served; blends are not offered and flavorings are not used. However, Petra also offers seasonal coffees, filter coffees and teas and all locations have an all-day dining menu.

POCO MATCHA

Kazım Özalp Sokak No.19/A Suadiye, Kadıköy
www.pocomatcha.com Open daily 09:00am–1.30am

Founded in 2020, Poco Matcha is Turkey's first matcha bar, aiming to introduce everyone to matcha and promote healthy caffeine habits. Known for its matcha sourced directly from Japan, this cozy spot offers a peaceful experience for visitors. One of the most popular options is their matcha with strawberry puree and syrup, but you can also personalize your matcha with your choice of flavors. Their coffee selection is just as delicious and memorable as the matcha. Be sure to check their website for additional locations across the city.

SELAMLIQUE

Cevdetpaşa Caddesi No.46/D Bebek, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 287 77 37; www.selamlique.com
Open daily 8:00am–10:00pm
Galataport Post Office Fashion Galleria
Tophane, Beşiktaş
Open daily 10:00am–10:00pm

Selamlique, a boutique brand of Turkish coffee was established in 2011 with the sole purpose of selling Turkish coffee, sweets such as *lokum* (Turkish delight), pralines, wafers, and chocolate almonds and a variety of accessories, coffee pots and machines. Today there are several branches of Selamlique in the city where you can taste different varieties of flavored Turkish coffee produced specifically by Selamlique. The blends sold are traditional, dark roast, cardamon, mastic, chocolate, cinnamon, rose and orange flavored. So after you find your favorite blend you can buy some to take back home in capsule form, single-serving coffee bags or ground coffee sold in tin containers. Selamlique is a derivative of the word *selamlık* which was the name given to the section of an old Turkish mansion or palace where guests were greeted and entertained, isolated from the *harem* section (private quarters). The company aims to draw attention to the socializing force of Turkish coffee.

SPADA COFFEE

Av. Süreyya Ağaoğlu Sokak No. 8/E Teşvikiye, Şişli
Tel: (GSM) 0530 223 32 60; www.spada.com
Open Monday–Saturday 7:00am–10:00pm; Sunday
8:00am–10:00pm

Spada uses the omni-roast method to roast the coffee beans they source from different coffee bean farmers from different parts of the world. You can order your coffee from the "modbar", "spada match", "brew bar" or "cold brews" sections of the menu. Spada also has a small breakfast menu, tartines and grilled sandwiches, salads, croissants and other hot and cold non-alcoholic beverages on offer.

TURKISH COFFEE

Coffee was introduced to Istanbul in the 16th century and quickly became the most popular drink in Istanbul and coffee houses, or kahvehane, started appearing all over the city. Men would get together to drink coffee while relaxing, socializing and playing card games. Attracting travelers to the city, Turkish coffee's fame quickly spread throughout Europe. Coffee became an essential part of the Ottoman court's elaborate ceremonies by the 17th century. While the sultan was ceremoniously served coffee, this ritual also played a role in marriage customs. The women in the harem were taught how to make the perfect Turkish coffee and potential husbands would judge a woman by her skills in preparing this special brew. This ritual continues to this day and when the suitor's family asks the parents of his potential wife for her hand in marriage, Turkish coffee is served to all by the bride-to-be.

Turkish coffee is a rich and thick pleasant beverage that needs to be slowly savored, accompanied by good conversation with loved ones. The finely, almost powder-like ground coffee is brewed in a cezve, a special small pot with a long handle and traditionally made of copper. It can be prepared plain or with different amounts of sugar to taste. It's not very difficult to make, however it does require practice to get the brew's signature foam on top.

The unfiltered Turkish coffee is served in demitasse-sized cups and is never stirred during or after brewing. Because of its intense flavor, it is usually served with a glass of cold water as a palate cleanser with a small sweet on the side, like a lokum (Turkish delight) or a small piece of chocolate. Although using cezve is the most common way to make Turkish coffee, there are also electric Turkish coffee makers. Turkish coffee was deemed worthy of being registered in UNESCO's Intangible Cultural List in 2013 due to its special preparation, brewing techniques and rich communal culture. It has also been acknowledged as a symbol of hospitality and friendship as it is served to guests as a welcoming gesture. It is common to get together at coffee houses or homes to socialize over coffee.

Another favorite pastime is drinking Turkish coffee and then having your fortune told from the leftover coffee sediments in the cup. After finishing the coffee, turn the cup over upside down on the saucer. Then swirl the cup and saucer a few times clockwise and counterclockwise before setting the cup and saucer down so that the sediments can drain down the cup onto the saucer. Not to be taken too seriously (while some do and go to Turkish coffee fortune tellers), it's another fun way to pass the time with good friends.

VAKKO L'ATELIER & VAKKORAMA CAFE



VAKKO L'ATELIER

Vakko is not only a leading Turkish fashion brand; but has also proven in a short time that its presence in the Food & Beverage industry is another success story in the history of the Vakko brand, utilizing the same resolve and determination in this industry. The following are the brands under the Vakko L'Atelier umbrella:

VAKKO PATISserie

Consultant Philippe Chatelain, a second generation French pastry chef and Vakko's Patisserie Chef Ghislain Gaille, a fourth generation French pastry chef have created an incredible French pastry menu that can rival any patisserie in France, enhanced with the stylish nuances of the Vakko brand. The pastries look too pretty to eat and are absolutely delicious, so it's worth the extra one-hour workout at the gym!

VAKKO BISTROT

Didier Doucet, the French consultant chef for Vakko Bistrot was the mastermind behind the delightful menu developed for food aficionados. It includes appetizing and tempting French bistro classics as well as selections of delectable dishes from world cuisine. Vakko Bistrot is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner and is set in a cozy and inviting ambiance including all the signature qualities and services offered under the umbrella of the Vakko brand.

VAKKO CHOCOLATE

Vakko was the first fashion brand in Türkiye to expand into the Food & Beverage Industry and launched Vakko Chocolate in 1985. The formula for the unique range of fine chocolates was exclusively developed for Vakko by expert Swiss chocolate makers.

VAKKO ICE CREAM

A "boutique" choice of a unique selection of tasty and flavorful ice creams and sorbets were developed for Vakko at the skillful hands of French pastry chefs and include Ice Cream Macarons, Ice Cream Gingembre (with ginger), Ice Cream Cafe Turc (with Turkish coffee), Sorbet Citron, etc.

VAKKO DELIGHT

Re-interpreting classic cookie recipes from around the world, Vakko's pastry chefs have created an excellent array of handmade cookies prepared with fresh fruits, a line of Vakko confitures, meringue, flatbreads & crisps, etc. to the "delight" of sweets lovers.





VAKKO L'ATELIER

European Side

Vakko L'Atelier
Abdi İpekçi Caddesi No.41/43
Nişantaşı, Şişli
Tel: (0549) 838 62 91

Atatürk Cultural Center
Mete Caddesi No.2
Gümüşsuyu, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0549) 570 03 94

Akmerkez Shopping Mall
Nispetiye Caddesi No.56 Beşiktaş
Tel: (0549) 836 87 66

Aqua Florya Shopping Mall
Halkalı Caddesi No.93
Florya, Bakırköy
Tel: (0212) 942 21 64

Akbatı Shopping Mall
Sanayi 1655 Sokak No.6
Esenyurt
Tel: (0212) 942 33 80

Galataport İstanbul
Meclis-i Mebusan Caddesi, No.8
Tophane, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 919 09 38
Open daily 10:00am- 11:00pm

İstinyePark Shopping Mall
Katar Caddesi No.11 Sarıyer
Tel: (0212) 345 58 30

Vadistanbul Shopping Mall
Azerbaycan Caddesi No.3/C Sarıyer
Tel: (0549) 826 37 57
Open daily 9:30am-midnight

Zorlu Center Shopping Mall
Koru Sokağı No.2 Beşiktaş
Tel: (0546) 400 40 40
Open daily 10:00am - 9:00pm

Asian Side

Akasya Shopping Mall
Çeçen Sokak No.25
Acıbadem, Üsküdar
Tel: (0549) 836 89 03

Emaar Square Mall
Ayazma Caddesi No.78
Çamlıca, Üsküdar
Tel: (0549) 836 01 77

Metropol İstanbul
Ataşehir Bulvarı Gazi Sokak
Ataşehir
Tel: (0216) 227 54 39

Vakko Hotel Sumahan Bosphorus
Kuleli Caddesi No.43,
Çengelköy Üsküdar
Tel: (0549) 784 50 50

Unless otherwise specified, all branches of Vakko L'Atelier are open daily between 10:00am-10:00pm.

VAKKORAMA CAFE

Take a break from your shopping expedition at Vakkorama Cafe for a cup of coffee, snacks or a meal at the following top upscale shopping malls in the city. Established in 1982, the typical cafe menu includes Breakfast Bowls, Chocolate Chip Pancakes, Eggs Benedict, etc. for breakfast; healthy and nourishing salads and bowls, vegan friendly dishes, yummy sandwiches and burgers, starters like Mac N' Cheese, Korean Wings and Confit Duck Croquettes; and mains like Steak au Poivre and Skewered Chicken Kebabs which you can enjoy in a vibrant and eclectic setting.

Unless otherwise specified, all are open daily between 10:00am - 10:00pm.

Akmerkez Shopping Mall
Nispetiye Caddesi No.56 Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 942 32 13

Aqua Florya Shopping Mall
Halkalı Caddesi No.93 Florya, Bakırköy
Tel: (0549) 771 51 74

SAIL LOFT VAKKORAMA

Sail Loft Vakkorama, situated at Galataport and Zorlu Center, offers an ideal urban escape. At the Galataport location, guests can savor panoramic views from the terrace while enjoying music, entertainment, and a delightful menu against the backdrop of the historic peninsula. Meanwhile, the Zorlu Center branch has become a popular destination for casual get-togethers. With its vibrant atmosphere and a menu spanning from breakfast to dinner, both branches provide the perfect setting to unwind after a bustling day.

Unless otherwise specified, all are open daily between 10:00am - 10:00pm.

Galataport İstanbul
Meclis-i Mebusan Caddesi, No.8
Tophane, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 919 09 39
Open daily 10:00am - 11:00pm

Zorlu Center Shopping Mall
Azerbaycan Caddesi No.3/C Sarıyer
Tel: (0212) 942 33 26



TURKISH BATHS & PERSONAL CARE



TURKISH BATHS

You're in the right city if you've never experienced an exhilarating, adrenaline-charged, invigorating, rejuvenating and refreshing authentic and traditional Turkish Hammam ritual! After getting thrashed, pummeled, kneaded, scrubbed and totally worked over by a tellak (male) or natir (female) masseur or masseuse; to your utter surprise, you will feel totally re-born. The treatments refresh the skin and cleanse the stress of daily life. While many hotels, especially in this part of the world, offer these services, visiting Turkish Hammam in its historic set up is an unforgettable opportunity to experience the culture.

We have listed some of the best Turkish Hammams dating back hundreds of years to the Ottoman Empire. Enjoy! But be careful; you might become addicted!

Please note these hammams have separate sections for men and women. Some establishments accept children. All Turkish Hammams offer tea, coffee, beverages services and private bookings for special events such as bridal showers, groom's hammam, birthdays, and more. Tipping is an old custom and appreciated by the staff. It is recommended to make a reservation before each visit.

TARİHİ CAĞALOĞLU HAMAMI

Prof. Kazım İsmail Gürkan Caddesi No.24 Cağaloğlu, Fatih
Tel: (0212) 522 24 24; www.cagalogluhamami.com.tr
Open Monday–Thursday 9:00am–10:00pm;
Friday–Sunday 9:00am–11:00pm

This historic and longstanding hammam was built during the Ottoman Empire period in 1741 and it's the last of its kind to be built in Istanbul. The door leading to the women's section is on a side street called Hammam Street while the men's section is can be accessed from the main street and has two marble columns with classic stalactites on both sides. Besides the traditional Turkish Bath, this hammam offers different packages and other services (30-minute foot massage, 45-minute aromatherapy massage, detoxifying full-body organic clay mask, and more.). Visit their website for detailed info on all packages and services. The hammam also hosts the independently run Lokanta 1741, which complements the visitors day with a delicious menu.

HÜRREM SULTAN HAMAMI

Cankurtaran Mahallesi Ayasofya Meydanı No.2, Sultanahmet
Tel: (0212) 517 35 35; www.hurremsultanhamami.com
Open daily 08:am-10:00pm

Commissioned by Hürrem Sultan, the wife of Sultan Süleyman I, commonly known as Süleyman the Magnificent, this hammam was designed by the famous Ottoman architect Mimar Sinan and constructed between 1556 and 1557. Located in the heart of Istanbul, it sits between the Hagia Sophia and the Blue Mosque. The hammam underwent a thorough restoration from 2008 to 2011 to preserve its historical significance and provide a modern experience. In addition to the traditional hammam rituals, services such as full-body massages, aromatherapy, and various wellness treatments are offered. A selection of hammam products, including towels, soaps, and copper bathing bowls, is also available for purchase at the entrance.

Tarihi Cağaloğlu Hamamı

TARİHİ ÇEMBERLİTAŞ HAMAMI

Vezirhan Caddesi No. 8 Çemberlitaş, Fatih
Tel: (0212) 522 79 74; www.cemberlitasahamami.com
Open daily 7:30am–midnight

Commissioned by Nurbanu Valide Sultan after the death of her husband Sultan Selim II and mother of Sultan Murat III who came to the throne, this historic hammam was built by the legendary Architect (Mimar) Sinan and opened in 1584. It is located in Çemberlitaş Square along the Divanyolu amidst many of Istanbul's historic monuments. The services offered at this hammam is limited compared to the Cağaloğlu Hammam and include a traditional Turkish Bath, Aromatherapy Oil Massage, Indian Head Massage, and Face and Neck Clay Mask. You can also opt to take a bath on your own without including the 15-minute scrub and massage exercised by the skilled masseurs and masseuses.

TARİHİ KILIÇ ALI PAŞA HAMAMI

Hamam Sokak No. 1 Tophane, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 393 80 10; www.kilicalipasahamami.com
Open daily (women): 8:00am–4:00pm;
(men) 4:30pm–11:30pm.

Commissioned by Kılıç Ali Paşa, a notable Ottoman Admiral to build a mosque and school complex, this hammam is named after the admiral. The building was constructed between 1578–1583 by legendary Ottoman Architect (Mimar) Sinan. It recently went through a 7-year extensive restoration to better serve customers. Besides the traditional hammam experience, massages (full-body; deep tissue; sports, foot and lower leg, and partial-body) are also available to book. Children are also welcome at this hammam and can accompany their parents. They are offered a special and softer traditional hammam experience. It's free of charge for children up to the age of 5. A fee is charged for those between the ages 6–12; those over the age of 12 are considered adults and charged accordingly. You can also shop for typical hammam products such as towels, soaps, and copper bathing bowls at Derya Boutique, located at the entrance.

PERSONAL CARE

HAIR SALONS & BARBER SHOPS

Istanbul offers a wide options of upscale hair salons and barber shops. However, in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is a must to make an appointment for all services (hair, make-up, manicure & pedicure, shave, etc.). Appointments are required for all services (hair, make-up, manicure & pedicure, shave, etc.). The concierge can assist you in making an appointment. We have listed some of the upscale hair salons in Istanbul (most have a few branches).

DIEGO NİŞANTAŞI

Sezai Sokak No.24/4 Teşvikiye, Şişli
Tel: (0212) 261 05 65
Open Monday–Saturday 8:00am–8:30pm.

Barber Shop.

ERSİN ÇAMSARI BEAUTY & HAIR DESIGN

Siraselvililer Caddesi No.9–2 Taksim, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 251 29 09; www.ersincamsari.com
Open Monday–Thursday and Saturday
9:00am–10:00pm; Friday 10:00am–10:00pm.

Provides all hair and beauty care services for women.

MAKAS

İhlamur Nişantaşı Yolu Sokak No.14/A
Teşvikiye, Şişli
Tel: (0212) 234 22 46; www.makas.com.tr
Open Monday–Saturday 9:00–8:00pm.

Unisex hair salon offering all beauty care services.

MOS

Şakayık Sokak No.57/3 Teşvikiye, Şişli
Tel: (0212) 234 65 20; www.moskuafor.com.tr
Open Monday–Saturday 8:00am–8:00pm.

Unisex hair salon offering all beauty care services.

NAIL & BEAUTY SALONS

DK NAIL & BEAUTY CLUB

Abdi İpekçi Caddesi No. 23/1 Nişantaşı, Şişli
Tel: (GSM) 0533 377 14 54
Open Monday–Saturday 9:30am–7:00pm.

Offers permanent nail polish, prosthetic nails, nail extensions, and more.

EMSAL DOĞAN

Abdi İpekçi Caddesi No. 32/5 Nişantaşı, Şişli
Tel: (0212) 234 01 30; www.emsaldogan.com
Open Monday–Saturday 10:00am–7:00pm.

Offers prosthetic nails, microblading, satin brows, eyebrow lamination.

PERSONAL CARE SHOPS

The following establishments offer a wide selection of products from cleaning products to beauty care products and more. They are located close to the Vakko Hotel & Residence and can be accessed easily.

GRATIS

Teşvikiye Caddesi No. 17/B Teşvikiye, Şişli
Open daily 9:00am–10:00pm.
Kanyon Shopping Mall Levent, Şişli
Tel: (0850) 210 69 00; www.gratis.com
Open daily 10:00am–10:00pm

ROSSMANN

Dereboyu Caddesi No. 45/A Ortaköy, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0850) 259 77 66; www.rossmann.com.tr
Open Monday–Saturday 9:00am–9:00pm;
Sunday 10:00am–9:00pm.
Zorlu Center Shopping Mall Levent, Beşiktaş
Open daily 10:00am–10:00pm

WATSON'S

Güzelnahçe Sokak No. 6/A Teşvikiye, Şişli
Tel: (0850) 755 99 87; www.watsons.com.tr
City's Nişantaşı Shopping Mall
Tel: (0212) 373 16 30
Open daily 10:00am–10:00pm

SHOPPING

SHOPPING

SHOPPING STREETS

Although shopping at spacious and large shopping malls makes the most sense as you can pretty much find anything and everything you need, there are 2 streets (one on the European and the other on the Asian side) lined with stylish Turkish and international fashion stores for shoppers.

Abdi İpekçi Caddesi (street) is located in the fashionable and trendy Nişantaşı, a neighborhood in the Şişli district. In fact, as a hotel guest at the Vakko Hotel & Residence, a Member of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World, all you have to do is to walk outside the hotel and start shopping to your heart's content! In fact, you don't even leave the hotel. You can shop at Vakko Fashion Store in the same building, have a cup of coffee or grab a bite to eat at Vakko L'Atelier. Surprisingly, the street is only 750 meters (0.75 km) long but it is home to chic fashion stores, cafes and restaurants.

Bağdat Caddesi (street) is on the Asian side of the city and stretches from Kızıltoprak to Bostancı. The 14 km long highly wide street is lined with trees, shops and apartment buildings (most with stores below) and is simply referred to as Cadde by the inhabitants. Most of the trendier Turkish and international fashion stores (Vakko Fashion Store and Vakko Wedding) are clustered in the Caddebostan, Şaşkınbakkal and Suadiye, neighborhoods in the Kadıköy district. So, if you do find yourself venturing to this primarily residential area of the city, you still won't miss a beat if you need to shop while exploring this lovely district. There are also countless high-quality cafes and restaurants if you get hungry or just want to have a cup of coffee and dessert.

SHOPPING MALLS

All shopping malls:

- Are open daily between 10:00am – 10:00pm.
- Have underground parking lots and offer valet parking.
- Offer free Wi-Fi and Duty-Free services; have F/X Bureaus (although the exchange rate is lower than counterparts with other foreign exchange bureaus) banks and ATMs.
- Have infirmaries, baby care rooms, tailors, hair salons, supermarkets, movie theaters, and state-of-the-art fitness centers (most).

AKMERKEZ

Nispetiye Caddesi No. 56 Etiler, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 282 01 70; www.akmerkez.com.tr

Located right in the center of one of the busiest districts in the city, Akmerkez, one of the oldest and first shopping malls of the city, opened on December 18, 1993. Four floors of the 8-story mall (the other 4 floors are parking lots) is allocated for shops and has 3-connecting atriums. The multi-purpose complex has 2 office blocks (14 and 18 floors), 23-story luxury residences, and a total of 160 shops. Akmerkez has a spacious terrace which occasionally hosts special events. It is a place where visitors can relax during their shopping expedition. Additionally, Akmerkez has a spacious fast-food court, kid's zone, playground, pharmacy, along with a number of upscale cafes and restaurants lined up on its outer perimeter.

CITY'S NİŞANTAŞI

Teşvikiye Caddesi No. 12 Nişantaşı, Şişli
Tel: (0212) 373 33 33; www.citysnisantasi.com

Centrally located in Nişantaşı, a trendy and fashionable neighborhood, City's opened in 2008 and has about 155 affordable national and international fashioners with about 30 eateries at their "Mahalle Food Hall" (fast food and cafes). The 51,000 m² shopping mall attracts more than 18 million visitors annually and is a short 5-minute walk from the Vakko Hotel & Residence.

İSTİNYEPARK

Katar Caddesi No. 11 İstinye, Sarıyer
Tel: (0212) 345 55 55; www.istinyepark.com.tr

Open since September 2007, the whopping İstinyePark complex is built on 270,000 m² of land with 190,000 m² luxury residences and the 87,000 m² indoor/outdoor shopping mall that hosts more than 280 shops. The outdoor concourse level at İstinyePark is home to some of the most popular international fashion luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton, Hermes, Chanel, Fendi, Gucci, and upscale restaurants in the city. Moreover, the "Market Place" located on the lower level of the mall includes mini shops offering a wide range of products from Turkish spices/herbs, dried fruits and nuts, and organic products with a florist to a green grocer and sweets & pastries shops to wines and spirits sellers.

KANYON

Büyükdere Caddesi No. 185 Levent, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 317 53 00; www.kanyon.com.tr

The completely open-air trendy Kanyon with its unique architectural design is centrally located on the main business district in the city. Open since June 2006, the 6-story Kanyon (which means canyon in English) built on 37,500 m² land with 121 shops, 22 kiosks and 27 casual and upscale cafes and restaurants. The complex also has 30,000 m² office spaces and luxury residences with private gardens; balconies and terraces, state-of-the-art home automation systems, and fully opening windows. Guests can access the shopping mall via the "Levent" metro station thanks to its direct link to the mall.

VADİSTANBUL

Azerbaycan Caddesi No. 3/C Ayazağa, Sarıyer
Tel: (0212) 330 38 38; www.vadistanbul.com

Open since September 2017, Vadistanbul is one of the largest shopping malls in Türkiye with 103,000 m² space. It hosts a total of 270 shops including cafes and restaurants and a live-music club (Jolly Joker) with a 760-meter outdoor shopping "avenue". Also, Vadistanbul has a specially designed 2,000-meter show pool where it offers visual shows with water, flame jets and water curtains. The incredibly massive complex also includes a 5,400 m² concert arena, luxury 5-star hotel and residence, Vadistanbul Terrace with 1,111 housing units, 300,000 m² office spaces, private hospital and Türkiye's first and only privately owned monorail (havaray) linking Vadistanbul to the Seyrantepe metro station.

ZORLU CENTER

Koru Sokak No. 2 Levaşım, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 924 01 00; www.zorlucenter.com.tr

Conveniently located just off of Büyükdere Caddesi with an underground walking path link to the Gayrettepe metro station, the fashionable and chic Zorlu Center opened in October 2013. Built on 72,213 m² of land, the mall hosts over 200 shops and has the largest green roof in Europe with its 10,000 m² main square and 12,000 m² park. The indoor and outdoor mall houses some of the most popular luxury fashion brands lined up on the concourse level side by side with some famous and prominent Turkish fashion brands and topnotch cafes and restaurants. The complex includes a 5-star luxury hotel, Tower Residences with spacious balconies or terraces and panoramic views of the Bosphorus, Marmara Sea and Historical Peninsula, a 32-story office building, and the state-of-the-art Zorlu PSM, the largest performing arts center in Türkiye.



Galataport İstanbul

SHOPPING

GALATAPORT İSTANBUL

Meclis-i Mebusan Caddesi, No. 8 Tophane, Beyoğlu;

Tel: 444 52 66 (area code not required if calling from within the city; otherwise add 0212).

Galataport İstanbul is more than a shopping mall. It not only includes the prerequisite shopping mall, 5-star luxury hotel, offices and residences, but Galataport İstanbul has many other significant attractive features and characteristics. Built to be a homeport and port-of-call for international luxury cruise ships, the state-of-the-art port opened in October 2021. It features a hatch system (first of its kind in the world) and a 29.000 m² underground terminal. Galataport has a capacity to serve 3 cruise ships and 15,000 passengers daily. The hatch system allows for the promenade to be open to the public when there is no cruise ship berthed at the port as it separates the customs and security areas, creating a temporary customs area. With all these advantages, it is estimated that 1.5 million cruise line passengers will visit İstanbul annually. Galataport İstanbul is also home to the long-standing İstanbul Modern, a private contemporary art museum (see private museums section) and the Mimar Sinan University İstanbul Museum of Painting and Sculpture. Moreover, the Tophane Clock Tower dating back to 1848 was totally restored on-site using special restoration techniques. The 100-year-old Parcel Post Office, one of the oldest structures at the port was also meticulously restored, maintaining its characteristic slated dome, roof and facades. Renamed the Post Office Fashion Galleria, it offers a unique shopping experience based on the centuries-old traditions set by the Grand Bazaar. It houses 73 boutiques (local brands, Turkish brands with a global presence and international boutique brands) on a 180-meter coastline overlooking the historical peninsula with the boutiques facing the interior and exterior courtyards. To sum up, Galataport İstanbul is located on a 1,2 km stretch along the Bosphorus waterfront in Tophane in the Beyoğlu district. The 52,000 m² outdoor shopping mall has 250 F&B and fashion stores. 40% of the leasable space has been allocated to F&B establishments and includes some of the best upscale cafes and restaurants in İstanbul where visitors can enjoy gastronomic delights from around the world. It also has an underground parking lot with a capacity for 2,400 vehicles which is a major advantage for the highly congested part of the city.



Vakko Nişantaşı



Vakko Nişantaşı

VAKKO STORES

European Side

Vakko Fashion Store

Abdi İpekçi Caddesi No.43 Nişantaşı, Şişli
Tel: (0546) 400 40 40
Open daily 10:00am-8:00pm

Akmerkez Shopping Mall

Nispetiye Caddesi No.56 Beşiktaş
Tel: (0546) 400 40 40

Aqua Florya Shopping Mall

Halkalı Caddesi No.93
Florya, Bakırköy
Tel: (0546) 400 40 40

İstinyePark Shopping Mall

Katar Caddesi No.11 Sarıyer
Tel: (0546) 400 40 40

Vadistanbul Shopping Mall

Azerbaycan Caddesi No.3/C Sarıyer
Tel: (0546) 400 40 40

Zorlu Center Shopping Mall

Koru Sokağı No.2 Beşiktaş
Tel: (0546) 400 40 40

Asian Side

Vakko Fashion Store

Bağdat Caddesi No.422
Suadiye, Kadıköy
Tel: (0546) 400 40 40
Open daily 10:00am-8:00pm

Akasya Shopping Mall

Çeçen Sokak No.25
Acıbadem, Üsküdar
Tel: (0546) 400 40 40

Emaar Square Mall

Ayazma Caddesi No.78
Çamlıca, Üsküdar
Tel: (0546) 400 40 40

All Vakko shops located at shopping malls are open between 10:00am-10:00pm

Please refer to the "shopping malls section" for website addresses of the major shopping malls.



VAKKO BOUTIQUE

Only carrying Vakko-label scarves, handbags and men's shirts and ties; Vakko Boutiques are dedicated to selling limited quantities of pure silk handmade and meticulously manufactured scarves each season in a vast kaleidoscope of colors and designs; and shirts and ties for men produced using high-quality fabrics perfectly combined with unique colors and patterns. Vakko has the richest scarf collection in the fashion world.

VAKKO BOUTIQUES

European Side

Akbatı Shopping Mall
Sanayi 1655 Sokak No.6 Esenyurt
Tel: (0212) 708 69 86

Capacity Shopping Center
Fişekhane Caddesi No.62 Bakırköy
Tel: (0212) 708 68 80

Carousel Shopping Center
Fişekhane Caddesi No.5 Bakırköy
Tel: (0212) 571 70 12

**Cevahir Shopping
& Entertainment Center**
Büyükdere Caddesi No.22/A
Mecidiyeköy, Şişli
Tel: (0212) 948 71 12

Forum İstanbul
Paşa Caddesi Bayrampaşa
Tel: (0212) 640 70 19

JW Marriott
Ataköy 2-5-6. Kısım,
Rauf Orbay Caddesi No:2/1, Bakırköy
Tel: (0212) 919 03 58

Kanyon Shopping Mall
Büyükdere Cad. No.185, Levent
Tel: (0212) 353 10 80

Mall of İstanbul
Süleyman Demirel Bulvarı
Mahmutbey, Başakşehir
Tel: (0212) 803 26 97

Ritz Carlton
Askerocağı Caddesi, Harbiye,
Süzer Plaza No:6/1, 34367 Şişli
Tel: (0212) 919 03 56

Asian Side

Buyaka Shopping Center
Balkan Caddesi No.56 Ümraniye
Tel: (0216) 227 40 36

Capitol Shopping Center
Mahir İz Caddesi Altunizade, Kadıköy
Tel: (0216) 217 35 13

ISTMarina Shopping Center
Ankara Caddesi No.147/6 Kartal
Tel: (0216) 227 29 77

Maltepe Piazza Mall
Tugay Yolu Caddesi No.69C
Cevizli, Maltepe
Tel: (0216) 227 29 95

Metropol İstanbul
Ataşehir Bulvarı Gazi Sokak Ataşehir
Tel: (0216) 227 57 84



VAKKO COUTURE

The first Vakko Couture shop opened at the İstinyePark shopping mall in 2017. If you are looking for the perfect off-the-rack stylish and elegant formal evening gown or cocktail dress for a special occasion or event while in Istanbul, Vakko Couture carries a rich and exquisite collection of international designer labels to select from, including Elie Saab, Zuhair Murad, Monique Lhuillier, Carolina Herrera, Vera Wang, Alberta Ferretti, and Vakko Couture's own label among many other renowned designers. Also, Vakko Couture labels are sold at all flagship Vakko fashion stores.

İstinyePark Shopping Mall
Katar Caddesi No.11 Sarıyer
Tel: (0212) 948 83 45

Zorlu Center Shopping Mall
Koru Sokağı No.2 Beşiktaş
Tel: (0546) 400 40 40

Nişantaşı
Abdi İpekçi Caddesi No.43 Nişantaşı, Şişli
Tel: (0546) 400 40 40



VAKKO WEDDING HOUSE

A seamlessly planned spectacular wedding comes second to the bride-to-be: on the top of her list is finding just the "perfect" wedding gown for the most exciting and special day of her life! Vakko Wedding House comes to the rescue and offers exclusive full-service comforts to the bride, groom and entire family. Selections from top international bridal designers to include Elie Saab, Vera Wang, Georges Hobeika, Oscar de la Renta, Marchesa etc. and Vakko Wedding exclusive designs are available for the discerning bride, groom and family at Vakko Wedding House.

Nişantaşı
Abdi İpekçi Caddesi No.43 Nişantaşı, Şişli
Tel: (0850) 800 65 65

Zorlu Center Shopping Mall
Koru Sokağı No.2 Beşiktaş
Tel: (0850) 800 65 65

Vakko Wedding House
Bağdat Caddesi No.438/A Sudaie, Kadıköy
Tel: (0850) 800 65 65
Open daily 10:00am-8:00pm

Emaar Square Mall
Ayazma Caddesi No.78 Çamlıca, Üsküdar
Tel: (0850) 800 65 65



VAKKO HOME

Vakko stepped outside the realm of the fashion world and launched Vakko Home in 2009. Portraying the distinctive Vakko brand and characteristics, Vakko Home has designed and created a rich, exclusive and superior home collection, including bespoke decorative home accessories & furnishings, tableware, board games (backgammon & chess sets), fabrics, beddings, boat accessories, gift items and so much more. Moreover, since 2017 Vakko Home collections are sold at all flagship Vakko fashion stores.

Zorlu Center Shopping Mall
Koru Sokağı No.2 Beşiktaş
Tel: (0546) 400 40 40

Aqua Florya Shopping Mall
Halkalı Caddesi No.93 Florya, Bakırköy
Tel: (0546) 400 40 40

Emaar Square Mall
Ayazma Caddesi No.78 Çamlıca, Üsküdar
Tel: (0216) 217 34 57

Akasya Shopping Mall
Çeçen Sokak No.25 Acıbadem, Üsküdar
Tel: (0216) 217 12 14



VAKKORAMA

In 1982, Vakko launched Vakkorama; a concept fashion store for young adults. The stores combine fashion, music and sports aimed at this target audience. Today, Vakkorama continues to offer a variety of apparel and accessories from youth-oriented new and innovative fashion designers and lifestyle brands. Also, besides the recently opened stand-alone Vakkorama Cafe serving delectable café fare in a casual and trendy setting at Galataport; Vakkorama Cafes were opened at Vakkorama's flagship stores at Akmerkez and Zorlu Center shopping malls to further enhance the retail experience.



VAKKORAMA STORES

European Side

Vakkorama

Abdi İpekçi Caddesi No.31/1
Nişantaşı, Şişli
Tel: (0212) 705 58 86
Open daily 10:00am-8:00pm

Akmerkez Shopping Mall

Nispetiye Caddesi No.56 Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 282 09 65

Aqua Florya Shopping Mall

Halkalı Caddesi No.93 Florya, Bakırköy
Tel: (0212) 708 12 55

Galataport İstanbul

Meclis-i Mebusan Caddesi, No.8
Tophane, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 919 09 35

İstinyePark Shopping Mall

Katar Caddesi No:11 Sarıyer
Tel: (0212) 345 58 28

Zorlu Center Shopping Mall

Koru Sokağı No:2 Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 942 26 39

Asian Side

Vakkorama

Bağdat Caddesi No.422/A
Suadiye, Kadıköy
Tel: (0216) 373 90 90
Open daily 10:00am-8:00pm

Akasya Shopping Mall

Çeçen Sokak No.25
Acıbadem, Üsküdar
Tel: (0216) 217 12 15

Hilltown Shopping Mall

Siteler Yolu Sokak No.1
Maltepe
Tel: (0216) 227 18 95

V2K DESIGNERS

In 2000, the V2K Designers concept was integrated in the Vakkorama stores in order to bring together unique international brands under one roof with the initial slogan “two cities, one brand” whereby New York fashion brands were sold. Today, V2K designers include other international brands under the same roof. In 2009, V2K Designers opened its first stand-alone store, bringing together an eclectic blend of women’s fashion from Acne Studios, JW Anderson, MM6-Maison Martin Margiela, Simone Rocha, and Thom Browne. V2K Designers also supports new and upcoming designers and emerging labels alongside more established labels within its exciting brand mix and unique store concept.



V2K DESIGNERS STORES

European Side

Abdi İpekçi Caddesi
No.43/A Nişantaşı, Şişli
Tel: (0212) 219 94 98
Open daily 10:00am-8:00pm

Akmerkez Shopping Mall – Vakkorama
Nişpetiye Caddesi No.56 Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 282 06 95

Aqua Florya Shopping Mall – Vakko
Halkalı Caddesi No.93
Florya, Bakırköy
Tel: (0212) 574 09 99

İstinyePark Shopping Mall – Vakko
Katar Caddesi No.11 Sarıyer
Tel: (0212) 345 58 32

Zorlu Center Shopping Mall – Vakko
Koru Sokağı No.2 Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 708 33 33

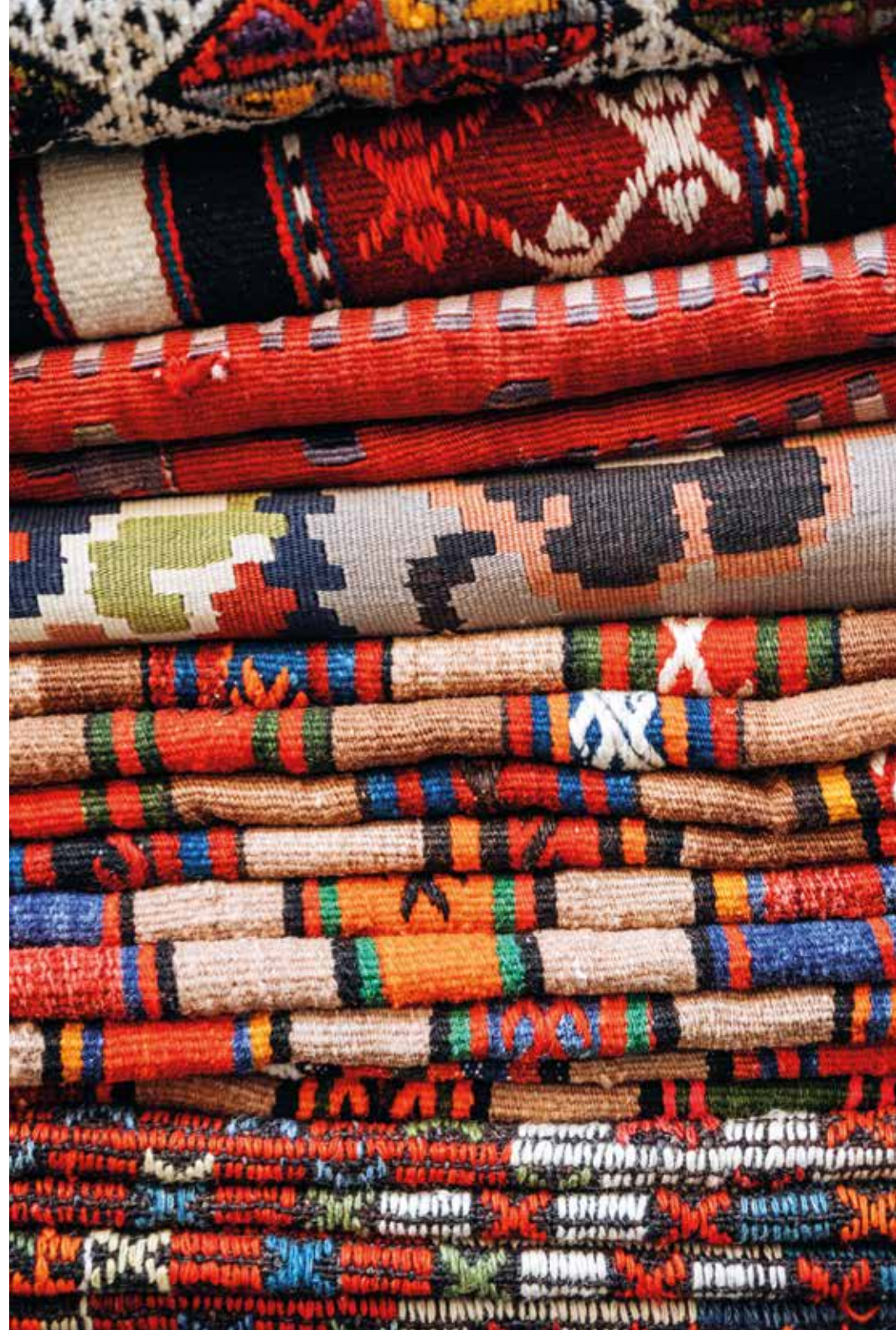
Asian Side

Akasya Shopping Mall – Vakko
Çeçen Sokak No.25
Acıbadem, Üsküdar
Tel: (0216) 217 12 14

Emaar Square Mall – Vakko
Ayazma Caddesi No.78
Çamlıca, Üsküdar
Tel: (0216) 217 34 57

Bağdat Caddesi – Vakkorama
Bağdat Caddesi No.422/A
Suadiye, Kadıköy
Tel: (0216) 373 90 90
Open daily 10:00am-8:00pm

GIFT IDEAS



A LA TURCA

Faik Paşa Caddesi No.4 Çukurcuma, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 245 29 33; www.alaturcahouse.com
Open Monday-Saturday 10:30am-7:00pm

Owned by designer and antiquarian and collector Erkal Aksoy, A la Turca carries a wonderful collection of select antique kilims and carpets, unique and exquisite objects and accessories, paintings, furnishings and more from the Ottoman period forward.

ASLI GÜNŞİRAY

Çukurcuma Caddesi No.58 Çukurcuma, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 252 59 86; <http://asligunsiray.com>
Open Monday-Saturday 10:00am-6:00pm

Ms. Günşiray is a very talented and successful interior designer who sells antiques alongside her own designs at her lovely shop in Çukurcuma (home of antique shops) since 1988.

ASSOULINE

Cevdetpaşa Caddesi No.25/A Bebek, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 287 55 34; www.assouline.com
Open Monday-Saturday 10:00am-7:00pm;
Sunday noon-6:00pm

Assouline carries an excellent collection of elegant English language coffee table books (including books on Türkiye) on Art, Design and Architecture, Fashion, Food & Drink, Jewelry, Luxury Brands, Photography, and Travel. The unique bookstore also offers luxury gift items, exclusive library accessories, and stationery.

HAZAL HALI

Mecidiye Köprüsü Sokak No.9 Ortaköy, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 227 40 71; www.hazalkilim.com
Open Monday-Friday 9:30am-7:00pm;
Saturday 10:00am-7:00pm

The store owner Ms. Engin Demirkol has spent more than three decades carefully choosing her collection of unique old Anatolian kilims and carpets available for all budgets.

İZNİK FOUNDATION TILES

Cengiz Topel Caddesi Tuğcular Sokak No. 1/A
Etiler, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 287 32 43; www.iznik.com
Open Monday-Friday 8:00am-5:00pm

The store carries a collection of classic and modern tiles, decorative plate miniatures, classic panels and objects (vases, bowls, mugs, etc.) produced by the İznik Foundation with the ancient colors and patterns referred to as İznik tiles, dating back hundreds of years and named after the town of İznik in Western Anatolia where it is produced. More than 70% of İznik tiles are composed of quartz and quartzite.

SOFA ARTS & ANTIQUES

Şahkulu Seraskerci Çıkmaşı No.2 Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 520 28 50; www.kashifsofa.com
Open Monday-Saturday 10:00am-6:00pm

Established in 1976 by Mr. Kaşif Gündoğdu, a gifted antiquarian and previously located on Nuruosmaniye Street, steps from the Grand Bazaar, the antique shop sells a unique and wide range of engravings, maps and prints, miniatures, calligraphy, paintings, reproductions, silverware, mosaics and so much more.

THE EVIL EYE... a.k.a. NAZAR BONCUĞU

Did you know that the world-renowned evil eye (nazar boncuğu in Turkish) dates back 5,000 years? The earliest known belief in the power of the evil eye predates ancient Roman and Greek eras. There is literature indicating that it appeared on the Chalcidian drinking glasses, referred to as "eye-cups" in the 6th century BC.

The evil eye is found in many cultures in this part of the world with the population often believing that receiving the evil eye will cause misfortune or injury while others consider it a kind of supernatural force and that by casting a nasty or vindictive stare to someone (especially innocents), can cause them harm. So, the evil eye talisman is a way to ward off the evil spells that might be cast by malicious people.

Initially older versions of the talisman were made of ceramic or clay; however, with the production of glass beads in the Mediterranean region around 1,500 BC, evil eye objects quickly became popular with the Phoenicians, Persians, Greeks, Romans and Ottomans.

Another belief (even today) among those who live in the Aegean region

where light-colored eyes are quite rare, those with blue or green eyes are thought to cast the curse, whether it is intentional or not.

In present day, evil eye objects are mostly seen in homes (walls, tables, etc.), offices and hung on the rearview mirrors of cars, trucks, buses, minibuses, etc. in Türkiye. Some tie tiny evil eyes to the clothing of babies or children. More and more evil eye jewelry (earrings, bracelets, necklaces, rings) has become quite popular and come in all shapes and sizes and some are quite unique and expensive. Moreover, vases, drinking and tea glasses; Turkish coffee cups, regular mugs, rakı glasses, textiles, clothing, ash trays, etc. are today decorated with beautifully crafted evil eyes.

The color of a traditional evil eye is blue. However, it is also available in different vibrant colors such as yellow, red, black, dark blue, green, and more.

With no encouragement necessary, I'm sure you will be taking back home different evil eye souvenirs for yourself, co-workers, friends or family whether you believe in its powers or not.

SWEETS & SPECIALTY SHOPS



BAKLAVA SHOPS

Rooting back to the 15th century, one of the most popular sweet pastries, baklava was first created in the Ottoman palace kitchens. The traditional Turkish dessert requires a great deal of expertise. It is a multi-layered (up to 40 layers) pastry prepared with phyllo dough sheets and (a very thin unleavened dough) prepared plain or filled with a variety of ingredients (pistachio nuts, walnuts, etc.). After baked, it is sweetened with syrup prepared with sugar, water and lemon juice or sometimes honey.

For the guests who wish to experience the historical Baklava, below is a list of the best baklava providers in Istanbul.

BAKLAVACI GÜLLÜOĞLU (M. NEJAT GÜLLÜ)

Spice Bazaar No.40-1 Eminönü, Fatih
Tel: (0212) 528 51 81; www.gulluoglu.com
Open daily 8:00am-7:00pm

Established in 1871, this ever-popular baklava brand has about 30 branches in 6 countries in 3 continents (New York, Miami, Los Angeles, Amsterdam, Riyad and Bursa, Izmit and Ankara among others) and plans to expand to other cities in Europe, USA, Canada, China and Saudi Arabia. The branch is owned and managed by M. Nejat Güllü, the estranged brother of the branch owned and operated by Nadir Güllü.

HACI BOZAN OĞULLARI

Çarşı Caddesi No.28 1. Levent, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 268 03 07; www.hacibozanogullari.com.tr
Open daily 6:00am-11:00pm

The Hacı Bozan Oğulları brand has been around in the restaurant industry since 1948, and the family-run business opened their first kebab restaurant in Istanbul in 1958. In 1973, they decided to establish a baklava and cake shop. With 10 branches throughout the city, their flagship shop is in Levent. All branches include a wonderful selection of delicious baklava, cakes and milk puddings.

KÖŞKEROĞLU

Necatibey Caddesi Eski Gümrük Sokak No:6 Karaköy
Tel: (0212) 249 63 40; www.koskeroglu.com
Open daily 7:00am-7:00pm

Köşkeroglu traces its roots back to 1946 in Gaziantep, where Hacı Mehmet Ali Kaya juggled between crafting desserts in winter and grilling kebabs in summer. The inaugural Istanbul branch debuted in 1985, nestled in Karaköy. Among their specialties is a baklava variant named 'prens' (prince). With 7 branches, including one in Galataport, Köşkeroglu attributes its enduring success to unwavering commitment to quality, scrupulous ingredient selection, precise craftsmanship, and decades of expertise.

CONFECTIONERIES

ALİ MUHİDDİN HACI BEKİR

İstiklal Caddesi No.83A Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 244 28 04; www.hacibekir.com
Open daily 8:00am-9:00pm

Established in 1777, Ali Muhiddin Hacı Bekir specializes in *akide şekeri* (hard candies) with all sorts of flavors and sizes, *lokum* (Turkish Delights), plain or flavored halva, homemade jams and more.

CEMİLZADE ETİLER

Bebek Yokuşu Sokak No. 3/1 Etiler, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 263 17 63; www.cemilzade.com.tr
Open Monday-Saturday 10:00am-7:00pm

Established in 1883, Cemilzade Etiler specializes in *badem ezmesi* (marzipan) and lokum varieties.

MEŞHUR BEBEK BADEM EZMESİ

Cevdetpaşa Caddesi No.53/C Bebek, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 263 59 84; www.meshurbekbademezmesi.com.tr
Open daily 9:00am-9:00pm

Established in 1904, Meşhur Bebek Badem Ezmesi specializes in and only sells different flavored marzipan sweets.

ŞEKERCİ CAFER EROL

Galataport, Meclis-i Mebusan Caddesi Block J-3 Tophane, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 877 66 77; www.sekercicafererol.com
Open daily 10:00am-10:00pm

Established in 1807, Şekerci Cafer Erol specializes in Turkish delights, flavored hard candies; *badem şekeri* (candied almonds); assortment of nougats; among other goodies.

MILK PUDDING SHOPS

Turkish milk puddings are known for their heavenly and delicious taste. They are light and easier to digest compared to other sugary heavy desserts. The word *muhallebi* is the general name for all milk puddings and a *muhallebici* is a place where milk puddings are sold. All of the shops mentioned below sell milk puddings with most also carrying a selection of cakes and other pastries.

The Turkish cuisine offers different types of milk puddings such as *fırın sütlaç* (baked rice pudding), *tavuk göğüsü* (milk pudding prepared with finely shredded chicken breast), *kazandibi* (caramelized version of tavuk göğüsü and cooked a second time in a metal tray to caramelize one side), *muhallebi* (custard), and *keşkül* (almond pudding).

BOLULU HASAN USTA

Vali Konağı Caddesi No.95 Nişantaşı, Şişli
Nişpetiye Caddesi No. 28/A Levent, Beşiktaş
Tel: 444 42 48; www.bhu.com.tr
Open daily 8:00am-midnight

Izmir-based Bolulu Hasan Usta has branches throughout Istanbul and the rest of the country. The menu also includes a variety of cakes and ice cream.

ÖZSÜT

Çarşı Caddesi No. 37 1. Levent, Beşiktaş
Tel: (0212) 283 81 54; www.ozsut.com.tr
Open daily 7:00am-10:00pm

Founded in 1938, the Izmir-based Özşüt has branches all over the country offering a wide selection of milk puddings; cakes, pastries, syrupy sweets, baked goods and more.

SARAY MUHALLEBECİSİ

İstiklal Caddesi No.107 Beyoğlu

Teşvikiye Caddesi No. 19B Teşvikiye, Şişli

Tel: (0212) 999 28 88; www.saraymuhallebicisi.com

Open daily 7:00am–1:00am

Established in 1935, Saray Muhallebicisi has branches in other parts of the city too. It offers an extensive menu with desserts, a wide variety of breakfast treats, soups, salads, and more.

EMİRGAN SÜTİŞ

Şair Nedim Sokak No.9/11 Akaretler, Beşiktaş

Tel: (0 212) 227 28 27; www.sutis.com.tr

Bebek Caddesi No. 101–103 Arnavutköy, Beşiktaş

Tel: (0212) 263 25 43

Open daily 8:00am–1:00am

Established in 1953, Emirgan Sütüş has branches throughout Istanbul, major cities in Türkiye and in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar.

TARİHİ SAVOY PASTANESİ

Siraselvililer Caddesi No.91/A Cihangir, Beyoğlu

Tel: (0212) 249 18 18; www.savoypastanesi.com

Open daily 7:00am–11:00pm

Established in 1950, Tarihi Savoy Pastanesi has no other branches. The longstanding and popular pastry shop offers a good selection of delicious breakfast treats, as well as yummy cakes, tarts, savory pastries and more.

PASTRY & BAKERY SHOPS

BAYLAN

Muvakkithane Caddesi No.9/A Kadıköy

Tel: (0216) 346 63 50; www.baylangida.com

Cevdetpaşa Caddesi No. 52–54 Bebek, Beşiktaş

Tel: (0212) 358 07 60

Open Sunday–Thursday 7:00am–midnight; Friday–

Saturday 7:00am–1:00am

Baylan is particularly favored for its cakes, cupcakes, cookies, chocolates and macaroons in addition to the cakes they prepare on special order for different occasions. One of their absolutely delicious signature desserts since 1954 is Krup Griye. The Bebek branch offers a spectacular Bosphorus view with its waterfront cafe and restaurant.

DİVAN PASTRY SHOP

Akmerkez Shopping Mall

Tel: (0212) 942 38 43; www.divan.com.tr

Open daily 8:30am–11:00pm

Established in 1956, Divan has numerous branches in Istanbul offering a wide variety of tasty cakes and pastries. This luxury brand produces and sells over 150 products including savory pastries, Turkish delights (lokum), chocolates, macarons, ice cream, homemade jams, and more.

FOURNOS ARTISAN BAKERY

Dereboyu Caddesi No.149B Ortaköy, Beşiktaş,

Tel: (GSM) 0552 836 85 40; www.fournos.com.tr

Open Weekdays 6:30am–9:00pm;

Weekends 7:30am–9:00pm

Fournos Artisan Bakery is known for their good selection of cookies (including gluten-free), pastel de nata (Portuguese egg custard), yummy sourdough breads, and savory pastries (simit, croissants, etc.).

GOODIES FOR FOODIES

CHARCUTERIES

The following are some of the best charcuteries (or delis) in Istanbul. They all carry a wide selection of regional Turkish cheeses cured meats (sucuk, pastırma), deli meats, cold and hot meze (that can be re-heated), olives, honey and jams, dried fruits and nuts, fresh fruits and vegetables, along with some supermarket products and more. Most places listed below also prepare cheese and deli meat platters for special events as well as selling wines and spirits

GOURMET GARAGE

Nispetiye Caddesi No.114/A Hisarüstü, Beşiktaş

Tel: (0850) 622 64 64; www.gourmetgarage.com.tr

Müderis Salih Rüştü Bey Sokak No.1/A Ulus, Beşiktaş

Open daily 8:00am–10:00pm

Established in 1995, Gourmet Garage has other branches on both sides of the city and carries a wide selection of specialty cheeses, charcuterie and bakery items among other imported goods.

MERKEZ GURME

Levent Çarşısı Gonca Sokak No. 27 Levent, Beşiktaş

Tel: (0212) 268 40 49

Open daily 9:00am–9:00pm

Open since 1966, Merkez Gurme is in close walking distance to the Levent Metro Station.

NAMLI GURME

Rıhtım Caddesi Katotopark No. 1/1 Karaköy, Beyoğlu

Tel: (0212) 293 68 80; www.namligurme.com.tr

Open daily 7:00am–10:00pm

City's Nişantaşı Shopping Mall

Tel: (0212) 373 28 70–71

Open daily 10:00am–10:00pm

Founded in 2007, Namlı Gurme offers a wonderful breakfast (a la carte) spread which is quite popular at both branches.

NAMLI PASTIRMACI

Hasırcılar Caddesi No.14 Eminönü, Fatih

Tel: (0212) 511 63 93; www.namlipastirma.com.tr

Open Thursday–Monday 7:30am–8:00pm;

Tuesday–Wednesday 7:30am–8:30pm;

closed Sunday

Established in 1929, Namlı Pastırmacı is only steps from the Spice Bazaar in the historic peninsula.

SANTRAL ŞARKÜTERİ

Cevdetpaşa Caddesi No.57/D Bebek, Beşiktaş

Tel: (0212) 263 63 52; www.bebeksantral.com

Open since 1960, Santral Şarküteri has some of the best and tasty selections of cold and hot meze in the city.

ŞÜTTE

Teşvikiye Caddesi No. 95 Teşvikiye, Şişli

Tel: (0212) 261 07 43; www.sutte.com.tr

Open Monday–Saturday 8:00am–9:00pm;

Sunday 9:00am–7:00pm

Established in 1918, Şütte has other branches in the city and only a 5-minute walk from the Vakko Hotel & Residence.

TURKİŞ CHEESES (PEYNİR)

There are about 193 types of cheeses produced in Türkiye, but here we will mention the more popularly consumed cheeses at most households in the country.

Beyaz peynir (white cheese) is not the same as the Greek feta cheese although often confused. It is a high-fat cheese produced from cow, sheep, or goat's milk and has no rind. While some have a mild taste and are soft, others are matured for a longer period of time and are hard and have a strong taste. Some varieties can also be quite salty and are usually a staple on all Turkish breakfast tables, crumbled over salads, used to make cold or grilled sandwiches, and a must at a *rakı-meze* table.

Likened to Roquefort cheese, **Divle Obruk cheese** is produced in May and June usually with raw sheep and goat's milk and then placed in the caves of the Divle village in South central Anatolia and matured for 6 months in special casings. The aromatic cheese is pale yellow or white when cut. The sharp cheese has a rind and a unique taste. It is typically used in the same way as the other cheeses mentioned here.

Kars gravyer is similar to Gruyere cheese and it is usually made with pure cow's milk from cows that graze the highlands or plateaus in Kars (Northeastern Anatolia) and is an aromatic cheese with a unique fresh flavor. It's great for making cheese fondues or a great choice to include on a cheeseboard. Not to be confused with the "kashkaval" cheese which is produced with cow's or sheep's milk or the Greek "kasseri" cheese produced mostly with sheep's milk and at most 20% goat's milk, **Turkish kaşar peynir** (yellow cheese) is a medium-hard to hard pale-yellow cheese produced with cow, sheep or goat's milk. *Taze* or fresh kaşar is pale yellow with a mild taste and usually used to prepare grilled sandwiches or as toppings when preparing *pide* (savory pastries stuffed with vegetables, meats, etc.) or simply eaten on its own at breakfast. On the other hand, *Eski kaşar*, or aged yellow cheese is a hard and sharp flavored cheese ideal to be paired with wine.

Tulum Cheese is a traditional Turkish goat's milk cheese aged in a goatskin casing called Tulum in Turkish, hence its name. With an aging period of 6 months, it is a soft-ripened cheese and is sold plain with different herbs or nuts like walnuts. It is commonly produced in the Erzincan province (Eastern Anatolia) while other types are produced in Izmir (Aegean), and in the Black Sea and Central Anatolia regions. It can be used in a variety of ways from making omelets and savory pastries to homemade pizzas to spinach tarts or an excellent addition to a cheeseboard.

Van otlu peynir (herbed cheese) is a type of cheese produced in the springtime in the Van Province (Eastern Anatolia). It is aromatic, semi-hard and salty, produced with sheep's milk. More than 25 types of medicinal herbs grown in Van are used to prepare this cheese

SPECIALTY SHOPS

ANTRE GURME

Bakraç Sokak No.14 Cihangir, Beyoğlu
Tel: (GSM) 0538 931 66 72; www.antregourmet.com.tr
Open Monday-Saturday 9:00am-9:00pm;
Sunday 9:00am-7:00pm

The "star" at Antre is Turkish cheeses. The owners Berrin Bal Onur and Neşe Aksoy Biber have traveled throughout Türkiye many times in the past 20 years and have shared their expertise about Turkish cheese in several books. Antre offers a very wide selection of unique and indigenous Turkish cheeses and these wonderful women will be more than happy to give you a short lesson! Other products sold are vinegars, organic honey, jams, olives, organic molasses, breakfast sauces and more.

ASRİ TURŞUCU

Ağa Hamamı Sokak No. 9/A Cihangir, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 244 47 24; www.asritursucu.com
Open Monday-Saturday 10:00am-9:00pm;
Sunday noon -9:00pm

Established in 1938 this modest-sized specialty shop prepares the most incredible selection of delicious pickled vegetables and fruits, pickle juices, tomato and pepper pastes, breakfast sauces, preserved grape leaves, *şalgam* (fermented turnip juice), and vinegars.

EATALY MARKET

Zorlu Center Shopping Mall
Tel: (0212) 336 66 00; www.eataly.com.tr
Open daily 10:00am-10:00pm

The Italy-based brand sells anything and everything Italian as well as Turkish products such as dried fruits and nuts, spices and flavorings, Turkish delights, breads, Turkish cheeses, deli meats, cured meats, olives, olive oil and more.

VEGAN PRODUCTS

VEGAN DÜKKAN

Sıraselviler Caddesi Soğanlı Sokak No.8/C
Cihangir, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 243 23 83; www.vegandukkan.com
Open Monday-Saturday 10:00am-8:00pm

Everything is plant-based here! From the foods to the vitamins, personal care products (shampoos, soaps, make-up, etc.) to anything else you can think of including some gluten-free products are on offer.

WINES & SPIRITS

LA CAVE WINES & SPIRITS

Sıraselviler Caddesi No. 109 Cihangir, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 243 24 05; www.lacavesarap.com
Open Monday-Saturday 10:00am-8:30pm

The longstanding La Cave has the best collection of Turkish & International wines and spirits in the city. The owner Mr. Esat Ayhan can assist you in making your selections based on his years and years of experience.

SENSUS WINE BOUTIQUE

Büyükhendek Caddesi No.5 Galata, Beyoğlu
Tel: (0212) 245 56 57; www.sensuswine.com
Open Monday-Thursday, Sunday 2:00pm-11:00pm;
Friday-Saturday 2pm-midnight

Located at the entrance to the Anemon Hotel and facing the Galata Tower, over 400 local Turkish wines are sold at Sensus. The wine boutique hosts wine tastings in addition to its extensive Turkish cheeses menu and separate a la carte dinner menu.

VAKKO GROUP

EVERY COUNTRY HAS A BRAND
THEY ARE PROUD OF...

From the Past to the Present

It all started with a vision: Vitali Hakko (1913–2007) entered the retail world by opening a small millinery shop in 1934 in Istanbul. He was only 21 years old and not from a wealthy family... but he had a dream. Jumping 90 years to 2024, it is more than clear that with determination, perseverance, hard work; strategic decision-making skills and being at the “right place at the right time”, everything is possible! Today, the Vakko Group is a major conglomerate with solid footholds in the retail, media & entertainment, arts & culture, food & beverage and hotel industries in Türkiye.

The following is a chronological list of the major accomplishments of the Vakko Group in the business world from the beginning to 2024. Vitali Hakko was unable to see first-hand all of Vakko’s achievements; but it was his leadership and determination that led the way for his heirs to continue on his legacy to the future.



1934

Vakko's story began with a small hat shop named "Şen Şapka", founded by Vitali Hakko in 1934.

1938

Name of Şen Şapka has changed to Vakko. Vitali Hakko started to introduce hand-made scarves with the Turkish fashion world simultaneously with the world fashion under the Vakko brand.

1948

Vakko established its first factory in Kurtuluş.

1955

The first fashion show in Türkiye was held by Vakko in 1955.

1962

The first Vakko store was opened in Beyoğlu, the heart of Istanbul.

1969

A new factory was built in Merter on the production of garments, prints and shoes on a closed area of 40 thousand square meters. It became the first art gallery in a factory where paintings and sculptures of famous Turkish artists are exhibited. And it was the first step in Vakko's importance and support for art. Then, the first art galleries were opened in Türkiye, which is also located in the stores in Beyoğlu and Ankara.

1975

Vakko broadcasted the first color commercials on TV.

1979

Vakko Store was opened in Izmir. Thanks to the advertising campaigns carried out throughout Türkiye and the extraordinary fashion shows held regularly, the Vakko brand's awareness started to increase.

1981

On the 100th birthday of Atatürk, the "Anatolian Sun-Anadolu Güneşi" fashion and art show, bringing together Anatolian cultures and Western fashion concept, was held. The show, which was also exhibited in Rome, Vienna, Brussels, Paris and London, introduced contemporary Turkish fashion and Vakko in Europe.

1982

The world's first concept store, Türkiye's first youth store Vakkorama, was opened in Istanbul. Vakkorama soon became a youth center with its store where music, art and sports meet.

Vakkorama GYM, which was launched in the same year, became the first of its kind as the only and most equipped place where men and women do sports together.

1985

Vakko became the first fashion brand to produce chocolate in Türkiye and pioneered the birth of chocolate culture in the country.

1986

The first of the Karadam ski races, which would be traditionally organized each year later by Vakkorama, was held.

1987

The first of the Pupa Sailing races was held with great enthusiasm and the participation of 1200 racers.

Culture matinees were organized in Vakkorama Taksim Store once a week, enabling young people to meet, meet and chat with the notables of the culture and art world face to face.

1988

A turning point: Vakko celebrated the 50th anniversary of its establishment by renewing its brand identity.

1990

With its perfumes named Vakko, Katia, V de Vakko and Piu Piu, Vakko lead the way another first in Türkiye as a fashion brand with its own perfume.

1992

Power FM, one of the pioneers of the first private radios, has become the most listened foreign music radio since its establishment.

1993

The first Vakko Boutique, which is a new store concept, reaching 47 today and offering scarves-ties and shirts for sale, was opened.

1995

Vakko Forest was established.

1996

The multi-story Vakkorama Rumeli Store was opened. Türkiye's first internet cafe was also included in this store.

1997

Vakko Suadiye Store was opened in the white mansion that is now synonymous with Vakko.

The first European Aerobics Championship was held in Istanbul, sponsored by Vakkorama and Power FM.

At the Beyaz Geceler (White Nights) where DJ Championships are organized,

Ricky Martin who was very popular and Tito Puente, known as the king of Latin music, took the stage.

The Power Rodeo Show, featuring famous French car acrobats, was watched by tens of thousands of people enthusiastically in Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir and Antalya.

1998

Vakko was offered to public and opened to the stock exchange.

Vakko Espace, an organization company carrying Vakko's line to special events and events, was established.

Vakko Wedding, which offers a unique wedding shopping concept in the world and brings together the wedding dresses of world famous designers under one roof, was opened.

Vakko designed uniforms for Turkish Airlines and the Turkish National Football Team.

With the sponsorship of Vakkorama and Power FM, Türkiye's first Offshore Championship was held in the Bosphorus with 3 million spectators.

1999

The first Vakko Golf Cup was held.

Power Records is established.

2000

Vakkorama V2K, bringing together world-famous brands and designers under one roof, met with fashion lovers.

A 6.5 km walking path with 17 different exercise stations for beginners, trained and active athletes was established by Vakkorama in the Belgrad Forest under the name of "Live Young Track-Genç Yaşayın Parkuru".

In the organization organized by Power, 10,000 people watched the Stomp team at the Harbiye Open Air Theater.





2006

2001

PowerTurk, the most popular Turkish pop music radio in all of Türkiye, started broadcasting.

2002

The fashion brand of young professionals, W Collection, was launched.

Vakko Card and Vakko Loyalty Programme was born.

2004

Bringing a new breath to beaches with its colorful swimwear collection, Vakkorama H2O brand was launched.

2005

Vakko Sailing Cup 05 was held, accompanied by solo sailors from Figaro France, where 167 boats competed in the Istanbul Strait and still has an unbroken record in terms of the number of participating boats.

Offering original designs for boats and yachts, Vakko Cruise was born.

2006

The famous American fashion designer Zac Posen met Vakko and the Zac Posen Vakko label was born.

The world-famous model Gisele Bündchen became the face of Vakko.

Olivier Martinez, Jessica Stam, Jessica Miller, Frankie Ryder, Missy Ryder, and Alain Delon Jr. continued this tradition in the following years.

2007

The Grand Classics invitation was held, hosted by Vakko and the famous actor Daniel Day Lewis and his wife Rebecca Miller, attended by 200 world-famous foreign guests.

Also established in the same year, the national radio channel Radyo Fenomen started its broadcasting life as the most listened radio for the young generation between 12 and 24.

2008

All works of art from the Vakko factory in Merter were moved to Esenyurt with the highest level of measures and renewed as the Vakko Production Center.

2009

Offering timeless collections for houses and gardens with Vakko signature and aesthetic point of view, Vakko Home was established.

2010

Vakko Fashion Center moved to its new location in Nakkaştepe.

2011

Vakko Fashion Center was selected as the world's "Best Workplace" by Wallpaper Magazine.

The world-famous hat designer Stephen Jones's "Stephen Jones and the Accent of Fashion" hat exhibition met with fashion and art lovers for the first time after world museums at Vakko Fashion Center.

The international culture and arts festival ISTANCOOL started to be held under the sponsorship of Vakko.

2012

Vitali Hako Creative Industries Library, which opens the doors of the entire creative world such as fashion, art, architecture, photography and cinema and hosts many resources in these fields, was opened in Nakkaştepe, Vakko Fashion Center.

2013

Vakko Esmod Fashion School was established in cooperation with Esmod, the oldest fashion school in the world, in order to support the training of future fashion professionals.

Combining art, fashion and architecture, Vakko Zorlu opened and many stores followed this newly born concept.

2014

Celebrating its 75th anniversary with 180 foreign business partners invited from abroad, Vakko provided its guests two unforgettable days in the magical atmosphere of Istanbul.

Vakko Mare was founded, bringing together the famous brands of world beach fashion under one roof. The first store bearing its own name was opened in Bodrum and Çeşme.

2015

Vakko's new perfume Infiniti for Him, Infiniti for Her with 3 different scents, and the unisex perfume Infiniti for Us entered the cosmetics world with Vakko elegance.

2016

Vakko Patisserie, where elegant French pastry meets Vakko elegance in the light of its "Meilleur Ouvrier de France Pâtissier" (MOF) advisors, which are given in the field of gastronomy in France and accepted as an indicator of excellence all over the world, was opened in Akmerkez.

Composed of 5 different fragrances, Vakko Eau de Cologne promised a brand new and fascinating journey to Vakko's world.

Under the sponsorship of Vakkorama, the world famous Fuerza Bruta team came to Türkiye for the first time to perform their show. It met with a total of 15,000 viewers in 15 shows.

2017

With PowerApp, it has created a platform where all local, digital radio and TV channels belonging to the Power Group and the most up-to-date sets of world-famous DJs can be listened.

2018

Combining French cuisine and world flavors with elegant and meticulous presentations, Vakko Bistrot was established, with the difference in taste and outstanding quality at Vakko Patisserie.

Vakkorama Cafe was opened with a completely different, young energy and menu.

Vakkorama Sailing Team reopened its sails years later and won many championships.

2020

During the pandemic process that affected the whole world, Vakko produced 3 million free masks in coordination with the Ministry of Health.

Vakko has created a brand-new platform called Vakko Live 24/7 that serves online and offline, which is comprehensive and unique in the world. You can reach sales consultants, product consultants and customer services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and online training for thousands of consultants has been provided.

With the participation of thousands of people under the scope of "the new normal", Vakko realized a first in the world and organized the first online Trunk Shows.

Vakko 365 opened its doors for the first time in Canyon.



Vakko Nakkaştepe Fashion Center



Vakko Izmir İstinyepark

2021

Vakko Nişantaşı opened in March 2021, bringing together Vakko Women, Men, Couture, Home, V2K Designers, and Vakko L'Atelier, with a new merchandising concept.

Vakko L'Atelier meets Vakko Friends at summer branches and brings a refreshing touch to life in Alaçatı, Göcek, and Mandarin Oriental Bodrum as of summer 2021.

For Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, Vakko designs the official formal wear of the "Team Türkiye" Olympic national athletes.

Izmir İstinyePark opens.

Vitali Hakko Creative Industries Library moves to Atatürk Cultural Center.

Vakko becomes a partner of Fuudy App.

Vakko L'Atelier collaborates with Vanilla Rococo.

2022

Vakko L'Atelier, Vakkorama Cafe and Vakkorama open in Galataport İstanbul.

Vakkorama Junior opens in May 2022.

2023

Opening the doors of a brand new Vakko World, Vakko Hotel & Residence brings together its privileged services under one roof in Nişantaşı, the fashion center of Istanbul.

Vakko's new flagship in Bursa Downtown, spanning 2,400 sqm, seamlessly combines luxury fashion and F&B in an experiential concept.

Vakko Group announced the development of a second hotel in Istanbul, Vakko Hotel Sumahan Bosphorus, situated in Çengelköy on the city's Asian shores.

On the 16th anniversary of Vitali Hakko's passing, Vakko commemorated its founder. The ceremony introduced the inaugural Vitali Hakko Retail Employees Honor Awards, marking the beginning of an annual event to honor outstanding employees.

Participating in 18 races in total, the Vakkorama Sailing Team secured third place in the Winter Trophy in Marmaris and achieved second place at the Göcek Autumn Race Week.

In order to present Vakko's culture and service quality in the field of hospitality at its best, Vakko School of Hospitality and Service was established in collaboration with the world's most renowned school in the field, Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne, EHL.

2024

Vakko designs the travel and ceremony kits for Team Türkiye - Turkish National Team Athletes competing in the Paris 2024 Olympic Games.

The first monobrand Eichholtz store opened in Nispetiye On, Istanbul in early 2024. Driven by an expressive creative vision, the brand offers an extensive range of interior and outdoor designs that add an inviting ambience to living spaces.

Vakko Group's second hotel, Vakko Hotel Sumahan Bosphorus launches in a landmark waterfront property dating back to 19th century. With this opening, Vakko Le Specialità and Caviar Kaspia, with its first location in Istanbul, add diversity to the gastronomy culture and social life of the city.

PURSUING ITS GROWTH STRATEGY, VAKKO GROUP HAS EXPANDED ITS RETAIL AND SERVICE PRESENCE TO A TOTAL OF 194 AS OF 2025.

THE LOCATIONS INCLUDE:

20 VAKKO, 41 VAKKO BOUTIQUE, 26 VAKKORAMA, 5 VAKKO WEDDING, 2 VAKKO HOME, 1 VAKKO CHOCOLATE, 11 VAKKO PATISSERIE, 13 VAKKO BISTROT, 5 VAKKORAMA CAFÉ, 2 VAKKORAMA CAFÉ SAIL LOFT, 13 OUTLET VAKKO, 5 VAKKO KIOSK, 48 W COLLECTION, 1 CHRISTOFLE AND 1 VAKKO 365 STORE.

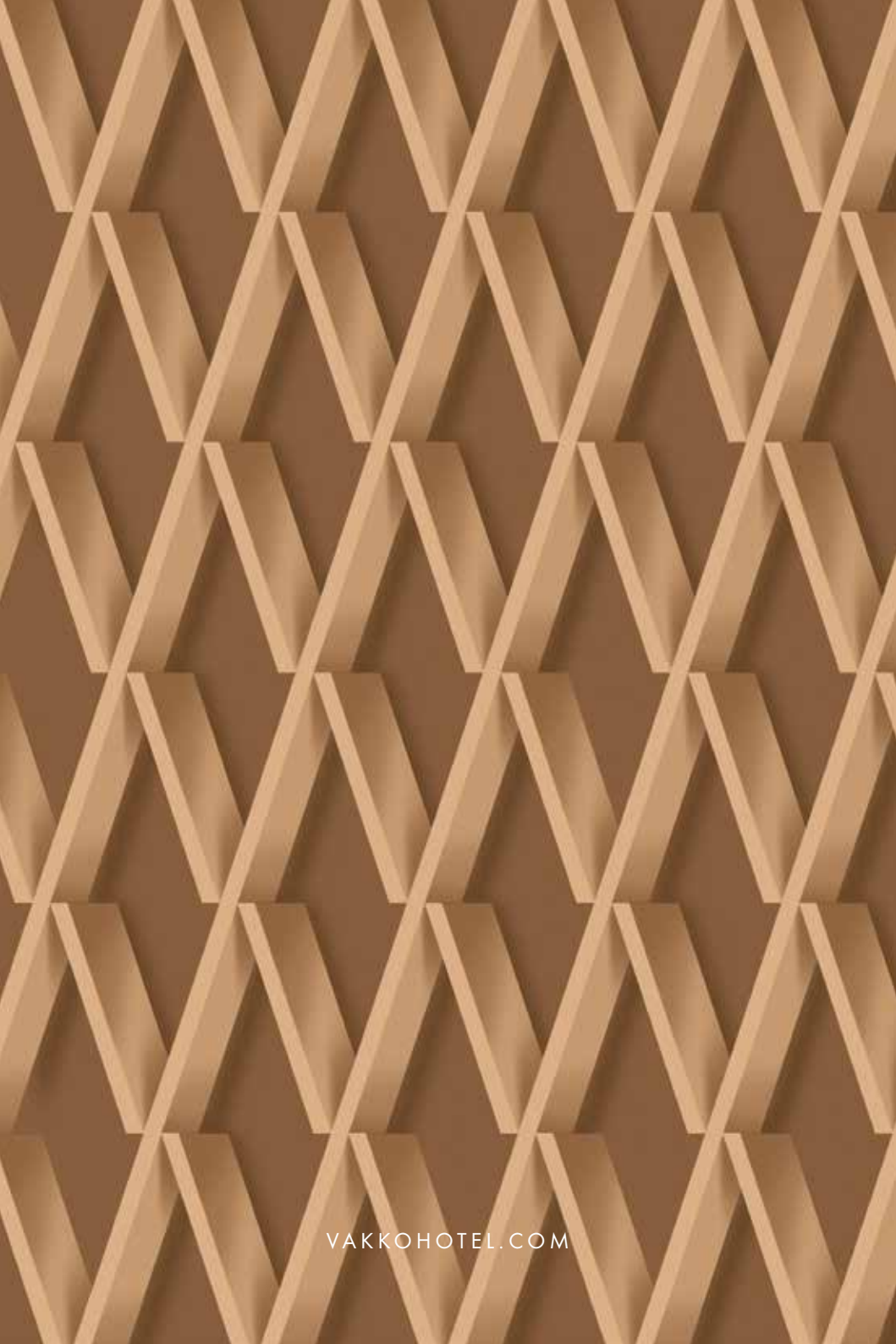
2025

VAKKO opens its first ever store in Athens, set in a charming five-storey building in the heart of the city's high-end shopping district, Kolonaki. The Vakko Athens store presents a thoughtfully curated Vakko experience with exceptional collections and services.



Vakko Hotel Sumahan Bosphorus

VAKKO | HOTEL &
RESIDENCE



VAKKOHOTEL.COM