

## **USEFUL INFORMATION ON ISTANBUL**

### **Local Time**

Local time in Istanbul is GMT + 2 hours.

### **Working Hours**

Banks are open weekdays from 8.30 until noon (or 12.30), depending on the bank, and from 13.30 until 17.00. However, there are some banks which continue to serve during lunch breaks.

Museums are generally open from Tuesday to Sunday from 9.30 until 17.00 (or 17.30) and closed on Monday.

Shops and bazaars are normally open from Monday to Saturday from 9.30 to 20:00 and closed all day on Sundays. But shopping malls and stores on crowded streets are open seven days a week, including lunch breaks. You can find restaurants or cafes open virtually at any time of the day or night.

### **Currency and Exchange**

As of 01 January 2009, the monetary unit in Turkey was changed to the Turkish Lira (TL), which comes in bank notes of 5 TL; 10 TL; 20 TL; 50 TL; 100 TL and 200 TL. Smaller denominations will come in coins of 1 TL; 50 Kr; 25 Kr; 10 Kr; 5 Kr; and 1 Kr." Kr. stands for "Kuruş". 100 Kuruş is worth 1 Turkish Lira.

Exchange rate is around 1 USD = 1,5 TL and 1 EURO = 2,10 TL. The most recent exchange rate values may be accessed at the website of the Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey ([www.tcmb.gov.tr/yeni/eng](http://www.tcmb.gov.tr/yeni/eng).) Convertible foreign currency can be exchanged at the airport, hotels and exchange offices as well as at all banks in accordance with the daily announced exchange rates at that time.

In Turkey travelers' checks are rarely accepted. We recommend that you cash your travelers' checks at the banks.

ATMs can be found in even the smallest Turkish towns. Most accept international credit cards or bank cards (a strip of logos is usually displayed above the ATM). Almost all ATMs have a language key to enable you to read the instructions in English.

### **VAT & Service Charges**

Value-added tax, here called KDV, is 18%. Hotels typically combine it with a service charge of 10% to 15%, and restaurants usually add a 15% service charge. Value-added tax is nearly always included in quoted prices. Certain shops are authorized to refund the tax (ask).

### **Credit Cards**

International credit cards are widely used in Turkey. Major credit cards (American Express, Visa, Diner's Club, MasterCard, Access, JCB, Eurocard, etc.) are accepted in most establishments. Most ATMs accept international credit/bank cards.

## **Climate & Clothing**

Average temperatures in Istanbul in March are likely to be relatively cold, with average highs of 8 °C. Warm clothes are advisable.

## **Electricity Supply**

The electrical current in Turkey is 220 volts, 50 cycles alternating current (AC). Wall outlets take Continental-style plugs with two round prongs.

## **Communications**

Turkey has a highly sophisticated communication system. In addition to the usual postal and telephone services, GSM telephones can be used through international roaming agreements. Please contact your GSM Operator for more information. It is possible to use most cellular phones in Turkey.

Public telephones have two different systems. Some of them work with cards while others work with tokens. They are both sold in post offices and tobacco shops. For international calls it is advisable to purchase cards.

All over Turkey, phone numbers consists of two sections: area code with three digits and the number itself with 7 digits.

Same area / city calls just the 7-digit number From area to area 0+area code-7-digit number  
International calls 0+0+country code + area code + number

## **Mail**

Post offices are painted bright yellow and have PTT (Post, Telegraph, and Telephone) signs on the front. The central Post office is open from Monday to Saturday from 08:00 to 21:00, Sunday from 09:00 to 19:00. Smaller ones are open from Monday to Friday between 08:30 and 17:00.

## **Eating Out**

Turkish Cuisine is one of the best in the world. One may dine at any of the hundreds of good restaurants to be found on every corner of the city, serving Turkish and/or international cuisine.

## **Shopping**

Istanbul is a shoppers' paradise with beautiful hand-woven carpets, leather goods, gold bargains and fashion products. The fascinating Covered Bazaar and Spice Market make shopping an irresistible pleasure.

## **What To Buy**

Many people come to Istanbul just to shop. The Kapalı Çarşı (Covered Bazaar), or Grand Bazaar, is the most logical place to start as the variety is immense. Still the commercial centre of the old city, the bazaar is the original shopping “mall” with a vast selection of carpets, souvenirs clothes, shoes, jewellery, and handicrafts made from ceramic, copper and brass.

The Mısır Çarşısı is good for picking up spices, Turkish delight, flavoured teas, and small souvenirs.

The sophisticated shops in the Taksim and Nişantaşı districts contrast with the chaos of the bazaars. İstiklal Caddesi and Cumhuriyet Caddesi have shops selling elegant fashionwear made from Turkey’s high quality textiles. Exquisite jewellery, as well as finely designed handbags and shoes can also be found. Nişantaşı is the main area for clothes by top Turkish designers.

For an even more modern, European shopping experience, the huge new malls have European outlets, Turkish fashion shops, branches of Istanbul’s most elegant shops, as well as restaurants and cinemas.

In Istanbul’s busy flea markets there is an astonishing assortment of good, both old and new.

## **Tipping**

Tips are generally not included in bills. In any case tipping is your prerogative, a reward for service. 10% is the generally applied rate.

## **For emergencies**

In case of emergency contact the registration or information desk or dial 155 for police, 112 for ambulance and 110 for fire. There are a number of pharmacies throughout the city. Look for the sign “Eczane “. They are usually open from Monday to Saturday from 09.00 to 19.00 and pharmacists in each district take turns to provide a 24-hour service. The names of the pharmacist on duty at night and weekends are listed in the window of the other pharmacists’ shops.

### **Emergency Numbers**

Emergency : 112

Fire : 110

Police Help : 155

Unknown num. service : 11880

## **Tax-free**

Visitors who do not reside in Turkey are able to reclaim VAT on goods purchased in tax-free shops. Look for the tax-free sign in the shops and remember to ask for the VAT or reclaim form at the time of purchase. The shop assistant will ask to see your passport.

## Visas

All participants are advised to check with the Turkish Consulate for visa requirements.

<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>OFFICIAL PASAPORT</b>	<b>ORDINARY PASAPORT</b>
<b>ALBANIA</b>	Official passport holders are exempt from visa for their travels up to 90 days.	Ordinary passport holders are required to have visa to enter Turkey.
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<b>EGYPT</b>	Official passport holders are exempt from visa for their travels up to 90 days.	Ordinary passport holders are required to have visa to enter Turkey.
<b>FRANCE</b>	Official passport holders are exempt from visa for their travels up to 90 days	Ordinary passport holders are exempt from visa for their travels up to 90 days.
<b>GREECE</b>	Official passport holders are exempt from visa for their travels up to 90 days.	Ordinary passport holders are exempt from visa for their travels up to 90 days.
<b>ITALY</b>	Official passport holders are exempt from visa for their travels up to 90 days.	Ordinary passport holders are exempt from visa for their travels up to 90 days
<b>LEBANON</b>	Official passport holders are required to have visa to enter Turkey.	Ordinary passport holders are required to have visa to enter Turkey.
<b>MALTE</b>	Official passport holders are exempt from visa for their travels up to 90 days.	Ordinary passport holders are required to have visa to enter Turkey.
<b>MOROCCO</b>	Official passport holders are exempt from visa for their travels up to 90 days.	Ordinary passport holders are exempt from visa for their travels up to 90 days.
<b>PORTUGAL</b>	Only diplomatic passport holders are exempt from visa for their travels up to 90 days. Official passport holders are required to have visa to enter Turkey.	Ordinary passport holders are required to have visa to enter Turkey.
<b>SPAIN</b>	Official passport holders are exempt from visa for their travels up to 90 days.	Ordinary passport holders are required to have visa to enter Turkey.
<b>TUNISIA</b>	Official passport holders are exempt from visa for their travels up to 90 days.	Ordinary passport holders are exempt from visa for their travels up to 90 days.

**Health Requirements**

Visitors to Turkey are not required to bear any vaccination certificates upon entry provided that they are not coming from a country where there is an epidemic.