

Jetset Journals

no.1

2025

ISTANBUL

5 Days

Citytrip



a travel guide

SUMMARY

01.

INTRO

All you need to know before your trip to Istanbul!

p.3

03.

DAY-TO-DAY

A potential itinerary for a 5-day trip to the Turkish megacity.

p.7



02.

HIGHLIGHTS

My top 10 must-see places in Istanbul, including tips and tricks!

p.4

04.

WHERE TO EAT

The best restaurants and cafes in town that you definitely shouldn't miss.

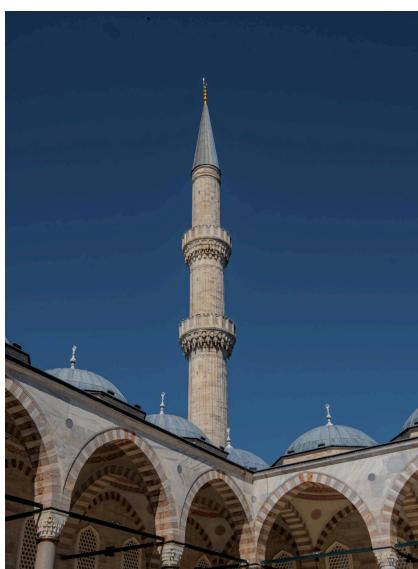
p.8

05.

WHERE TO SLEEP

My recommendation for accommodation to enjoy your city break to the fullest.

p.9





INTRO

Istanbul – Turkey's largest city (but not its capital) – is an ideal destination for a city break.

A long weekend (3–5 days) gives you enough time to experience Istanbul's main highlights and get a good impression of the city.

The Turkish megacity is served by several European airports and the flight time is about 2.5–3 hours. From both airports, you can reach the city center by metro (M11 from IST or M4 from SAW) inexpensively or more comfortably, but correspondingly more expensively, by Uber.

In Istanbul itself, the individual sights are quite far apart, so you have to rely on public transportation or Uber. Good daily planning definitely helps here.

The time difference between Germany and Istanbul is one hour, and the best time to travel is March–May and September–November, when it is warm and dry but not too hot. The currency of Turkey is the Turkish lira. Tourists do not currently need a visa.

Istanbul is characterized by its unique location on two continents (Europe and Asia) and between the Mediterranean and Black Seas. In addition to the classic sights, we were particularly impressed by the cuisine and the hospitality of the people.

Istanbul is considered the gateway to the Middle East, making a visit to the city an ideal opportunity to explore the surrounding countries.

HIGHLIGHTS



01.

Hagia Sophia

Hagia Sophia is undoubtedly the city's most famous landmark and its symbol. The former Byzantine church was built in the middle of the first millennium and is now used as a mosque. The largest dome of its kind, with a span of over 30 meters, is particularly worth seeing. It is definitely worth a visit, even if tickets are not exactly cheap and you have to queue for quite a long time despite having a ticket.

02.

Blue Mosque

The second highlight is another mosque—the Blue Mosque, or Sultan Ahmed Mosque. As its name suggests, it was commissioned by Sultan Ahmed I at the beginning of the 17th century. The mosque is characterized by its many light blue domes and six minarets. Today, you can even visit the mosque free of charge outside of prayer times.

03.

Cisterna Basilika

The third highlight will be known to some from Dan Brown's film Inferno or from James Bond. The Cisterna Basilica, also known as the Sunken Palace, formerly served as a cistern and water reservoir for the Great Palace. The lighting, which bathes the vaulted ceilings and corridors in a mystical light, makes a visit worthwhile. Tickets can also be purchased online [here](#).



04.

Topkapi Palace

Topkapi Palace, formerly the residence and seat of government of the sultans, is also one of the city's highlights. It is located in the immediate proximity of Hagia Sophia, and the magnificent harem of the former sultans is particularly worth seeing here.

05.

Grand Bazaar

The Grand Bazaar is also one of the city's most famous highlights. Covering an area of over 30,000 m², it is home to more than 4,000 shops selling textiles, jewelry, books, and more. If you're looking for something to eat, the Egyptian Bazaar is the place to go.

06.

Galata Bridge

You will definitely cross the Galata Bridge at least once during your trip, as it connects the districts of Eminönü and Karaköy/Galata. Particularly striking are the numerous fishermen who try their luck here in all weathers.

07.

Kadıköy

We particularly liked the Kadıköy district on the Asian side. Everything is more relaxed here than on the European side, and it is full of trendy cafés and restaurants. Moda Pier is also worth a visit.



08.

Balat

Another neighborhood that should definitely be on your list is Balat. The colorful houses around the corner from Usturumca Sk./Kiremit Cd. are particularly photogenic. But the nice cafés and restaurants here and in the neighboring district of Fener also invite you to pause and linger. The atmosphere here is lively but relaxed.



09.

Beyoglu

Beyoglu is also definitely not to be missed. This is where the main shopping street, Istiklal Caddesi, Taksim Square, and the streets of Galata around the Galata Tower are located. The distinctive traditional red tram also runs through the streets here.



10.

More

Istanbul also offers other mosques worth seeing, such as Ortaköy, Süleymaniye, and Camlica Mosque. In addition to those mentioned, other neighborhoods are also worth a visit, such as Besiktas, Nisantasi, Üsküdar, and Arnavutköy. A boat trip on the Bosphorus is also a worthwhile activity.



DAY TO DAY

Day 1 – After arriving, you'll first have a midday snack—for example at *Örnek Börek*. Then you'll take a walk through *Beyoglu*, along *Istiklal Caddesi*, past the *Galata Tower*, and to the *Galata Bridge* at sunset. After dinner at the *Galeyan Restaurant*, you'll enjoy a dessert from *Hafiz Mustafa*.

Day 2 – With a simit from *Cihangir Tarihi*, you set off for *Hagia Sophia* and the *Blue Mosque*. At lunchtime, you head to *Kadıköy* for lunch at *Halil Lahmacun*, and after a stroll through the neighborhood and along the *Moda promenade*, you'll have dinner at *Gözlemeye Manti ve Evi*.

From the *Üsküdar* district, take the *ferry* past *Maiden's Tower* and on to *Ortaköy* to visit the *Ortaköy Mosque*. Here you'll also find a lot of street food around the Mosque.

Day 3 – On the third day, or if it rains, visit the *Cisterna Basilica* after breakfast. At lunchtime, grab an outstanding fish *dürüm* from *Meshur Tarihi Eminönü Balık Ekmek Yılmaz* and then stroll through the *Egyptian* and *Grand Bazaar*. For dinner, head to *Adana Ocakbaşı*.

Day 4 – With breakfast to go from *World Coffee Co.*, you drive to *Balat* the next day. Here you visit *Café Naftalin* for tea and *baklava*. At lunchtime, you head back to the other side—first to *Besiktas* for lunch at *Karadeniz Döner*, then to *Arnavutköy* and *Nisantasi*. Dinner is at *Mahir Lokantasi*.

Day 5 – On the last day, you can enjoy a leisurely breakfast at *Walton Breakfast*, stroll through *Galata*, and then head to the airport.

WHERE TO EAT

Restaurants:

• **Galeyan Restaurant**

Great Kebab & Meze in Eminönü
Alemdar, Ticarethane Sk. No:13/B

• **Nişantaşı Mantıcısı**

Good handmade Mantı in Nisantasi
Poyracık TR, Teşvikiye, Poyracık Sk 61 B

• **Halil Lahmacun**

Delicious Lahmacuns in Kadıköy
Caferağa, Güneşli Bahçe Sok No:26



• **Gözlemeye Mantı ve Gözleme Evi**

Handmade Gözleme & Mantı in Üsküdar
Selimiye, Selimiye İskelen Cd. No:26/2

★ **Mahir Lokantasi**

Pide & Lahmacun, sometimes queues
Cumhuriyet, Tavukçu Feth Sokağı 28/B

• **Adana Ocakbaşı**

Very good kebab skewers & Salads
Ergenekon caddesi, Telefoncular Sokağı
Karşısı, Baysungur Sk No:2



Cafés, To-Go & more:

★ **Meşhur Tarihi Eminönü Balık Ekmek Yılmaz Usta**

Awesome Fish-Dürums
Rüstem Paşa, Ragıp Gümüşpala Cd. No:13

• **Karadeniz Döner Asım Usta**

Best Kebab in Besiktas
Sinanpaşa, Köyiçi Cd No:6



• **Cihangir Tarihi Simit Fırını**

Best Simits (Sesame) we had
Firuzaga, Türkücü Cd. 59/A

• **Cafe Naftalin K**

Nice Café for Tea & Baklava in Balat
Balat, Yıldırım Cd. No:27/A

• **Van Kahvaltı Evi**

Good breakfast spot in Beyoğlu
Kılıçali Paşa, Defterdar Ykş. 52/A

• **Hafız Mustafa**

Great Desserts (Baklava), many locations

WHERE TO SLEEP

There are great hotels and Airbnbs in Istanbul, and we tried both.

First, we stayed one night at the **Wish More Hotel Şişli**. The night was paid for by Turkish Airlines' Stopover Program. The hotel was super comfortable, with a nice room, gym, and spa area (including a hammam).

We spent the rest of our nights in a great Airbnb in a central location right in Beyoglu.

Unfortunately, the Airbnb is no longer available, which is why I can't link to it here.

However, there are several good accommodations in the area.

Thanks for reading! You can find more details on my website or Instagram & TikTok!



jetset_journalist

<https://www.jetset-journals.com/>