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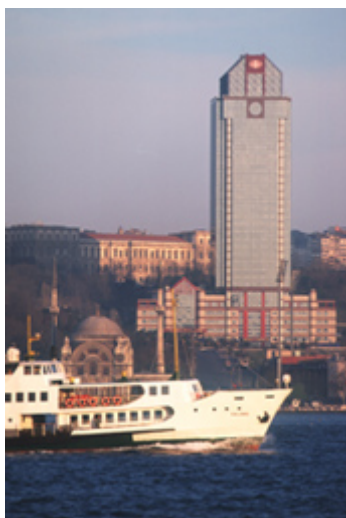
## Istanbul, Turkey

[Istanbul](#) is a dream of a city, part Arabian nights and part cosmopolitan city, which makes for a most enchanting mixture.

History, culture, architecture, the sights, the sounds, the aromas, the flavors of Turkey, conjured up the exotic in my mind, and upon my arrival in Istanbul in March 2006, Turkey exceeded my expectations.

Whenever possible, Edward F. Nesta and I fly the national airline to a destination, so for our trip to Turkey we selected [Turkish Airlines](#), with its direct flight from New York to Istanbul. Turkish Airlines runs two classes of service, business class and economy, and shares its lounge in New York with Alitalia, which is conveniently located next to Gate 3, the departure gate for Turkish Airlines. The lounge is large and comfortably furnished with black leather tables, buttercream leather sofas and chairs, plasma televisions, private rooms, a business area with computers and a printer, and a well-stocked snack area.

Once on board, the Turkish Airlines service continued, with travel amenity kits being distributed to both business and economy classes, which is something of a rarity these days. Business class seats were wide, with wrap headrests. Meals were tasty with ample portions, and the service team was friendly, professional and courteous. I would like to especially thank Purser, Arzu Lbevi Gokbeck and Flight Attendant Onur Bicer who made our flight seamless.



Upon arrival in Istanbul, we took a taxi to our hotel, [The Ritz-Carlton Istanbul](#). This gorgeous 244-room hotel, opened in October 2001, and situated on a hill, provides guests with panoramic views of the Bosphorous Straits, which divide Europe and Asia. The hotel knows how to pamper its guests with Afternoon Tea complete with violin and piano music, their Laveda Spa offers a wide assortment of innovative treatments, their indoor swimming pool features an aquarium, their Fitness Center is open 24-hours, their Çintemani Restaurant has world-class Executive Chef Fabrice Canelle, and their RC Bar has award-winning bartender Cevat Yildirim. The rooms are graciously and opulently decorated, and The Ritz-Carlton Istanbul staff goes out of their way to really create the perfect luxury experience for every guest.

After settling into our Club Room with a view of the Bosphorous and the Dolmabahçe area, we toured the hotel, made reservations for Spa treatments, and then enjoyed a relaxing Afternoon Tea in their Lobby Lounge.

Read articles on **The Ritz-Carlton Istanbul** in the **Hotels and Resorts**, **Restaurants**, **Chefs' Recipes**, **Spas** and **Liquor Cabinet** sections.

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Afterwards, we set out to explore Istanbul. We began by visiting **Taksim Square**, an interesting mix of souvenir and clothing shops, cafés, bars, restaurants and bakeries. In the alleyways, men sat at low tables playing backgammon (tavla) the national game, and the cobblestone streets were filled with people leaving work and enjoying Friday night. We visited **St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church** (Istiklal Caddesi No. 225 Galatasaray) that was completed in 1912 and is the largest church in Istanbul.

We returned to the hotel, changed for dinner, and after looking at the tempting desserts, decided to indulge in a glass of wine and pre-dinner desserts in the Club Lounge, followed by dinner at Çintemani Restaurant. Afterwards, we ended our evening at the RC Bar, where bartender Cevat Yildirim was creating unusual and fabulous cocktails, and listened to live music.



The next morning, after breakfast in the Club Lounge, we visited the **Blue Mosque**, located at Sultanahmet Camii, the largest and most famous mosque in Istanbul with six minarets. Arriving during prayer service, we had to wait until the service was over, and decided to visit the **Carpet and Kilim Museum** located at Sultanahmet, next to the Blue Mosque. The museum has over 70 carpets on display, some of which date back to the 15th century. The museum is open from 9:00 am -12:00 pm and 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm, and is closed on Sundays and Mondays. An entrance fee is charged.

Entering the magnificent **Blue Mosque**, completed in 1616, you suddenly realize why it is called the Blue Mosque, as its walls are covered with more than 20,000 blue znik tiles. Just outside the gates to the Blue Mosque, we saw the **Obelisk of Theodosius**.

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We next visited **HaghiaSophia Museum**(Ayasofya Müzesi), located directly across from the Blue Mosque, and separated by a large park with fountains. Haghia Sophia, built in 535 AD, has a rich history, as it was a church for 916 years, became a mosque in the mid-15th century, and in 1935, it became a museum. It is a Byzantine architectural marvel with a dome of 56 meters in height, and is considered to be one of the Wonders of the World. It is open from Tuesday - Sunday from 9:00 am - 4:30 pm, and an entrance fee is charged.

Turkey is known for its high-quality leather goods, and after visiting many of the leather shops Edward found the perfect soft and supple black leather attaché of excellent quality, which he promptly purchased at a shop just outside the Grand (Covered) Bazaar.



One cannot visit Istanbul without making a trip to the **Grand (Covered) Bazaar** (Kapalı Çar\_i), located in the Old City, a few blocks from the Blue Mosque. Completed in 1481, it has over 4,000 shops, and covers 30,700 square meters on 50 streets, and here you can truly experience the unique sights, sounds, aromas and flavors of Turkey. It was like we had taken a magic carpet ride, and suddenly there were shops offering gold and silver jewelry, shoes, carpets in a dazzling array of colors and designs, exotic lamps, lavish arrangements of 'Turkish delight', brightly colored hand-painted ceramics, leather goods, and much more. Our eyes were literally dazed by the seemingly endless amount of shops and the variety of their offerings. Be prepared to bargain, and although the prices may be better at shops located outside of the Grand Bazaar, the atmosphere and the number of items available make it worth a trip. Open from 8:00 am - 7:00 pm everyday except Sunday.

In our excitement to experience Istanbul, we had forgotten to eat lunch, and were delighted when we found a small bakery selling Simit, the traditional Turkish round ring of bread covered with sesame seeds. We enjoyed our Simit, and then indulged in sampling the various Baklava (filo pastry with honey and walnuts or with honey and pistachios), and Tel Kadayif, a pastry made of shredded wheat with honey and pistachios.

We returned to the hotel laden with purchases. After depositing our new treasures in our room, we enjoyed hors d'oeuvres and a glass of wine in the Club Lounge, while waiting for our friend, Özlem Goksin to join us for dinner. Özlem lives in Istanbul, and she decided that we should experience a kebab restaurant for the traditional tastes of Turkey. We went to **Yüzevler**, (Nispetiye Caddesi No. 10 Etiler), a new and popular restaurant in the stylish Etiler area, where the tables were filled with families, fashionistas and local celebrities. Although the locals were drinking the Turkish national alcohol drink, raki, an anise flavored

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90-proof alcohol that is drunk with water we decided not to partake of this potent libation this evening.



On Sunday, our last day in Istanbul, we awoke early for our Spa treatments at the **Laveda Spa** at [The Ritz-Carlton Istanbul](#). After experiencing a traditional Turkish hamam, followed by a Shiatsu Massage and Sacred Stone Therapy, we emerged refreshed and energized. Read about the **Laveda Spa** the **Spas** sections.

Since many of the shops are closed on Sunday, we went to the **Ortaköy** district to browse their open-air arts and crafts market. Situated among the many vendors, there were restaurants and small stands selling local favorites, including large baked potatoes, which were laden with butter and vegetables, as well as grilled stuffed flat breads.



We love to visit supermarkets during our travels to see what is available. We found a small supermarket located a few blocks away, where the manager, Cemalettin Co\_kun tempted us with still-warm-from-the-oven savory pastries (su böre i), filled with cheese and mashed potatoes, which he insisted that we try, and of course, we did. Still sighing with pleasure from the pastries, we filled our shopping cart with pomegranate syrup and fruit teas, before making a final stop at the bakery to purchase more of the savory pastries to enjoy in the park.

No trip to Istanbul would be complete without experiencing a **ferry ride** on the Bosphorous. Istanbul, divided by the Bosphorous Straits, is the only city in the world that is located on two continents, Europe and Asia. The ferries are located on the pier directly behind the **Ortaköy Mosque**. We took a one-hour boat ride which provided us with an excellent view of Istanbul from the water as we passed the **Rumeli Hisari**, a fortress built in 1452, the **Anadolu Hisari**, the **Göksu Palace**, as well as the many luxurious mansions located on the Asian side, and the many yachts docked in the marinas. The ferry ride cost 3.50 YTL per person (approximately \$2.60 US, with the dollar trading at \$1.34 to the New Turkish Lira, YTL), and combined with the price of our tea of 1.50 YTL each sipped in pretty Turkish glasses, our 'cruise' totaled less than \$7.50 US for the two of us. It was a pleasant way to spend a Sunday afternoon, where locals as well as tourists enjoyed the scenery.

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We walked back to the hotel from Ortaköy, passing the **Çiragan Palace** and the **Dolmabahçe Palace** and **clock tower**, and had a few hors d'oeuvres in the Club Lounge before departing for the airport. We flew [Turkish Airlines](#) to the seaside city of **Bodrum**, often referred to as the "St. Tropez" of Turkey.

Three days later, we flew [Turkish Airlines](#) on their 9:05 am flight back to Istanbul. We arrived back at [The Ritz-Carlton Istanbul](#), where we were warmly greeted, and once settled back into our same Club Room, we had lunch in the Club Lounge, and then went to continue our exploration of Istanbul.



We began our day at the **Egyptian Market**, also called the **Spice Market** (Misir Çar\_isi), located between the Grand Bazaar and the Sultan Beyazit Mosque. Here our senses went on overload with the prevailing aroma of Turkish coffee in the air, as the coffee was ground and measured for the long line of customers, the colorful displays of the pungent spices, the fresh fruits and vegetables, grape leaves, and large selections of many types of Turkish delight, which the vendors urged us to try. One of the more interesting things that we saw at the market were dried eggplant skins tied on a string, which a vendor explained would be placed in hot water, and then filled with meat, rice or vegetables. We made our purchases and left the Market with the aromas and sights still fresh in our minds.



A definite must when visiting Istanbul is the **Topkapi Palace Museum** (Topkapi Sarayi Müzesi) located at Sultanahmet. This spectacular Ottoman Sultanate palace, built for Fatih Sultan Mehmet, once housed over 4,000 people and must be seen, in order to be truly appreciated. The grounds are immense with fountains and gardens. Some of the highlights of the palace include clothing, magnificent jewelry, gem-studded gold thrones, weapons, and an important Chinese, Japanese and European porcelain collection. Allow at least two hours here to really see everything. Topkapi Palace Museum is open everyday except Tuesday, from 9:30 am - 5:00 pm, and an entrance fee is charged.

When we left Topkapi Palace Museum, we saw a sign reading **dösimm**, Turkish Republic, The Ministry of Culture and Tourism Prestige Silver Handicrafts Sale Center, (Bab-I Hümayun Caddesi No: 2/4, Sultanahmet), and decided to visit the shop. The shop had such an interesting collection of quality silver

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that I happily ended up purchasing half of the silver in the shop.

We returned to the hotel, changed for dinner, and met with Chef Fabrice Canelle, who shares his tempting recipes in the **Chefs' Recipes** section. After a memorable dinner at Çintemani Restaurant, we visited the RC Bar to experience one more of Cevat's interesting cocktails, before retiring to our room. Read about Cevat and his cocktail recipes in the **Liquor Cabinet** section.

The next morning, we had breakfast in the Club Lounge, said goodbye to The Ritz-Carlton Istanbul staff, and went to the airport for our [Turkish Airlines](#) flight to New York. As usual when there is much to experience in a place, it seemed that our trip was all too short, but then it does leave us with something to look forward to for the next time.

Some useful Turkish information: in January 2005, the Turkish currency changed from the Turkish Lira (TL) to the New Turkish Lira (YTL), eliminating the profound number of 000s. 100 Ykr = 1YTL, and 1 YTL = 1,000,000 TL. Although the old currency is not used anymore, there are still shops that sometimes display the prices in both YTL and TL. In March 2006, the dollar was trading at approximately \$1.34 US to the YTL.

Although many people in Turkey speak English, listed below are some basic Turkish words and phrases. Even with our limited Turkish vocabulary, we found the Turks to be very helpful, and we were always able to make ourselves understood. It is important to note the pronunciation of the following letters:

c = j

ç = ch

\_ = silent, used to lengthen vowel

\_ = sh

ü = like ur

## Basic Vocabulary

### English

### Turkish

Please

Lütfen

Thank you

Te\_ekkür ederim

You're welcome

Bir \_ey de il

Yes

Evet

No

Hayir

Hello

Merhaba

How much?

Kaç

I do not understand.

Anlamadim

### **Getting Around**

Help!

Imdat!

Where is?

Nerededir?

Left

Sol

Right

Sa

Straight ahead

Düz

I'm ill

Rahatsızım

Allergic to

Alerjisi olmak

### **Drink Vocabulary**

Juice

Meyva suyu

Milk

Süt

Water

Su

Mineral Water

Maden Su

Coffee

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Kahve

Tea

Çay

Sugar

^eker

Beer

Bira

Wine

^arap

Ice

Buz

Cheers!

^erefe

### **Food Vocabulary**

Appetizer

Meze

Beef

Si ur eti

Cheese

Peynir

Chicken

Piliç or Tavuk

Dessert

Tatli

Eggs

Yumurta

Fish

Balik

Lamb



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Koyun eti

Meat

Et

Mutton

Kuzu eti

Soup

Çorba

Veal

Dana eti

Rare

Az pi\_mi\_

Well-done

Iyi pi\_mi\_

Please read other articles on **Istanbul** in the **Hotels and Resorts**, **Chefs' Recipes**, **Restaurants**, **Spas** and **Liquor Cabinet** sections.

Please read other articles on **Turkey** in the [Destinations](#), [Hotels and Resorts](#), [Spas](#), [Restaurants](#), [Chefs' Recipes](#) and **Luxury Products** sections.

For additional information on **Turkey**, please contact: [Turkish Culture and Tourism Office](#), [www.tourismturkey.org](http://www.tourismturkey.org). For Turkish Airlines information, please contact them at [Turkish Airlines](#), [www.turkishairlines.com](http://www.turkishairlines.com).

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