

HELLO TO İSTANBUL



Located in the center of the Old World, Istanbul is one of the world's great cities famous for its historical monuments and magnificent scenic beauties. It is the only city in the world which spreads over two continents: it lies at a point where Asia and Europe are separated by a narrow strait - the Bosphorus. Istanbul has a history of over 2,500 years, and ever since its establishment on this strategic junction of lands and seas, the city has been a crucial trade center.

The historic city of Istanbul is situated on a peninsula flanked on three sides by the Sea of Marmara, the Bosphorus and the Golden Horn. It has been the capital of three great empires, the Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman empires, and for more than 1,600 years over 120 emperors and sultans ruled the world from here. No other city in the world can claim such a distinction.



During its development, the city was enlarged four times, each time the city walls being rebuilt further to the west.

Surrounded by 5th century Roman city walls and stretching over seven hills, Istanbul is adorned by the masterpieces of Turkish art, the great mosques of the Sultans that crown the hills. The city presents an exquisite, majestic and serene silhouette from all directions. The Golden Horn, which is a very secure natural harbor, has played

a significant role in the development of the city.

Fortune provided such advantages to Istanbul as a location at a junction where the main overland routes reach the sea, an easily defensible peninsula, an ideal climate, a rich and generous nature, control of the strategic Bosphorus, and a central geographical position in the ancient world.



As a capital of empires, the city was not only an administrative, but also a religious center. The Patriarchate of Eastern Christians has been headquartered here since its establishment, and the largest early churches and monasteries of the Christian world rose in this city on top of the pagan temples. Within a century after the city was conquered, it was enriched with mosques, palaces, schools, baths and other architectural monuments that gave it a Turkish character,

while some of the existing churches in ruins were repaired, altered and converted into mosques. Between the 16th century when the Ottoman sultans acquired themselves the title of the "Caliph of Islam" and 1924, the first year of the Republic, Istanbul was also the headquarters of the Caliphate. More Jews settled in Istanbul than any other port, and here they built themselves a new and happy life after they were rescued from Spain by the Turks in the 15th century. Istanbul has always been a city of tolerance where mosques, churches and synagogues existed side by side. The city was adorned with a large number of dazzling and impressive works even during the period of decline of the Ottomans.

During this time, the influence of European art made itself felt in the new palaces, while the northern slopes of the Golden Horn, Galata and Beyoglu districts assumed a European character. Even when the Empire, which was a party to World War I, collapsed and the young Republic that replaced it moved the capital to Ankara, Istanbul did not lose its significance.

The haphazard development that began in the years following World War II and accelerated in the 1950's has unfortunately had a negative impact on the fabric of the old city, and while old wooden houses disappeared rapidly, concrete buildings proliferated. Istanbul experienced a population explosion due to immigration, and within a very short period it expanded far beyond the historical city walls. The areas inside the walls were invaded by workshops, mills and offices; even the new thoroughfares could not solve the traffic problems, and the inadequacy of the infrastructure gave rise to a sea pollution problem, starting with the Golden Horn.

With the initiatives for saving the city in the 1980s, Istanbul embarked on a process of restructuring on a scale unseen in its history. Thousands of buildings along the Golden Horn were demolished to make way for a green belt on its shores; parks and gardens were built on the land claimed by filling up the beaches of the Sea of Marmara. In order to prevent sea pollution drainage systems were completed and physical and biological wastewater treatment plants were erected; the use of natural gas for heating has considerably reduced air pollution.

Efforts are continuing for the restoration of the Roman city walls, and Beyoglu, the main artery, was rescued by building a new avenue. Improvements were made in the general cleaning, maintenance, garbage collection fields and these services are now at Western European standards. Ring roads cross the Bosphorus over two suspension bridges to connect the two continents. The European side has now a fast tramway system and a subway, and comfort and speed has been ensured in sea transportation with the hydrofoil terminals built on the seashores. All industrial establishments on the historic peninsula have been moved to new facilities in the suburbs, and the new international bus terminal has reduced traffic intensity. The old jail and the first large concrete building of the city were given over to tourism and converted into 5-star hotels.

The city is growing dynamically and developing at full speed on an east-west axis along the shores of the Marmara.

FOR A SHORT VISIT

Have you got only a short period of time to visit this beautiful city? No need to worry- there are choices of “tasting Istanbul” even in a short period of time.

Daily excursions available throughout the year will give you the chance to visit the most important historical sites, museums, famous Grand Bazaar and surroundings. Excursions departing from hotels of the port present to you the monuments in the historical peninsula in half-day tours. You get a chance to visit Ayasofya Museum, the Mosque of Süleyman the Magnificent, the Mosque of Sultan Ahmet (also known as Blue Mosque), Hippodrome and Topkapı Palace Museum. You may also participate in tours taking you on the Bosphorus or to the Asian side. Then, you will go back home with unforgettable and beautiful memories.



The Roman fortifications, Chora (Kariye) Museum renowned for its late Byzantine period frescoes and mosaics, the Galata Tower for a splendid panorama of the city, Dolmabahçe Palace on the Bosphorus - the richest palace museum in the world, Archaeological Museums, Turkish-Islamic Arts Museum, the Spice Bazaar and others require 3 to 4 days' time.



And cruising Bosphorus... A ferry ride on the Bosphorus will be amongst the most unforgettable. You may be carried away with the unparalleled beauty of the yalı mansions lining along the coasts and from which many ancient love stories reflect on the water, luxurious modern villas of the 20th century, the palaces of Dolmabahçe, Beylerbeyi and Göksu, Rumeli and Anadolu Fortresses, remnants of the fishing villages, restaurants, tea gardens, and night clubs.

In the same day you can cool off in the waters of the Black Sea and then relax with a cup of coffee at a tea garden on the quiet coasts of the Sea of Marmara enjoying the beauty of the Istanbul Straits.

Istanbul is a place where the ancient meets the modern. For shopping there is a great variety of choices. The Grand Bazaar and the big reputable shops by it, the shopping malls of Ak Merkez, Galleria, Capitol and many more, the boutiques at Nişantaşı and Beyoğlu and in the Baghdad Street are at your service all through the year.

The Grand Bazaar still retains the dreamlike atmosphere of the “good old days,” yet, it presents you with the newest choices of the modern world: eye-catching jewelry, copperwork, rugs, leatherwear, suede wear, and many more... Once caught by it, you may lose track of time strolling in the Grand Bazaar.



Besides its historical importance and cultural heritage, the city is furnished with modern hotels, elegant restaurants, nightclubs, bars, historical bazaars and shops as well.

Once you step in this city, you will be able to experience by yourself this historical and natural beauty beyond words can describe.

Istanbul's Journey to Become a Capital of Culture

The term “European Capital of Culture” first emerged in the 1980’s. Greek Culture Minister at the time Melina Mercouri’s suggestion to the European Union Ministerial Council was passed, designating Athens the first city to receive the honour of being a city adding to European culture and adding to Europe as a whole in 1985. This title was given to cities of EU member countries between 1985 and 2000. By the time 2000 rolled around, a new millennium prompted the title to be given to more than one city in a year and to cities of countries that are EU candidates.

Istanbul’s journey to become a European Capital of Culture started when the decision was passed to designate cities of EU candidate countries as European Capital of Culture also.

In March 2005, Mr. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, expressed his support for İstanbul for being the European Capital of Culture With the opinion of the European Parliament on November 13th 2006 and approval by the European Union Culture Ministers Council, Istanbul was declared officially to be the 2010 European Capital of Culture.

Why Istanbul was picked a European Capital of Culture?

Istanbul, with its geographical location and cultural heritage of thousands of years, has a privileged position among world metropolises. Its young and dynamic population brings into life a creative energy, turning Istanbul –a mirror of Turkey- into one of the World’s most dynamic cities.



The cultural understanding that developed in Istanbul in the past twenty years especially reflects onto the cultural life. With each passing day, Istanbul turns into an attraction, a cultural and artistic centre for not only the people of Istanbul but also for the whole world.

The 21st Century will be the century of the cities. Cities will bring to life their identities, taking their cultures forward and paint the global culture by

sharing their expertise. People of cities understand one another through cultural exchange and

get to know each other better. The addition of culture into daily life and its dispersion through all segments of society gain importance with each passing day. Urban development is only achieved through urban knowledge reaching a desirable level and cultural exchange. For this reason, both administrations and non-governmental organisations have to be active, making the best use of professional knowledge and experience. It is only through this that cities picked as European Capitals of Culture can enrich global culture with their contributions.

With Istanbul becoming the 2010 European Capital of Culture, Europe will discover its own roots in Istanbul and take an important step in understanding one another. It is only when the people of Istanbul embrace this project and support it with wide attendance that Istanbul will be a successful European Capital of Culture.

Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture Domain

Within the Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture Agency there are three strategic areas: Urban Applications, Culture-Art and Tourism and Publicity. Administrations and directorates look over 13 different sections within these areas. Urban development projects of the Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture Agency are carried out by the Cultural Applications Directorate, Cultural Heritage and Museums Directorate, Urban Project Coordination and Follow-up Directorate. The culture and art projects within the scope of Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture are coordinated by the Artistic Committee and the projects are produced, shaped and brought to life by the Directorates for Visual Arts, Music and Opera, City Culture, Cinema and Documentary, Performance and Stage Arts and Traditional Arts. The aim is to ensure that these projects and events spill over from 2010 and become sustainable.

ISTANBUL, EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE 2010

1-Urban Applications

The geographical location of Istanbul, the fact that it has served as the capital of many empires and hosted many civilisations, make the European Capital of Culture especially important. One of Istanbul's ambitious aims is to bring to life in new convergence of rehabilitation and protection of these cultural heritage sources that will enrich the lives and visions of the people of Istanbul. The shaping of these protectionist projects around research, creativity and public interest carries vital importance in reaching this aim.

Projects shining a light to the face of Istanbul, bringing out and adopting its cultural and historical heritage are being brought to life with urban applications. Restorations, renovations, restitutions and urban transformation projects will have long-term and permanent effects on Istanbul, protecting its rich cultural heritage and once again putting them out for all to see.

Such large projects are: The completion of the restoration of the Hagia Sophia Museum by the end of 2009, the preparation of the Sur-i Sultani Strategic Vision to take up the boundaries of the Topkapı Palace and advance it along with the museum to world standards, the preparation of an archaeological park at Yenikapı in conjunction with the Theodosius Port project and the construction of a temporary fair area to showcase the remains taking Istanbul's history to tens of thousands of years back, and to renovate the Atatürk Culture Centre for 2010.

2-Culture and Art



One of the main aims of the project is to add culture and arts to the lives of the millions living in this metropolis, especially those in distant areas away from cultural events. Special importance is given to institutional projects that will have persistency after 2010 in a continuous infrastructure, as well as

many other projects in culture and arts. Another one of the aims of the Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture work is to ensure that the people of Istanbul actively participate in these events and projects.

Istanbul has been taking extensive steps in the past 20 years to establish itself as an important culture and arts centre of Europe; however, this position will be set in stone with events organised in 2010. All culture and art events that will add to Istanbul, will at the same time mean the support towards the production of art, create opportunities for artists to reach out to the world and develop the culture and art infrastructure in the city.

Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture Agency takes as its main aim to bring culture and arts to a wide audience. There were many street events organised in the summer of 2008. For example, the “Summer concerts of all tunes on the way to 2010” brought many different musical styles to the people of Istanbul. The “On the way to 2010” project will continue with additions in 2009.

With the aim of bringing modern art to all corners of Istanbul, 20 exhibitions had been put on display in Ümraniye, Kartal and Tuzla as part of the “Mobile Art” project. This will go onto visit 39 other towns of Istanbul.

At the same time, projects to support young artists, and have them opened up to the world are being developed. For this reason, an Arts Production Centre was opened in Yenikapı. The centre provides opportunity for development for young artists and will be a workshop for them to work with leading European artists.

The festival organised in 2008 as the Istanbul Universities Theatre Festival will be on stage around Turkey in 2009 as the Turkish Universities Theatre Festival and then will become the European Universities Theatre Festival in 2010 with international attendance.

3- Tourism and Publicity

The main aims are to reflect Istanbul’s unparalleled cultural heritage to tourism, to develop touristic opportunities, better citywide infrastructure, increase service quality and therefore bring more than 10 million tourists to Istanbul in 2010.

By diverting visitors wanting a cultural experience to Istanbul and increasing their duration of stay, a more active promotion will be possible and the city in turn will make better use of global tourism dynamism in an economical sense.

7 million visitors came to Istanbul in 2008. When the aimed 10 million visitors come to Istanbul in 2010, with increased spending per head, Istanbul's income from tourism in 2010 is envisaged to reach 10 billion dollars.

For more...

- **Governorship of İstanbul (<http://english.istanbul.gov.tr/>)**
- **İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality (<http://www.ibb.gov.tr/en-US/>)**