

ISTANBUL

The European culture capital of 2010, Istanbul is the only city situated on two continents, Asia and Europe and is the fourth largest city proper in the world and the second largest metropolitan area in Europe by population. Istanbul is a unique city where culture meets history, East meets West and the metropolitan life meets authentic venues. From the magnificent view of the Bosphorus to the numerous historical landmarks and its never-ending liveliness, Istanbul has countless distinguished attractions to offer its locals and tourists. Here are some practical information and Istanbul's best sites put together to help you enjoy the city in your limited free time.

Practical Information:

- Istanbul's time zone is GMT +2.
- The country phone code is +90. The city land line phone codes are 212 for the European side and 216 for the Asian side.
- Electricity is 220 Volts, alternating at 50 cycles per second. You might want to consider bringing adapters; outlets in Turkey accept plugs with two round pins used in most European countries.
- The weather in Istanbul is mostly mild in spring. It is a good idea to bring both t-shirts and sweatshirts to be prepared for both warm and cold weathers and rain. We suggest you to bring warmer clothes for the boat trip since the Bosphorus might be cold during the night.
- Istanbul is a large and congested city where public transportation is used very commonly. Electronic tickets and transit passes are used in public transportation like the metro, buses, ferries, and minibuses. Tokens can be bought from desks near stations and stops. You might consider getting an Akbil ticket – a token that can be used on buses, trams, the subway and ferries. You can reload it when necessary at stations and pay desks displaying the Akbil sign. A blue token operates as a 1-day, 1-week, 15-day or 31-day travel card.
- Shops are usually open Monday through Saturday from 9.30 to 19.00 and closed on Sundays. However, most shops in the malls and crowded streets are open seven days a week from 10.00 until 22.00, including lunch breaks.
- Banks are open weekdays; from 9:00 to 17:00 with a one hour break at noon.
- The currency in Turkey is TL (Turkish Lira). You can exchange foreign currency at banks or exchanges offices. Some large stores may accept USD or Euros. You may visit this link for up to date and detailed information. <http://www.turkey4travel.com/turkish-money-exchange-rate/>
- Museums and palaces are generally open Tuesday through Sunday from 9.30 to 17.00 or 17.30.
- The value-added-tax (VAT) (KDV in Turkey), is %18 for general consumer items and %8 in food and nutrition. Restaurants usually expect a tip of %10.
- Most tourist hotels, of any standard, have a computer with free Internet access in the lobby. Many also offer free Wi-Fi, as do some cafes. In some cafes, a password to access to the Internet is given for a small charge.
- Important Numbers: Traffic Police 154, Police 155, Fire Station 110, Ambulance 112, Tourism Info 170.

Where To Visit?

Having been the capital city of world's largest ancient civilizations, Istanbul inhabits world culture's most precious relics and historic venues. Due to its remarkable background and geography Istanbul has become one of the most important cities in the world. Here are some suggestions for historic buildings, structures and museums as well as other landmarks portraying the new modern Istanbul listed according to their location.

Sultanahmet Region:

- **Sultanahmet Square** (Sultanahmet Meydanı)

The Sultanahmet Square was called "The Hippodrome of Constantinople", and was a circus, which was also used as a social center until 324. When the capital was moved to Istanbul, the hippodrome was renovated and enlarged, and became the center of city's social life. Currently the district is the heart of historic Old Istanbul.

- **Haghia Sophia** (Ayasofya)

Considered to "change the history of architecture", Hagia Sophia is a former Orthodox Patriarchal Basilica, which was then turned into a mosque, and in these days, into a museum. Until the construction of the Seville Cathedral in 1520, it was accepted to be the largest cathedral in the world.

- **The Blue Mosque** (Sultan Ahmet Camii)

The Blue Mosque is another historical mosque in Istanbul, and also known as Sultan Ahmed Mosque. It was built between 1609 and 1616, under the orders of Sultan Ahmed I.

- **Topkapı Palace** (Topkapı Sarayı)

Topkapı palace contains the most holy relics of the Muslim world and for 200 years, it was the primary residence of the Ottoman Sultans. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1921, Topkapı Palace was turned into a museum of the imperial era. From the hundreds of rooms and chambers of the Palace, only the most important are accessible to the public today.

- **The Basilica Cistern** (Yerebatan Sarnıcı)

Located South West of the Hagia Sophia, the cistern is the largest of many ancient cisterns that lie beneath the city of Istanbul and used to provide water to the Topkapı Palace after the Ottoman conquest in 1453 and into modern times.

- **Istanbul Archaeology Museums** (Istanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri)

The Istanbul Archaeology Museums are located near the Gülhane Park, and Topkapı Palace and houses over one million objects that represent almost all of the eras and civilizations in world history consisting of three museums; The Archaeological Museum, Museum of the Ancient Orient and the Museum of Islamic Art.

Beyoğlu Region:

- **Mevlevi Monastery** (Dervişhane)

The Mevlevi order was founded in 13th century, and is named after Celaleddin Rumi, the great Sufi mystic and poet, also known as Mevlana (meaning our leader). The monastery contains Sufi musical instruments, dervish accessories and manuscripts of Turkish Mevlevi Poetry. Twice every month, there are concerts and/or performances of sema, the ritual of the Mevlevi sect.

- **The Fish Market and The Flower Passage** (Balık Pazarı ve Çiçek Pasajı)

The Fish Market is a bazaar, where finest fish, exotic spices, fruits, and vegetables are sold. The fish sold there is coming from all around the country, octopus from Bodrum, calamari from Antalya, and prawns from Çanakkale. Down at the Flower Passage, there are not flowers, but small fish restaurants.

- **St. Anthony of Padua Church** (St. Antuan Kilisesi)

Run by Italian priests the largest Catholic Church in Istanbul and is located on Istiklal Avenue in Beyoğlu. The local Italian community built the original church in 1725, but it was rebuilt on the same location. Italian priests run the church.

- **Galata Tower** (Galata Kilisesi)

Located in the Galata district, Galata Tower is a medieval stone tower, and has a panoramic vista of the Old Istanbul. It was built in 1348, during the expansion of the Genoese colony in Constantinople. There is a restaurant and café on its top floor.

- **Pera Palace Hotel** (Hotel Pera Palas)

Located in Tepebaşı, Hotel Pera Palace is a famous four-star hotel, which was built in 1892. It is accepted to be the oldest European hotel of Turkey.

- **French Street** (Fransız Sokağı)

Located behind the Galatasaray High School, also known as the Algeria Street, the French Street has tented buildings, street musicians, cafés, bars and street lamps from the Municipality of Paris. This street is very popular; the number of daily visitors is around 6.500, and is a great place to rest and enjoy the city.

- **Tünel**

The Tünel is a short underground railway line and is the second-oldest subterranean urban rail line connecting the quarters of Karaköy and Beyoğlu.

- **Taksim Square** (Taksim Meydanı)

Taksim Square is a major shopping, tourist and leisure district famed for its restaurants, shops and hotels, considered to be the heart of modern Istanbul, and is the location of the Cumhuriyet Anıtı (Republic Monument), which was built in 1928 and commemorates the formation of the Turkish Republic.

- **Church of Panaghia Mouchliotissa**

Also known as St Mary of the Mongols Church, Church of Panaghia Mouchliotissa was built in the 13th century, to honor Emperor Michael VIII's daughter Princess Maria, who was married to the Khan of the Mongols.

Sirkeci Region, and Ortaköy:

- **Grand Bazaar** (Kapalı Çarşı)

Constructed in the 15th century, the Grand Bazaar is known to be one of the largest and oldest markets in the world, with more than 1.200 shops and 58 streets. The bazaar has four gates, and is the best place for shopping for souvenirs, jewellery, carpets and basically all traditional Turkish products.

- **Spice Bazaar/ Egyptian Bazaar** (Mısır Çarşısı)

Spice bazaar, is the center for spice trade in Istanbul, and known to be the second largest bazaar of the city. The interesting L-shape of the building, was constructed by Koca Kasım Ağa, and was completed in 1660.

- **Tahtakale and Sultanhamamı**

Being the old and authentic trade centers of Istanbul, both Tahtakale and Sultanhamam are worth visiting. Sultanhamam is famous for its beautiful and rich collection of jewelers, and the atmosphere there is said to be a great example of Mid-Eastern.

- **Ortaköy**

Ortaköy is a district right next to the sea, on the European side of Istanbul. With its beautiful mosque (The Ortaköy Mosque), cafés, bars, the "intellectual" bazaar, and baked jacket potato parlors, Ortaköy is the greatest place to enjoy the view of Bosphorus while breathing the Turkish air.

- **Dolmabahçe Palace** (Dolmabahçe Sarayı)

The Dolmabahçe Palace served as the main administrative center of the Ottoman Empire from 1856 to 1922. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder and first president of the Republic of Turkey, spent the last days of his medical treatment in the palace.

Asian Side:

- **Maiden's/ Leander's Tower** (Kız Kulesi)

Located at the intersection point of the two continents, the tower used to serve as a light house. You can enjoy its cafeteria and restaurant, or you can just simply visit the tower to experience the amazing view of Bosphorus. They have ring service from Kabataş and Üsküdar between 12:00-18:00, so transfer is not a problem.

- **Bağdat Avenue** (Bağdat Caddesi)

Bağdat Avenue is a main street shopping district which runs 6 km from Bostancı to Kızıltoprak. The one way avenue is filled with shopping malls and departments store offering world famous brands. Most of the retail stores are open all week.

Where to Eat?

Istanbul is very famous for it's authentic cuisine. Here are some places with reasonable prices where you can try delicious traditional Turkish meals.

- Pierre Lotti Café

Julien Viaud, the French naval officer who wrote novels under the pen name of Pierre Loti used to come to this Istanbul hilltop overlooking Eyüp and the Golden Horn. It has a broad, magnificent view overlooking the entire Bosphorus. Address: Gumussuyu Balmumcu Sik 1, Eyüp

- Hacı Abdullah

Authentic, traditional Turkish, Ottoman cuisine. The restaurant is famous for its appetizers and its Turkish dishes. Address: Ağacami, Sakızağacı st. No. 17, Taksim

- Tarihi Sultanahmet Köftecisi

Try Turkish meatball in this traditional restaurant located at the Sultanahmet district since 1920 is a nice place to have your lunch. Address: Divanyolu st. No: 20 Sultanahmet

- Develi Kebap

One of the best kabab restaurants in Istanbul. Address: Tepecik Yolu, No 22, Etiler

- Bebek Balıkçısı

Located in Bebek, this old restaurant serves great fish courses. With an unbeaten landscape. Address: Cevet Paşa st. No: 123 Bebek

- Cazayir

Cezayir serves mostly Turkish dishes, but with an innovative twist. The building used to be an Italian schoolhouse for more than 100 years, so you think about the atmosphere. Address: Hayriye St. Galatasaray, Beyoğlu – right behind Lycee de Galatasaray

Bodrum Manti

- Bodrum Manti is a great place to have the traditional Turkish meal "manti"- dumpling and is open 24 hours. Adress: Arnavutköy 1. Cadde no:111 Arnavutköy

Where to Shop?

Istanbul offers many places to shop including department stores, high class shopping districts and local merchants which give you a wide range of possibilities varying from souvenirs and traditional jewelry to world re-known retail clothes. If you want to shop in a large shopping mall offering many stores and restaurants you might want to try the popular malls near the city center. Akmerkez is only 15 minutes walking distance from the Robert College campus. It is one of the oldest malls in Istanbul. It is located in Etiler and has more than 200 shops. Kanyon, located in Levent is easily accessible by the subway line and is mostly preferred because it is an open-air shopping mall. Metro City also located in Levent has direct access from the Levent subway stop. If you want to shop for authentic items in open air the Grand Bazaar and the Egyptian Bazaar are great choices. Districts such as Ortaköy and Taksim are the most famous and crowded districts in the city with many choices for shopping and dining. Nişantaşı is one of the most up-scale venues in Istanbul where you can shop from world famous designer stores and eat in up-scale restaurants.

ROBERT COLLEGE

Founded in 1863 by Cyrus Hamlin and Christopher Robert, Robert College is the first American college established outside the borders of the USA. It is located on the European side of Istanbul, in a campus of 65 acres, encompassing a beautiful ancient grove, extending between Arnavutkoy and Ulus. Robert College has always aimed to graduate students with an appreciation for and understanding of knowledge and ethics, therefore, it has created an environment that fosters learning and self-improvement. Valuing extracurricular activities along with academics, Robert College provides its students with a strong basis to build on throughout their lives. Every year, Robert College hosts a variety of activities that give students an opportunity to excel at addressing an audience, debating, and improving their command of the English language. In 2007, RCIMUN was added to this list as a means for participants to express themselves freely while sticking to parliamentary procedures. Every April since then, the campus has hosted this conference that takes UN as its model. Besides delivering solutions to the ever-lasting problems of the modern world, we recommend that participants take their time to appreciate the beautiful campus, and enjoy the fabulous view of the Bosphorus. The Plateau and the RC Heritage Room are perfect locations where the dazzling panorama lies before you.

ATTRACTIONS

Opening Dinner: The Opening Dinner takes place on the first day of RCIMUN right after the AdHoc meetings. The Opening dinner is a great chance for participants to listen to some music, enjoy delicious food and meet their new committee members. The Opening Dinner is always a great way to start of the conference in a high spirited and pleasant way.

Sightseeing Trip: Istanbul is a remarkable city in terms of it's historical and cultural significance and diversity. We encourage especially our foreign participants to participate in our Sightseeing Trip and get a chance to tour Istanbul's most important landmarks. The Sightseeing Tour will give participants the opportunity to visit the Blue Mosque and Hagia Sophia with professional tour guides and then shop at the Turkish Grand Bazaar.

Boat Trip: RCIMUN's traditional boat trip gives the delegates a great chance to say goodbye to the conference while having fun with their fellow delegates and enjoying the beautiful Istanbul view. The boat leaves from the Arnavutkoy gate of Robert College on Friday afternoon and takes the RCIMUN participants on a remarkable tour along the Bosphorus.