



İstanbul

POP 14 MILLION

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Best Places to Eat

- Klemuri (p118)
- Antiochia (p118)
- Zübeyir Ocakbaşı (p118)
- Meze by Lemon Tree (p121)
- Develi Baklava (p115)

Best Places to Stay

- Hotel Ibrahim Pasha (p111)
- Sirkeci Mansion (p111)
- Hotel Empress Zoe (p111)
- Marmara Guesthouse (p109)
- Marmara Pera (p113)

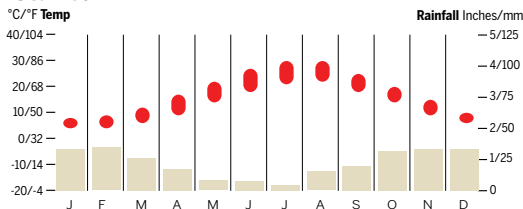
Why Go?

Some ancient cities are the sum of their monuments. But others, such as İstanbul, factor a lot more into the equation. Here, you can visit Byzantine churches and Ottoman mosques in the morning, shop in chic boutiques during the afternoon and party at bars and clubs throughout the night. In the space of a few minutes you can hear the evocative strains of the call to prayer issuing from the Old City's tapering minarets, the sonorous horn of a crowded commuter ferry crossing between Europe and Asia, and the strident cries of a street hawker selling fresh seasonal produce. Put simply, this marvellous metropolis is an exercise in sensory seduction like no other.

Ask locals to describe what they love about İstanbul and they'll shrug, give a small smile and say merely that there is no other place like it. Spend a few days here, and you'll know exactly what they mean.

When to Go

İstanbul



Apr Sunshine and balmy breezes usher in the colourful İstanbul Tulip Festival.

Jun & Jul Venues around town host high-profile classical, jazz and contemporary music festivals.

Sep Heat disperses and locals enjoy the season for *lüfer* (bluefish), a favourite local fish.



Istanbul Highlights

- 1 Uncover the secrets of the seraglio in opulent **Topkapı Palace** (p75).
- 2 Marvel at the interior of **Aya Sofya** (p65), one of the world's truly great buildings.
- 3 Surrender to the steam in an Ottoman-era **hamam** (p106).
- 4 Head to **Beyoğlu** (p123) for drinks at a rooftop bar followed by dinner at one of the many restaurants.
- 5 Admire the extraordinary Byzantine mosaics at the **Kariye Museum** (Chora Church; p93).
- 6 Take a **ferry trip** (p102) along the mighty Bosphorus, up the Golden Horn or to the Princes' Islands.
- 7 Lose yourself in the hidden caravanserais and labyrinthine lanes of the **Grand Bazaar** (p88).
- 8 Contemplate the cutting edge at a **contemporary art gallery** (p94).
- 9 Kick back with the locals at a traditional **çay bahçesi** (tea garden; p122).