

Insider's Guide to Istanbul and Turkey

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I have traveled extensively in Turkey for business and pleasure for more than ten years (at last count I have made nearly 50 trips to Turkey). I began writing this guide several years ago when some friends asked me for a list of recommendations prior to their trip to Turkey. Each time I returned from one of my trips to Turkey I added some new information. Eventually, my brief list turned into this *Insider's Guide*. While this guide focuses on Istanbul, I have included some general background information that will assist you in your travels to other cities and regions of Turkey.

I. Before You Leave

To most Westerners, Turkey is an enigma. Despite some perceptions to the contrary, Turkey is a safe, diverse and interesting country and is an outstanding destination for tourism and business. Turkey is particularly interesting because of its diverse geography and its rich and storied history. Turkey also has an expansive range of excellent cuisine, which varies from region to region. Generally, you will find the Turkish people very friendly and receptive to Americans. You should also find it relatively easy to communicate during your travel within Turkey, especially in the larger cities, where many people speak English.

Your trip to Turkey will be greatly enhanced if you do some homework in advance. In particular, you should purchase a comprehensive guidebook, such as *Lonely Planet's Guide to Turkey* or other books that provide a historical perspective of Turkey. Recommended reading includes *Istanbul: The Imperial City* by John Freely, published by Viking Press. Unlike many history books, *Istanbul: The Imperial City* is very readable and serves as an excellent travel guide to Istanbul and Turkey. Also, I recommend reading the biography of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey, written by Lord Kinross. *Lonely Planet's Guide to Turkey*, www.lonelyplanet.com/dest/mea/tur.htm, in particular, contains a synopsis of Turkey's history as well as excellent maps of Istanbul and virtually every other major and minor city that you will encounter during your visit. For detailed factual and geopolitical information on Turkey, I recommend the *CIA Factbook* at www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/tu.html.

You should also become familiar with the local weather conditions in Turkey. Temperatures in Turkey vary dramatically, depending on city's location. The weather in Istanbul is very similar to Washington, DC, with hot summers and cold, wet winters. The weather in Ankara is more extreme because of its high altitude. Izmir, located on the Aegean Sea is more temperate, as are the cities located on the Mediterranean Sea, such as Antalya and Adana. Weather-wise, the best months to travel to Turkey are April, May, September and October. The current weather conditions in Istanbul can be found on the Web at: www.weatherunderground.com/cgi-bin/findweather/getForecast?query=istanbul. The weather for other cities in Turkey can also be found on that same site.

II. Arrival, Visas, Currency Conversions

Your first destination in Turkey is likely to be Istanbul's Atatürk International Airport. Fortunately, a new international terminal opened in early 2000, which has greatly enhanced the arrival and departure experience (for further information and maps of the airport see www.ataturkairport.com).

Americans do not need to obtain advance visas to visit Turkey. A single entry visa for U.S. passport holders can be obtained upon your arrival at the Istanbul airport for US \$20 (the price was decreased from \$100 in April 2004). After you deplane, the visa office is located just before passport control. *Before* getting in the passport control line, head to the window with the sign that says "Visa or Vize." The person at the visa counter will gladly sell you a visa (which is a sticker that you place in your passport) in exchange for US \$20 in cash. For more information on Turkey's visa requirements for U.S. citizens see the Turkish Embassy's Web site at www.turkey.org/consularservices/index.htm.

After receiving your visa, get in one of the passport control lines to have your passport stamped. Once that is done, you will proceed directly into the baggage claim area. Luggage carts are available in the baggage claim area for US \$1.00.

A. Changing Money

There is no need to exchange your U.S. dollars into Yeni (new) Turkish Lira (YTL) before you leave for Turkey since money changers and ATMs are plentiful throughout Turkey (in any event, it is difficult to find a U.S. bank or *bureau de change* that sells YTL).

Because you will need TL for a taxi ride to the center of Istanbul (taxi drivers and other businesses in Turkey will not usually accept U.D. Dollars or Euros) you should obtain TL upon your arrival at Atatürk International. After you retrieve your baggage head to the exit, located past the Turkish Customs counters. There are a number of banks where you can buy TL located to the right as you exit the baggage hall. While these banks offer the prevailing exchange rates, they all charge a 3% commission. If you want to avoid the commission, go to the PTT (post, telephone and telegraph) office that is located past the banks. At the PTT window you can exchange your U.S. dollars or other currency into TL at very good exchange rates and with no commission.

Until recently, visitors to Turkey were overwhelmed by large numbers since the 1 U.S. Dollar equaled 1,500,000 Turkish Lira (TL). Fortunately, Turkey's long history of high inflation has recently slowed to single digit levels. The country is following an economic program backed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to rein in historically high inflation and the results have been impressive. In 2004, the year-on-year wholesale price index was approximately 9%, a 28-year low, and Turkey expects to bring consumer price inflation down to single digit levels umbers by 2005. As a result, the Turkish Government eliminated six zeros from the Turkish Lira in January 2005 and renamed the currency the New Turkish Lira (*or Yeni Turkish Lira* (YTL) in

Turkish). One YTL equals 100 Kurus. The current exchange rate (as of September 1, 2005) is 1 US\$ equals 1.33 YTL.

Currently, there are YTL banknotes in the following denominations: 1, 5, 10, 20, 50 and 100 YTL and coins in the amount of 1, 5, 10, 25, 50 Kurus and 1 New Turkish Lira. Note that throughout 2005, Turkish Lira (the old currency) and New Turkish Lira (the new currency) banknotes and coins will concurrently be in circulation.

The Central Bank of Turkey has an interesting Web site that provides a history of bank notes in Turkey and a "banknote museum" that shows a color picture of the notes formerly and currently in circulation: www.tcmb.gov.tr/yeni/eng/index.html – and then click on "banknotes").

As mentioned above, while most shops have calculators to let you figure out the dollar value of the YTL price, I recommend carrying a small calculator or a "cheat sheet" (a very good one can be found at www.oanda.com/convert/cheatsheet) that lets you know the rates for basic conversions (be sure to click on "Turkish New Lira"). Also, I suggest carrying only the new "big head" US \$100 notes, as many banks and money changers will not accept the old ones (this is true throughout the world).

Note:

Another convenient way to obtain TL is to use an ATM. ATMs are plentiful in Istanbul and other cities and have instructions in English. Turkish ATMs accept your normal ATM card or a credit card (be sure to take your credit card's PIN) and you will receive very good interbank exchange rates (but you may be charged a US \$2.00 ATM fee by your bank). I have had the best experience with Yapi Kredi Bank (look for the blue and orange signs), Akbank (red and white signs) and Garanti Bank (green and white signs with a four leaf clover).

B. Transferring to the Domestic Terminal

Unless you have to, I do not recommend transferring to a domestic flight immediately after arriving in Istanbul for two reasons. First, staying in Istanbul for two or three days at the beginning of your trip will help you get your bearings and adjust to the Turkish language, culture and food and will give you a good historical perspective for the rest of your trip. Second, transferring from the International Terminal (Dis Hatlar) to the Domestic Terminal (Iç Hatlar) is not as simple as in many airports. Fortunately, the new International terminal at the Istanbul airport has made this process easier since it is located relatively close to the domestic terminal and there is a covered walkway that connects the two buildings.

C. Getting From the Airport to the Center of Istanbul/Taxis

Depending on traffic and how fast your taxi drives, the center of Istanbul is about a 30 minute drive from the airport. The easiest way to get from the airport to the city centre is by taxi. The fare will be approximately US \$15. (Note that from 12 midnight to 6 a.m. there is a higher night rate (*gece* on the meter; the day rate is indicated as *gunduz*) in effect and as discussed below, taxi drivers do not expect tips). Taxis (all of which are painted yellow and have a sign on top of the cart that reads

Taksi, the Turkish word for Taxi) are available as you leave the arrivals hall. At peak times, the area outside the baggage claim area is a bit congested and you should proceed directly to the taxis located outside the building.

Taxis are cheap and reliable in Turkey. Taxis all have meters and while the drivers generally don't speak English, they are usually fairly friendly (except to other drivers). Make sure that you ask the driver to take the road by the sea, and not the motorway, to the city (you should say *Deniz Caddesi*, pronounced De-neeZ Jah-de-see, in Turkish) The motorway is a longer distance and is not as scenic.

Turkish taxi drivers do not expect tips and should not be tipped. Note that taxi drivers never have change and you should always carry plenty of small notes. Note: While most taxi drivers in Istanbul are very honest, be careful of the taxi drivers that hang out near the tourist areas, such as the Grand Bazaar and Aya Sophia. These drivers will often request a very expensive flat fare for short trips, which often is double or triple the meter fare. Also, even if the taxi driver uses the meter, they may take tourists on a circuitous route.

III. Safety/Dos and Don'ts

Contrary to the perception of many, Turkey is an extremely safe and tourist-friendly country, especially in the places most often visited by tourists. I frequently walk around Istanbul at night and feel safer doing so than I do in Washington, DC or New York City. As in traveling to any big city, however, I suggest that you constantly be aware of your surroundings, avoid wearing expensive or flashy jewelry and avoid carrying large amounts of cash.

The most hazardous part of your trip to Turkey will be your encounters with Turkish drivers. Driving in a car or taxi, or simply crossing the street in Turkey can be hazardous to your health since the drivers do not always obey traffic rules and often travel at a high rate of speed (if you want your taxi driver to slow down, just say *Yavaş* (pronounced Yavash in English), which means slow). Consequently, Turkey has one of the highest rates of accident fatalities and injuries to pedestrians in the world. The U.S. Embassy in Ankara has a Turkey-specific driver safety briefing on the Consular Information Sheet on Turkey at: travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1046.html. This travel warning states: "Drivers should drive defensively at all times and take every precaution while driving in Turkey. Drivers routinely ignore traffic regulations including driving through red lights and stop signs and turning left from the far right hand lane. These driving practices cause frequent traffic accidents." I think you get the idea. However, this should not deter you from renting a car in areas outside Istanbul, such as in Cappadocia or along the Aegean coast. Anyway, as a general rule you are better off minimizing the amount of driving in Turkey that you do yourself.

As for do's and don'ts from a cultural perspective, unless you know the person you are speaking to very well, it is not a good idea ridicule or insult Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic and Turkey's first President (you will see photos and other pictures of the very dapper Atatürk everywhere. For more information on Mustafa Kemal Atatürk see: www.Atatürk.com/index2.html). Second, it's also not a good idea to ridicule or insult the Turkish army, the Moslem religion or the Turkish flag.

When visiting a mosque you must remove your shoes and show the kind of respect that you would in any other house of worship. Women should not wear short skirts to mosques and it is a good idea to bring along a scarf just in case it is required (the rules vary from mosque to mosque). Men wearing shorts should not have any problems in the well-visited mosques, such as the Blue Mosque in Istanbul (*Sultanahmet Camii* in Turkish).

If you like to smoke, you will be in heaven in Turkey. A large percentage of the population smokes cigarettes and you can light up virtually everywhere, including restaurants. Although some of the major restaurants in Istanbul have so-called "non-smoking sections," it doesn't do much good when virtually everyone in the place is smoking. For a true Turkish experience, you should try smoking *Nargile* with some of the old-timers in a *Nargile* café. *Nargile* is a sweet-flavored tobacco smoked out of a large water pipe. There has been a recent new found in interest in *Nargile* and *Nargile* cafés have popped up everywhere. A classic spot to try *Nargile* is in the *Nargile* café located in the Sultanahmet (the old city) of Istanbul, halfway between the Blue Mosque and the Grand Bazaar. It is on your right (east side of the street) as you head to the Grand Bazaar. If you don't want to smoke, the *Nargile* cafés are an interesting place to people watch and to drink Turkish coffee or tea.

IV. Hours and Electrical Adaptors

Shops and offices in Turkey open from around 8:30- 9 a.m. until approximately 5 or 6 p.m. Although Turkey is a Moslem country, it observes a Monday through Friday work week. Note that many shops are closed on Sunday. When planning your itinerary be sure to remember that the Grand Bazaar and Egyptian Spice Market are closed on Sunday, although many other places in the tourist area in the Sultanahmet area are open on Sunday.

Turkey is 7 hours ahead of Eastern Standard/Daylight Time. Turkey observes daylight savings time in the summer and it runs almost concurrently (within a week) with daylight savings time in the U.S.

With respect to dining out, in Istanbul, people tend to eat dinner later than they do in the rest of Turkey and many restaurants are not crowded with people until 8:30 or 9 p.m.

Also, if you plan to use an electrical appliance, such as a notebook computer, in Turkey, be sure to bring an adapter with you since they are difficult to find in Turkey. Turkey uses the same two round prong plugs that are used on the rest of the European continent.

V. Language

English is widely spoken in Turkey's major cities, especially in the areas that tourists frequent. However, a great way to endear yourself to Turks is to say a few words in Turkish. Turkish is the national language of Turkey, and is also spoken by minority groups in Cyprus, Greece, Bulgaria and other countries. There are about 50 million speakers of Turkish. Turkish was originally written in the Arabic script. In 1928

Turkey's President, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, decreed the introduction of a slightly modified version of the Roman alphabet, consisting of 21 consonants and 8 vowels.

It is easy to learn a few basic phrases in Turkish once you learn a few simple rules. First, there are several letters in Turkish which are not found in English. For example the letter "ç" is pronounced like ch and the letter "c" is pronounced like a "j". An "ş" sounds like "sh." A "ğ" is silent. An "İ" (with a dot on top) is pronounced like a long e (ee) and an "I" with no dot on top is pronounced "uh". Thus, *RAKI*, the strong Turkish liquor (similar to Ouzo) is pronounced Rakuh, not Rakee. Second, there is no gender in Turkish, which makes things a bit easier than other languages.

The following basic numbers, words and phrases should make things a bit easier for you in your travels. For more complete information *Lonely Planet* has a good section on basic words and phrases at the end of their Turkey guide and they publish a Turkish phrase book.

Numbers:

English	Turkish	Pronunciation
0	Sıfır	SUH-fuhr
1	Bir	BEER
2	İki	ee-KEE
3	üç	EWCH
4	Dört	DURRT
5	Beş	BEHSH
6	Altı	Ahl-TUH
7	Yedi	yeh-DEE
8	Sekiz	seh-KEEZ
9	dokuz	doh-KOOZ
10	On	Own
11	On bir	own BEER
12	On iki	own ee-KEE
13	On üç	own EWCH
20	Yirmi	yeer-MEE
30	Otuz	Oh-TOOZ
40	Kirk	KUHRK
50	Elli	ehl-LEE
60	Altmış	ahlT-MUSH
70	Yetmiş	yeht-MEESH
80	Seksen	sehk-SEHN
90	Doksan	dohk-SAHN
100	Yüz	YEWZ
200	İki yüz	ee-KEE yewz
1000	Bin	BEEN
2000	İki bin	ee-KEE been
10,000	On bin	OWN been
1,000,000	Milyon	meel-YOHN

Useful Phrases:

English	Turkish	Pronunciation
Hello	Merhaba	mer-ha-ba
Welcome	Hoş geldiniz	hōsh gel-dee-neeZ
Thank you	Teşekkür ederim (formal) or Teşekkürler or sağol (informal)	te-she-koor e-de-rim or te-she-koor-ler or saa-ōl
You are welcome	Bir şey değil	beer shay deel
How are you?	Nasılsınız?	na-sill-si-niz?
I am fine.	İyiyim.	ee-yee-yeem
OK	Tamam (this is very commonly used)	Ta-mam
Good Bye (said by the person seeing the other one off)	Güle Güle	Gu-le gu-le
Good Bye (said by the person leaving)	Allaha İsmarladık	Alas-mah-duke
What is your name?	İsminiz ne?	eez-mee-neeZ ne?
My name is ...	Benim adım ...	be-neem a-dim .
Yes	Evet	e-vet
No	Hayır	ha-year
Please	Lütfen	Loot-fen
Good morning	Günaydın	goo-nay-dun
Good evening	İyi akşamlar	Eeyuh-ak-sham-lar
What time is it?	Saat kaç?	sa-at kach?
Do you speak English?	İngilizce biliyor musunuz?	een-gee-leeZ-je bee-lee-yōr-moo-soo-nooz?
How much is it?	Ne kadar?	Nay-ka-dar?
I don't understand	Anlamadım	An-la-dum
I understand	Anladım	An-la-dum
Do you understand?	Anladın mı	An-la-din muh
I don't speak Turkish	Türkçe bilmiyorum	tur-che bil-mi-yo-rum
Where is ...?	... nerede?	... ne-re-de?
... the restaurant?	Restoran nerede?	res-tō-ran ...
... the hotel?	Otel nerede?	ō-tel ...
... the restroom?	Tuvalet nerede?	too-va-let ...
... the bank?	Banka nerede?	ban-ka ...
Post office	Postane	pos-tah-neh
Bus Station	Otogar	oto-gar

English	Turkish	Pronunciation
Mosque	Camii	ja-mi
Airport	Havaalanı or Havalimanı	Hava-alaneh or Havalumanah
Hospital	Hastahane	Has-tan-ay
I would like...	... istiyorum.	... ee-stee-yör-room
... a beer.	Bira istiyorum.	bee-ra ...
... water.	Su istiyorum.	soo ...
... tea.	Çay istiyorum.	chai ...
...coffee.	Kahve (or Nescafe) istiyorum.	kah-ve ...
...Turkish Coffee	Türk Kahvesi istiyorum	Turk-kah-ve-see
... milk.	Süt istiyorum.	soot ...
... ice.	Buz istiyorum.	booz ...
... bread.	Ekmek istiyorum.	ek-mek ...
... sugar.	Şeker istiyorum.	she-ker ...
... white wine.	Beyaz şarap istiyorum.	be-yaz sha-rap ...
... red wine.	Kırmızı şarap istiyorum.	kur-mu-zu sha-rap ...
... salt.	Tuz istiyorum.	tooz ...
... pepper.	Biber istiyorum.	bee-ber ...
Carpet	Halı	halluh
Breakfast	Kahvaltı	kah-val-tu
Lunch	Öğle yemeği	ör-le ye-me-ee
Dinner	Akşam yemeği	ak-sham ye-me-ee
Bill/Check	Hesap	heh-sop
Bon appetit (used before and after a meal)	Afiyet olsun	a-fee-yet öl-soon

VI. VAT and Tipping

The Turkish Government imposes an 18% value-added-tax (KDV in Turkish) on virtually all goods and services. The KDV should already be included in the price of most items, including food. You will often see the term "KDV dahil" to denote that KDV is included. KDV is usually included in the price of restaurant food as well and should not be added to the price in that case.

It is customary to leave approximately 10% of the bill as a tip for meals ordered in restaurants. If you pay for the meal with a credit card you should leave the tip in cash. In fact, you will find that there is not even a place on the credit card slip to add a tip.

Note that in some restaurants frequented by tourists you may find that a 10% service charge is already in the total (it usually will say "Servis"). If you are in doubt as to what the additional charges are don't hesitate to ask.

As noted above, taxi drivers do not expect tips and should not be tipped. The fare should be rounded up or down as necessary.

VII. Suggested Itineraries

The must-see regions to visit in Turkey include Istanbul, Izmir (near Ephesus), the Cappadocia region (near Kayseri), the Aegean resort cities of Bodrum and Fethiye and the Mediterranean resort city of Antalya. If you have plenty of time, you may want to visit Turkey's capital city of Ankara, but you won't need to spend more than a day or two there. Turkey is a large country and inter-city distances are longer than you might think. Thus, you will need at least ten days to two weeks to see all the places mentioned above.

I recommend flying into Istanbul and spending 2 -4 days in Istanbul to recuperate from your flight and get adjusted to Turkish life and culture. Istanbul serves as the primary domestic hub of Turkish Airlines and you can connect to any city easily from Istanbul. From Istanbul you can choose the clockwise or counterclockwise tour of Turkey. The clockwise tour begins in Istanbul and includes Cappadocia (Kayseri), Antalya, Bodrum/Fethiye, Izmir and then back to Istanbul. The counterclockwise tour starts in Istanbul, but then continues on to Izmir, Bodrum/Fethiye, Antalya, Cappadocia (Kayseri) and then back to Istanbul. In terms of flight arrangements and logistics, it seems that the clockwise tour works better but others prefer the counterclockwise tour since travelers can purchase their carpets and pottery in Cappadocia since prices are much lower than in Istanbul.

You will need at least 2-4 days in Istanbul, 2-3 days in Cappadocia, 2-3 days in the Izmir/Ephesus region and several days along the Aegean Coast in the Bodrum/Fethiye area and several days along the Mediterranean coast. As noted above, driving in Turkey is precarious and it is best to minimize the amount of driving during your trip. However, when planning your trip you will find that you just can't escape a certain amount of driving. While inter-city plane travel on Turkish Airlines (known as THY) is inexpensive and safe, Turkish Airlines domestic flights are set up on a hub and spoke system with Istanbul and Ankara as the hubs. Thus, it is not always easy to make inter-city connections, such as between Antalya and Dalaman (the airport closest to Bodrum/Fethiye) without having to travel back to Istanbul). As noted below, however, Turkey has a very well developed inter-city bus system and if you do not have a car or driver than you should not think twice about this option.

Other places of note to visit in Turkey include: Gallipoli (located on the northern side of the Dardanelle Strait, this is the sight of one of World War I's most infamous battles); Pamukkale (a unique geological formation) and the ancient city of Pergamon.

VIII. Getting Around

Other than by foot, taxis are a cheap and easy way to get around Istanbul or any other city in Turkey. The base rate is the equivalent of approximately US \$0.65 and you can get from the old city to the new city (e.g., Taksim) for about US \$2 - 3 . (Note

because of the change from TL to YTL most reputable guidebooks will quote their prices in U.S. dollars).

In the Sultanahmet area there is an above-ground tram that is cheap and easy to use. Not only is it cheaper than a taxi (around 50 cents per ticket), it goes through some major streets that are off limits to taxis. It runs from the Eminonu pier (across from the Spice Market) all the way past the Grand Bazaar. It is a good way to get around when you get tired of walking.

Istanbul's subway system, known as the Metro, has recently opened. While there is a stop in Taksim, none of the stops are located near any of the sights frequented by tourists and it is highly unlikely that you will want or need to travel on Istanbul's Metro.

Be sure to take a ride on Istanbul's Tünel, one of the world's oldest subway systems. Istanbul's Tünel consists of only two stops. One is located at the end of Istiklal Caddesi in Beyoğlu (not far from the Pera Palas hotel) and the other is located near the Galata Bridge in Karaköy. Tünel was built by French engineers in the late 1800s and allowed European diplomats and businessmen to ride between their waterside offices in Karaköy and their hilltop residences in Beyoğlu. The stations are beautifully decorated. The one-way fare is approximately US \$0.65.

Traveling between large cities on Turkish Airlines (often abbreviated in Turkish as THY) is relatively inexpensive. Fares between Istanbul and Ankara or Kayseri (the closest city to the Cappadocia region), for example, run about US \$170 round-trip. THY is a safe airline and their flights generally run on-time (however, boarding and deplaning are usually like an Istanbul traffic jam). THY has a large ticket office in Taksim and they accept major credit cards. If you are staying at a hotel with a concierge, the concierge can make reservations for you. Otherwise, there are numerous travel agencies around Istanbul that can assist you. One other important piece of information about flying domestically in Turkey is that before you board the plane you may be asked to identify your luggage. This is done for security reasons. Once you get off of the shuttle bus that takes you from the terminal to the plane, go to the luggage that is sitting on the tarmac. Find your bags and tell the baggage handler which one is yours. They will place your bags on the luggage cart and then you can board the plane.

While I have never had such an experience, the following warning was told to me by the head of National Geographic Expeditions who received my Turkish guide from a friend: Seat assignments on domestic flights are usually ignored by Turks who simply get on and sit in any seat they want. If you insist on your assigned seat and ask them to move you may be in for a good Turkish tongue lashing!

Turkey has a poor inter-city train system with limited destinations. However, Turkey has a very well-developed inter-city bus system. In fact, the bus terminal in Ankara is larger than many U.S. airports. Most of the inter-city buses are modern, Mercedes-Benz buses, with televisions and attendants that serve coffee and other drinks. The ticket prices are very cheap as well. You should make sure to find out how

the long the trip is before you choose to take a bus. Because of the terrain and traffic, a 1 hour flight between Istanbul and Izmir may take as long as 10 hours on a bus.

IX. Istanbul Hotels

Before deciding on a hotel, you must first decide where in Istanbul you want to stay. You have two options: you can stay in the old area of the city where the major tourist sights are located, known as Sultanahmet, or in the newer part of Istanbul located on the other side of the Golden Horn, such as in Taksim. Some people prefer the convenience of staying in Sultanahmet. If you are going to Istanbul as a tourist, I would recommend staying in the Sultanahmet area since you can walk or take a tram to most of the major sights. Istanbul was planned long before cars were invented and traffic is a major problem. If you are interested in avoiding tourists and getting a feel for today's Turkey you should stay in the Taksim area and travel to the old city during the day to see the sights. You can enjoy the nightlife of Taksim (as noted below, the main street is Istiklal Caddesi. This street is closed to traffic and is the heart of modern Istanbul).

Taksim Area

I have stayed at many different hotels during my frequent trips to Istanbul. In the general area of Taksim I have often stayed at the **Swissotel**, located above the Dolmabaçe palace in the Beşiktaş area. The Swissotel is a good business hotel, but is very isolated and is not conducive to walking to restaurants or other sights. I have also stayed many times at the **Hyatt Regency Istanbul**, which is extremely nice and only a short walk to Taksim. The Hyatt has a beautiful bar called the Polo Lounge and an excellent Italian restaurant called Spasso. I prefer the Hyatt over any of the other hotels in the Taksim areas. The **Istanbul Hilton**, built in the 1950s, was the first upscale hotel in Turkey. While the Hilton's lobby and rooms were recently renovated, I do not recommend the Hilton as it is a bit out of the way and the walls are paper thin. I have also stayed at the **Marmara Hotel**, located on Taksim square. The Marmara is host to numerous tourist groups and the lobby is usually crowded. The best part about the Marmara is the coffee and pastry shop on the first level which is a nice place to escape the hustle and bustle of central Istanbul and is open late. I have also been told that the **Richmond Hotel**, located on Istiklal Caddesi in the Beyoğlu area of Taksim, is a good lower priced alternative. It is said to be quiet and very Turkish and the only hotel on the pedestrian-only street. It is only a 10-15 minute walk to the old city.

Another interesting and unique place to stay is the **Pera Palas Hotel**, which is a beautiful old hotel where guests traveling to Istanbul on the Orient Express stayed (the Orient Express traveled from Paris to Istanbul). The Pera Palas hotel, located near Istiklal Caddesi, was frequented by many famous people, including Agatha Christie and Atatürk. I recommend visiting the Pera Palas in the evening and having a drink in the Orient Bar, rather than staying there, as the rooms are old and the hotel has become overpriced. Make sure to check out the hotel's unique elevator. The restaurant, while located in a beautiful room, has mediocre food. However, the highlight of the Pera Palas is Atatürk's room (room No. 101) (Atatürkün odası), which has been converted into a museum.. There is very nice gentlemen that is the caretaker for Atatürk's room. If you can find him, he will show you Atatürk's room. He may be able to show you other

rooms, such as the room where famous celebrities, such as Greta Garbo, once stayed. Don't forget to tip the person that shows you the room.

If you are traveling on business and want to avoid the large hotels, I recommend the **Mega Residence** (tel. 212-231-3161 or fax 212-231-4461). Despite its unusual name, the Mega Residence is a new, small (30 rooms), reasonably priced that is very well situated in the upscale Nisantaşı area (it is next door to the Maçka Hotel -- pronounced Machka Oteli). For a list of other Istanbul hotels, check out the following Web site: www.istanbulhotels.com.

While the well-known and highly rated **Kempinski Çırağan Palace Hotel** (pronounced Cheeron) is excellent and has great views of the Bosphorus, getting to and from the hotel can be a nightmare since the narrow road in front of the hotel is a main thoroughfare (the traffic is particularly bad during rush hour and on Friday night).

The **Ritz Carlton-Istanbul** opened in October 2001. It is located just below the Hyatt and has fantastic views of the Bosphorus (and one of Istanbul' main soccer stadiums).

Sultanahmet Area

If you want to stay in Sulthanahmet and money is no object then you must stay at the **Istanbul Four Seasons Hotel**, which is one of the world's finest boutique hotels. The Four Seasons is located a short walk from the Aya Sophia and Topkapi Palace. The Four Seasons is very unique in that it was formerly a prison. The rooms are spectacular and so is the service. The hotel has an excellent, albeit expensive, restaurant. If you can't afford to stay at the Four Seasons be sure to stop by for a drink or coffee in their beautiful bar located immediately on your right upon entering the hotel.

If you can't stay at the Four Seasons then I recommend the **Seven Hills Hotel (Yeditepe Oteli** in Turkish), which is located right across the street from the Four Seasons. The Seven Hills Hotel is a small hotel, with only 14 rooms and reasonable rates. The rooms are very nicely appointed and have a European look and feel. Not only does the Seven Hills Hotel have a great location, but the hotel has a spectacular roof top bar/terrace with the finest view in all of Sultanahmet. From the terrace you will have stunning views of the Aya Sophia, the Blue Mosque and the Marmara Sea. I assure you that you won't be disappointed with the view. For more information on the hotel see their Web site at www.hotelsevenhills.com. You can reach them by e-mail at info@sevenhillhotel.com. Mr. Bulent Sayan, the hotel's general manager will take good care of you during your stay.

If you are on a budget and want to stay in a decent, but not very pricey, hotel I recommend the **Sude Konak Hotel** in Sultanahmet. The Sude Konak hotel is located a short walk down the hill from the Aya Sophia and the rest of the sights in Sultanahmet. The rooms, while small, are new and clean. The room rate is approximately US \$50 to US \$60 per night, depending on the season. The room rates include a buffet-style Turkish breakfast. For more information about this nice hotel see their Web site at www.sudekonak.com. To inquire about room rates send an e-mail to info@sudekonak.com.

There are many other pensions and small hotels in the Sultanahmet area, such as the Yeşil Ev (Green House) hotel. If you are traveling to Istanbul during the summer, make sure your hotel has a good air conditioning system.

X. Newspapers/CNN

Foreign newspapers and magazines are widely available in Istanbul and other cities frequented by tourists. There is one English daily newspaper, *The Turkish Daily News*, which publishes local news and information as well as international stories culled from wire services.

CNN International is available in virtually every hotel you will visit (there is Turkish version of CNN, known as CNN Türk, which is in Turkish).

XI. Istanbul Sights

Istanbul has been an unrivaled locus of cultural activity since its beginnings more than 26 centuries ago. As you may know, the city now known as Istanbul has had three different names: first, it was known as the Greek colony Byzantium, followed by Constantinople (after A.D. 330) and Istanbul (after 1453). A basic understanding of Turkey and Istanbul's long and storied history, including its role as the capitol of the Roman and Ottoman empires, as well as Atatürk's role in the creation of modern (post-1923) Turkey will greatly enhance your trip.

You can easily spend 3 or 4 days exploring the sights of Istanbul alone. The city is very easy to negotiate and you can walk to most of the major sights. A map is a must and the ones in *Lonely Planet* are excellent.

Most of the museums in Istanbul charge an admission fee. The following is my recommended list of must-see sights:

Topkapi Palace (pronounced Tope-cop-uh, not Topekap-ee) – For nearly 400 years the Topkapi Palace was the principle home of the Ottoman Sultans that ruled the Ottoman Empire. Today, the palace is a vast museum complex. Be sure to obtain the separate ticket to see the Harem first thing in the morning before the crowds arrive. Don't miss seeing the Prophet Mohammed's tooth and a hair from his beard.

Aya Sofia (aka Hagia Sophia or St. Sophia) – This building is one of the greatest architectural creations in history. Built as a church by Byzantine emperor Justinian in 535 it became a mosque during the Ottoman conquest in 1453. To avoid controversy, Atatürk designated the Aya Sofia as a museum. The entrance fee to the Aya Sofia was recently increased to about US \$15.00.

Sinan's Hamam – After visiting the Aya Sophia be sure to visit the Hamam (Turkish bath) built by the famous architect Sinan for Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent's wife. The building is located about 100 yards southwest of the Aya Sophia (on the edge of Sultanahmet Park). Although it is no longer used as a Turkish bath the building is absolutely stunning. The building is now used by the Turkish Ministry of Culture as a carpet bazaar and gives you the chance of simultaneously exploring an interesting building and looking at carpets. While you probably don't want to buy a carpet in this place (see the discussion of carpet buying below), unlike most carpet stores the prices of the carpets are indicated in YTL and you can get an idea of the price ranges of carpets that you may want to purchase elsewhere.

Blue Mosque – Also known as the Sultan Ahmet Camii (Camii, pronounced ja-MEE, means mosque in Turkish). This mosque with six minarets, was built in the 17th century receives its name from the magnificent blue and white Iznik tiles located inside. You cannot enter the mosque during prayer time, which occurs five times a day. When entering, you must leave your shoes outside and wear conservative attire. Entrance is free, but donations are accepted.

Mosaic Museum – If want to see some beautiful Byzantine mosaics, there is a small mosaic museum located just to the west of the shopping area known as the Arasta Bazaar located below the Blue Mosque.

Archeological Museum – This museum, located across from the Topkapı Palace contains spectacular examples from all eras of Turkish civilization. Don't miss the large chain that was used to keep out boats from the entrance to the Golden Horn.

Hippodrome – The grassy area located across from the Blue Mosque is the location of the ancient Hippodrome, where chariot races took place. It is now a park, with a remarkably well-preserved Egyptian obelisk.

Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art – Located across the Hippodrome from the Blue Mosque, this

wonderful museum contains a vast display of Islamic art and an incredible collection of antique carpets.

Basilica Cistern (Yerebatan Saray) – This is a must see. This Byzantine cistern was one of the highlights of Istanbul and is one of the most spectacular places I have seen in the world. This underground columned area was the water source for Istanbul in ancient times. It is located across from the Hippodrome near the Aya Sophia and is a pleasant escape from Istanbul's summer heat.

Grand Bazaar (also known as the Covered Bazaar)–(*Kapalı Çarşı*, pronounced kapallah charshe, in Turkish.). The Grand Bazaar is purportedly the largest market in the world (supposedly there are more than 4,000 shops. How this number was determined is anyone's guess). Your best bet here is to buy Turkish ceramics. The book bazaar, located outside the West side of the Grand Bazaar, is also worth a visit. On your right on the way from the Blue Mosque to the grand bazaar (at the corner of Divan Yolu) is a unique cemetery with a building containing the tombs of several sultans. This is very interesting and worth a visit. Don't forget that the grand bazaar is closed on Sundays, so plan your shopping accordingly. In the past, there were only a few places to eat or drink. However, recently a number of small cafes have opened that serve as a nice refuge from the hustle and bustle of the Grand Bazaar. Most of the cafes, such as **Cafelst** and **Fez Café** are located on Takkeciler Sokak, in the center of the bazaar, between the fountains just outside the Old Bazaar. Important note: The Grand Bazaar is only open Monday through Saturday and closes at approximately 6 p.m.

Suleymaniye Camii – Mosque of Suleyman the Magnificent. This spectacular building was built by Sinan, the famous Turkish architect. Be sure to see Suleyman's tomb located in the building next to the mosque.

Egyptian (Spice) Market – Located across from the Eminonu docks near the New Mosque (or Yeni Camii). You will drive by this place countless times during your visit. This is the place to buy the famous Turkish sweet known as Turkish delight (*lokum*, in

Turkish). Outside the back entrance are several streets with more shops, including a shop that sells Turkish coffee beans, called Mehmet Efendi. Look for the line of people and the speedy guy who takes the money. This is worth a look and is the place to buy Turkish coffee to take home. There is also a well-known restaurant called **Pandeli** above the main entrance of the Egyptian Market. Frankly, I think the restaurant is past its prime and is overrated.

Kariye Muzesi (also known as the Kariye Camii or Church of St. Saviour in Chora) –This is another must see place located off the beaten track in the western part of the old city near the city walls. You will need to take a taxi to visit the Kariye Muzesi, which is an 11th century Byzantine church, later turned into a mosque and subsequently into a museum. The Kariye Museum has some of the most wonderfully restored frescos and mosaics anywhere. While you are in the neighborhood, it is worth seeing Constantine's palace, a shell of a Byzantine palace that looks like a ruin is supposed to look. There is a neighborhood lady who takes care of the infrequent tourist and, of course, is happy to charge you to enter a place that has no admission fee.

Dolmabaçe Palace – This remarkable European-style palace was home to the Turkish Sultans after Topkapı. Dolmabaçe (pronounced Dolma-ba-chay) is located on the Bosphorus in the Beşiktaş area below the Swissotel. The Beylerbeyi Palace, which was the Sultan's summer home, is also worth a visit. However, the Beylerbeyi Palace is located below the first bridge on the Asian side of Istanbul and is a bit difficult to get to.

Bosphorus boat trip to Anadolu Kavağı – The small town of Anadolu Kavağı (pronounced Ka-VAK) is located north of Istanbul on the Asian side of the Bosphorus, near the entrance to the Black Sea. Anadolu Kavağı is well known for its fish restaurants. This town is the northern terminus of the Bosphorus ferry boat that leaves the Eminonu pier (across from the Egyptian spice market -- look for the sign *Bogaz Hattı*) around 9:30 a.m. and takes about 1 hour each way (The round trip fare is about \$1) The ferry returns to Istanbul at around 3 p.m. There is a medieval castle above the town that offers

spectacular views of the Black Sea. This trip takes most of the day and your enjoyment will be dependent on the weather. This trip should be avoided on cold or rainy days.

Military Museum (Askeri Muze) – If you have some extra time, this overwhelmingly large museum is definitely worth a trip. It is located in Harbiye, just down the road from the Hilton Hotel. Don't miss the Ottoman Empire tent exhibit and the Atatürk collection. A band that plays Ottoman-Empire era military marching music, known as Mehtar, plays on a daily basis.

Naval Museum (Deniz Muze) – This museum, located in Beşiktaş, just down the road from the Çırağan Palace Hotel is also worth a trip for history buffs. This museum has very interesting displays on the history of the Ottoman Empire's navy. In the main building are numerous items from Atatürk's yacht, naval uniforms from various eras, and beautifully constructed models of Turkish naval vessels. The most impressive part of this museum, however, is located in the annex building through the courtyard. In this building are several Caiques, long-wooden rowboats that were used to carry the Sultans during ceremonies. These Caiques are elaborately decorated and are an impressive sight. Located halfway between the main building and the annex is a newly constructed display recounting the voyage of a Turkish couple around the world in their 8.5 meter sailboat. The boat, and photos from their voyage, is on display.

Rahmi M. Koç Museum (pronounced Coach Museum) - Another worthwhile trip is to the Rahmi M. Koç Museum, the first major museum in Turkey dedicated to the history of Transport, Industry and Communications. Founded by Rahmi Koç, the former CEO of the Koç Group, one of Turkey's leading industrial groups, this new museum is located in magnificent industrial buildings on the Eastern shore of the Golden Horn. The museum's collection contains thousands of items from gramophone needles to full size ships and aircraft. The museum has a great collection of historic automobiles. Don't miss the restored railroad car that was used by Sultan Abul Aziz during his tour of Europe in 1867. Also,

there is a nice French bistro with outside seating called Café du Levant. The Koç museum is located in Haskoy, about a 15 minutes taxi ride from Taksim. For directions and more information see the museum's Web site at www.rmk-museum.org.tr/english/visiting/index.html.

XII. Food/Drink and Restaurants

A. Drinks

Water and Soft Drinks – Because Turkey has an abundant supply of fresh water, the tap water in Turkey is safe to drink. However, virtually everyone, including locals, drinks bottled water (*su* in Turkish), either with or without gas (mineral water in Turkish is *soda* or *maden suyu*). Coca Cola, Diet Coke and other bottled and canned beverages are also plentiful. My favorite drink in Turkey is called Cappy Vişne Suyu (pronounced Kappee Vishnay), a sour cherry juice.

Ayran – Ayran is a drink that is commonly served with kebab. It consists of yogurt mixed with spring water. It is an acquired taste.

Beer – The principal beer of choice in Turkey is *Efes* (which means Ephesus in Turkish). *Efes* is a good lager beer and is plentiful. Recently, *Efes* introduced a dark beer, which is a nice change of pace, and they also produce *Efes Light*.

Wine – Turkey has some very good wine growing areas and consequently Turkish wine is plentiful and inexpensive (Wine in Turkish is *Şarap*, pronounced *Sharap*). The largest wineries in Turkey are Doluca and Kavaklıdere. Until recently, it was best to stick to Turkish white wines (*beyaz*), as the Turkish red (*Kırmızı*) wines were mediocre at best. For good white wine that are moderately priced I recommend the Kavaklıdere Selection or any of the Çankaya wines.

Kavaklıdere, Doluca and Sarafin, a new winery, are now producing some very good red varietal wines. Although generally found in more expensive restaurants, if you can find them you should try the Sarafin Cabernet Sauvignon, the Kavaklıdere Ozel Kırmızı, Kaleçik Karası and Doluca Kav. If you want to buy some wine to bring home with you, I recommend purchasing it at the airport in Istanbul as you depart for home. There is an excellent wine shop located in the duty free area of the international terminal (after passport control).

Rakı – The alcohol of choice for Turkish men is Rakı. Rakı is a clear aniseed drink similar to Greek Ouzo. It is served in a tall glass and should be mixed in a 1:1 ratio with water and a few ice cubes if you desire. When the clear liquid is mixed with water it turns white. Rakı is affectionately known as "lion's milk". After one drink you will know why. Beware -- Rakı goes down very easily.

Tea and Coffee – There are two hot drinks of choice, Turkish coffee (Turkçe Kahvesi) and tea (Çay, pronounced chay). Turkish coffee is served in small cups similar to espresso cups, but it is a bit more bitter and grittier than espresso. If you order Turkish

coffee you must specify how much sugar you want. Orta is the term for medium sugar and Sade (pronounced saday) is the term for no sugar.

While Turkish Coffee is world famous, tea is Turkey's national drink and is the drink of choice during most of the day. Turkey has a rich tea culture. Since the first tea seeds were planted in the Black Sea region in 1917, Turkey has become the world's fifth-largest tea-producing country and the highest in per capita consumption. Tea is served all day long and is available everywhere, including the ferryboats. Tea is typically served in small, clear, tulip-shaped glasses (be careful, you can easily burn your fingers) with sugar cubes provided on the side. It is very common to enjoy tea with a **Simit**, a round, sesame-encrusted bread. Simit's are available from street vendors (for less than 25 cents each) and make a great snack.

The tea man is an institution in Turkey. Turkish workers drink tea all day long and nearly all companies and government offices have personnel dedicated to serving tea and coffee to the workers. The following story demonstrates the importance of the tea man in Turkey:

A lion escaped from the zoo in Ankara, Turkey's capital city. It found its way to the offices downtown and hid in the basement of a government building, surviving on eating bureaucrats and even high level ministers of state. Nobody cared until the lion ate the tea man. That was the last straw -- the people then rose up and formed a posse to capture the lion.

There are other types of tea available in Turkey, including Apple Tea (Elma Çay) and Rosehip tea (pronounced "Kushburnu" in Turkish). Rosehip tea is supposed to be good for you when you are sick. Apple Tea is consumed by tourists, not locals.

A friend of mine, Pelin Aylangan, is now writing a book about the role of tea in Turkish culture. She was recently quoted in the December 2003 issue of *National Geographic*, which mentioned Turkey's new spot as the world's top consumer of tea, surpassing Great Britain. Pelin quoted the Turkish saying that "Conversations without tea are like a night sky without the moon."

B. Food

Turkish food is quite good, and is very similar to the Greek food that is plentiful in the United States. Turkish cuisine varies dramatically by region. For example, Istanbul, Izmir and Samsun have excellent fish because they are near the sea. You are more likely to find chicken and lamb in Kayseri or other cities in central Anatolia. I particularly like the spicy cuisine that comes from Southeastern Turkey.

Turkey is famous for kebab (*kebab* in Turkish), which is the generic term for grilled meat. You will find several types of kebabs, including chicken kebab, lamb kebab, *şiş* kebab (meat or lamb on a skewer), Iskender Kebab (sliced lamb with tomato sauce and yogurt-very good if done right), Adana kebab (my personal favorite, which is a spicy, ground lamb kebab). Doner is the term for lamb and is the same as Greek

Gyros (the Turks invented it though). Doner sandwiches from street vendors make great snacks.

Prior to your meal at a traditional Turkish restaurant the busboy or waiter will bring out a tray containing plates of meze, or small salads/appetizers (a concept similar to Tapas in Spain). There is a large variety of meze in Turkey, including eggplant, string beans, white cheese, and my personal favorite, called ezme salata, a spicy tomato salad. You can easily become very full on the meze alone, so be sure to save room for the main course and dessert.

Other Turkish specialties include lentil soup and lahmacun, a Turkish style pizza covered with a spicy mixture of ground lamb, onion and tomatoes,

Traditional Turkish desserts include fruit and pastries, such as baklava. The fruit in Turkey is excellent and, depending on the season, you will find fresh strawberries, watermelon, apricots and small green plums, known as erik. The baklava in Turkey is superb and comes in many varieties. Be sure to try the baklava made with or covered in pistachio nuts (pistachio nuts grown in Turkey are excellent as well). Another excellent dessert is Firinda Sutlaç, a baked rice pudding.

Also, many hotels serve a traditional Turkish breakfast, which consists of tomatoes, cucumbers, olives, white cheese and fresh bread. At first it will seem a bit strange eating vegetables for breakfast, but I assure you that you will enjoy it.

If you get tired of Turkish food, there is a good variety of international fare in Istanbul, including Chinese, Japanese, Thai (Pera Thai in Beyoglu) and Italian. Istanbul has some of the greatest collection of restaurants anywhere. Many of the restaurants move to outdoor summer locations in June, July and August, so call in advance.

Here is my list of some recommended restaurants:

Istanbul:

Istanbul is famous for seafood. When the weather is good, I highly recommend taking a taxi to an area known as Kumkapı, located across from the fish market on the Marmara Sea and below Sultanahmet. Kumkapı has several small streets with scores of restaurants. The best place to go by far in Kumkapı is called the **Sandal Restaurant** (from the main entrance, Sandal is located halfway down the main street on the right-hand side – Address, Capariz Sokak No 13A, telephone 518-6708). After trying the various mezés (salads) order one of the grilled fish, such as *Çupra*, *Levrek* (Seabass) or *Lufer* (bluefish) and the fried mussels (*Midye Tava*) or fried calamari (*Kalimar Tava*). The other outstanding fish dish is known as *Lipsos Guveç*. Although no one can provide me with the exact English translation for the Lipsos fish, this hot, casserole-style dish combines the fish with cheese, olives and peppers. It is excellent on a cold evening.

Park Fora – This upscale seafood restaurant is located on the European side of the Bosphorus, just north of Ortakoy and the first bridge, before Bebek. It also has an inside seating area. The seafood, atmosphere and service are excellent. The sea bass

in salt is as good as that served at Korfez Restaurant mentioned below. Park Fora's address is Muallim Naci Caddesi, No. 134 in Kuruçesme (pronounced Kurucheshmay). Telephone 265-5067.

Korfez Restaurant – This romantic restaurant on the Asian side of the Bosphorus is the premier fish restaurant in Istanbul. Their special dish is sea bass cooked in salt (*Tuzden Levrek* in Turkish). Korfez (which means “bay” in Turkish) is located under the second bridge over the Bosphorus. If you have a car you can drive to the restaurant. But the best way to get there is using the restaurant’s boat service. When you make your reservation (which is a must) they will tell you where to meet the boat (located near the Rumeli Hisari fortress, just North of the town of Bebek). All you have to do is to tell the taxi driver where to take you. The best way to do this is to have your hotel concierge or some other Turkish speaking person make the reservation and write down the directions in Turkish. You can then give the written instructions to your taxi driver. Allow at least 30 minutes to drive to the meeting point, more on Friday night. A word of caution: Korfez’ menu does not have all of the prices listed. When in doubt, ask the price in advance in order to avoid any unwanted surprises when the check comes. Korfez’ telephone number is 216-413-4314.

Hammam – Hammam is a great place in the summer. It consists of a group of restaurants located in an outdoor garden on the Bosphorus, with a beautiful view of the city. It is located behind the International Press Center located below Topkapı Palace and near the central train station (in the Eminonu District). Hammam, which means Turkish Bath, includes an Italian restaurant, a Turkish restaurant and several others. In the winter time the restaurant is located in a glass enclosed building. The address is Kennedy Caddesi, Sarayburnu, Eminonu, Istanbul. Call for reservations – 212-528-8810.

Develi –The name of this restaurant means "with camel" in Turkish, is an authentic, local kebab restaurant considered by many locals to be the best kebab restaurant in Istanbul. If you are adventurous, this place is worth a trip. It is located about a 20 minute taxi ride, halfway between Sultanahmet and the airport, in an area known as Samatya. Be sure to order the kebab with pistachios (Fıstık kebab). Address: Gumusyuzuk Sokak, No. 7, Samatya, Istanbul. Telephone 212-529-0833.

Vogue – If the weather is good, you can't beat this place. Located on the top floor of a modern office building near the Swissotel, this relatively new Euro-bistro offers an incredible opportunity to eat outdoors overlooking the Bosphorus and the Sea of Marmara. The food is good too, with fish and pasta the predominant choices. Getting an outdoor table on a nice evening is difficult at this new restaurant, so be sure to make a reservation in advance. (Address: Spor Caddesi, BJK Plaza, A block, 13th floor, Beşiktaş; Tel: 212-227-4404).

Sarnıç – Located near the Aya Sophia in Sultanahmet, this restaurant is located in a former cistern that is lit only by candles and has a wonderful atmosphere. The food is typical Turkish. Be sure to call for a reservation in advance (Tel 212-512-4291).

The village of **Ortakoy**, located up the Bosphorus near the first-bridge, has many nice outdoor restaurants. Ortakoy, which has a beautiful mosque on the water, is very

popular with locals on Sunday. Further up the Bosphorus is a town called **Bebek** with many good restaurants.

The area with the greatest number of shops and restaurants is Taksim. There are many large hotels nearby and the main street is called **Istiklal Caddesi**. You should not miss this place on your trip. Istiklal Caddesi runs from Taksim to the Tunel area and is closed to traffic. The architecture in this area has a European look and feel. There are many shopping arcades in this area, which are known as passages. The building known as the Çicek Pasajı (Flower Passage) in the Galatasaray area has numerous, albeit, turistik (the Turkish word for touristy), restaurants. One of my favorite pastimes is to wander around the narrow hallways of the market situated next to the Flower Passage. Make sure you check out the giant baked potatoes and the freshly fried mussels.

A great inexpensive kebab restaurant on Istiklal Caddesi is **Koşebaşı** (pronounced koshaybashuh) in the Pera/Beyoğlu area (address Istiklal Caddesi No. 405). Koşebasi is a well-known kebab restaurant with several locations in Istanbul and has very good food at reasonable prices (there is one in the Nisantaşı area). Try the Adana kebab, doner kebab or lahmacun. The Pera/ Beyoğlu location has separate sit down and carryout areas.

I also highly recommend an excellent Anatolian-style restaurant right off of Istiklal Caddesi. It is called **Marko Paşa Şark Sofrası** (pronounced Marko Pasha Shark Sofrasuh). Şark Sofrası means “Eastern Cuisine.” In other words, this restaurant serves central Anatolian cuisine, such as **mantı** (delicious Turkish ravioli covered in yoghurt and garlic and Gozleme, Turkish crepes filled with cheese or meat). The restaurant is nicely decorated and is inexpensive. The menu is printed in Turkish and English and a few of the waiters speak excellent English. The food is very reasonably priced and you can have an entire meal for 5 or 6 dollars. Marco Paşa is the second restaurant on the right of Sadri Alisik Sokak, an alley located off Istiklal Caddesi, across the street from the Ağa Camii or Ağa Mosque in the Beyoğlu neighborhood. Tel. 212-252-8080 (look for the ladies making mantı in the window).

If you want a truly unique experience, buy a grilled fish sandwich from one of the boats in the water near the Eminonu ferry piers (across from the Spice Market). They will serve you a freshly grilled fish sandwich on bread. The sandwiches are a bargain and are very tasty.

Ankara: While the restaurants in Ankara don't compare to those in Istanbul, there are a few that are noteworthy:

Mezzaluna Restaurant –An Italian bistro that is related to Mezzaluna in Istanbul, Aspen and LA.. The address of the Ankara/Bilkent Mezzaluna is: Ankuva Alisveris Mrk, No.2 Bilkent Plaza, Bilkent Ankara Turkey, Telephone: (90)(312)2661360.

Mest Restaurant – This upscale restaurant popular with the diplomatic corps is located in a house in the Gazi Osman Pasa neighborhood of Ankara. The menu ranges from fish to meat. For directions and reservations call 312-468-0743.

Antalya:

Marina Hotel Restaurant – I have been told by a reliable source that the restaurant located in the Marina Hotel in the old city of Antalya has outstanding food, service and décor.

XII. Shopping

Istanbul is home to the Grand Bazaar (also known as the covered bazaar), the world's first shopping mall and is an excellent place to buy carpets and kilims (discussed below), ceramics (see below), leather goods, silk products, jewelry, vintage books, maps and prints (the Book Bazaar, located outside of the Grand Bazaar in Istanbul, has an excellent selection).

Grand Bazaar – The Grand Bazaar has more than 4,000 separate shops and is literally a covered city. The Grand Bazaar is a good place to buy ceramics and other souvenirs. Only a few stores in the bazaar have prices indicated on the merchandise and in true Turkish fashion you will have to negotiate your sale prices. I strongly recommend that you do not buy from the first shop you see. Use that shop as a place to gauge prices and then use that price as a guide in the next shop that you come to. As a general rule, expect to pay about half of the original price offered to you by the salesman.

Ceramics – Turkey has been famous for its colored tilework since the 16th century, when artisans in Iznik produced some of the most beautiful work ever made. Today, most of the ceramics in Turkey are produced by artisans in a town called Kutahya, which is located south east of Istanbul. If you can find it I recommend Dalida Ceramics, located in the Grand Bazaar on Yaglikcilar Caddesi near the Oruculer Gate (or call them at 212-513-4804). While their main shop is small they will take you to their warehouses located a short distance away. They have a great selection and will give you very good prices, especially if you tell them I sent you. They also do a very nice wrapping job. Ask for Tarkan, the sales manager. Tell him you were sent by the American Avukat (that's lawyer in Turkish) and he will give you fair and reasonable prices.

Carpets/Kilims – Buying a carpet (*Halı* in Turkish) or *kilim* (a flat-woven rug) during your trip to Turkey will make your trip a memorable one for several reasons. First, your purchase will serve as a long-term reminder of your wonderful trip to Turkey. Second, you will certainly not forget the process of purchasing your carpet or kilim. Buying a carpet in Turkey is a truly unique experience. Unlike most stores in the United States, prices for carpets in Turkey (and many other items) are negotiated. One does not just walk into a store and ask the price. You will be asked to sit down, drink Turkish coffee or tea and then you will be shown numerous carpets. Once you see a carpet that you like, ask the price and the negotiations will begin. Because the carpet dealers have much more information than you on their products (and are very good salesmen), you are operating at a major disadvantage in the negotiation process and may be taken for a ride. Prices vary widely from store to store and from city to city within Turkey. It is a good idea to purchase carpets only from reputable dealers or from a shop that you were referred to by a friend.

Despite the large selection of carpets and kilims in Istanbul's Grand Bazaar, you may want to avoid buying a carpet or kilim there since the prices in the Grand Bazaar are higher than you would find anywhere else in Turkey. Also, be sure to avoid the myriad of carpet sellers that hang out near the Aya Sophia and Blue Mosque.

Your carpet buying experience will be enhanced if you have done some homework in advance on the price of the style and size of carpet you are interested in (Turkey is famous for its Hereke carpets, which have a multi-floral design). Also, if you are planning to buy a carpet you should measure the place where you want the carpet to go. Make sure to convert your measurements to centimeters.

Finally, don't forget that carpets are very heavy (kilim's are much more travel friendly). Unless you plan to ship it home, you should purchase your carpet as close to the end of your trip as possible. Reputable carpet shops will give you a duffle-like carry bag for the carpet and, depending on the size, you can carry it on board the plane or check it as baggage.

I have had good experiences with several carpet shops in Istanbul. Two are located in Sultanahmet, the old city of Istanbul and two are located in the newer part of Istanbul.

Harem 49 – This carpet shop is located at the East end of the Arasta Bazaar, a large group of shops located directly behind the Blue Mosque. Harem 49 has a great selection of carpets and kilims. Huseyin, the owner of the store is a very nice gentleman, but be sure to ask for Musfafa, who is their lead salesman. He is very knowledgeable about carpets and kilims. Most importantly, he is a true gentleman and a pleasure to deal with. Harem 49 has a very good and informative Web site (www.harem49.com) which you can check out prior to your trip. They are also very experienced in shipping carpets to the U.S. Unlike the shops in the Grand Bazaar, the shops in the Arasta Bazaar are open on Sunday and until around 8 p.m. in the evening.

ER&NE&MET – Ernemet has two stores and has a huge selection of carpets and kilims. They have a small shop located in the West end of the Arasta Bazaar (no. 109) in Sultanahmet and a very nice showroom located just one block away. See their Web site for directions (www.ernemet.com). Ask for Faruk Metin (the Met in Ernemet), who is one of the owners and he will take good care of you. Ernemet is open on Sunday.

Şengor (pronounced Shengor) – Is located near Taksim across the street from the Divan Hotel. It is a small store, but it has an excellent reputation and has been in business for a very long time. Şengor is closed on Sunday.

Other Things to Buy – Other things to buy in Turkey include things decorated with the "evil eye" (*nazar boncuk* in Turkish-pronounced na-ZAR bon-JOOK). The *nazar boncuk* is probably the most common article in any Turkish home or car. It consists of a small white circle set within a larger blue circle and can take the form of beads, pendants, wall decorations, etc.. The nazar boncuk tradition dates back to the age-old "evil eye" superstition that one person can cast a spell on another. To prevent this, Turkish artisans created a blue glass "eye" that "looks" straight back at the spell-

caster. It has no religious significance, and few people believe in the evil eye superstition anymore, but it is a commonly accepted part of Turkish culture.

XIII. Other Cities

While this guide focuses on Istanbul, I have also traveled to Izmir (the closest major city to Ephesus), Adana, Ankara, Bursa, Kayseri and the Cappadocia region (which is a must see), Samsun and many other cities. I would be pleased to give you my recommendations on these cities as well.

XIV. Turkey-Related Web Sites

The internet is an incredible resource for travelers. Not surprisingly, there is large amount of Turkey-related travel information now on the internet. Here is a list of some of the best Web sites that I have found on Turkey:

A good place to start is the Republic of Turkey's Homepage, maintained by the Embassy of Turkey in Washington, DC, at: www.turkey.org.

For excellent information on what's happening in Istanbul, see: www.istanbulcityguide.com/.

I highly recommend Tom Brosnahan's Web site called Turkey Travel Planner (www.turkeytravelplanner.com). Tom is the author of the first *Lonely Planet Guide to Turkey* and has been traveling to Turkey for more than 30 years. His site contains a great deal of useful information on traveling in Turkey and is updated regularly.

Turkish Airlines also has a decent Web site at www.turkishairlines.com.

For the latest news in Turkey see www.turkishpress.com and www.turkishdailynews.com.

Finally, when you return home from your trip and want to learn more about Turkey, I highly recommend subscribing to *Cornucopia*, the award winning magazine on Turkey and Turkish culture. Each issue is full of interesting articles and wonderful photographs on Turkey-related topics. Subscription information can be found at www.cornucopia.net.

XV. Conclusion

I would be pleased to talk to you about your upcoming trip to Turkey. Also, once you return from your trip please let me know your suggested additions or changes to this guide.

I hope you enjoy traveling to Turkey as much as I do and have a great trip!

Güle Güle and Bon Voyage,

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