

Week-end in Istanbul

Cultural, Leisure

Country : Turkey May 2019

Life in Istanbul, or more clearly said, living 100% like an Istanbuler, means discovering one's culture. And it does not finish surprising us between the thousand-year-old monuments, its religious and popular districts, its overflowing energy. Istanbul is a city built on two continents for which it bridges over the bosphorus.

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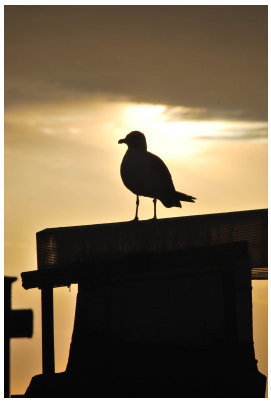
By Olivier Paudex

Bosphorus and city of Istanbul

Istanbul has **14 million inhabitants**. If the city is surprising, it is certainly due to its cultural sharing between East and West. The city is built half on Asia and half on Europe, divided in two by the Bosphorus. It is steeped in history, religious monuments, both Muslim and Christian. We disembark in Istanbul and reach the city center by bus. It is by crossing the bridge that we apprehend the gigantism of the city. Not too much of a weekend to see the essential.





The Bosphorus and the city

The district of Sultanahmet

There are some nice small charming hotels in this district which is undoubtedly the most popular in Istanbul. We cross a lot of tourists and we speak more English than Turkish there. The district is 5min walk from the big square where the famous mosques of the city are built.



View from the hotel on Sultanahmet district

A visit to Istanbul is not to be missed, with its mosques and museums. However, many tourists never leave the **Sultanahmet** district. Not surprising, so much the district abounds in monuments which one can make on foot. It is worthwhile to go a little far from the center, even if it is only to find a restaurant or a bar.

The Blue Mosque

The Blue Mosque is without a doubt, the most photographed building. It has no less than**6 minarets** and many domes. It owes its name to the blue earthenware that decorate its interior.



The minarets of the blue mosque



The interior domes

Saint Sophia Basilica

It is located right next to the blue mosque. Unlike its big sister, it has only**4 minarets**, but its interior is full of mosaics, frescoes and religious symbols.



On the roofs of Saint Sophia

The basilica has often changed its religion over the centuries. There are as many mosaics and Christian symbols as medallions and other gilding from the Muslim world. Without forgetting the Byzantine and Ottoman architecture that have marked its history.

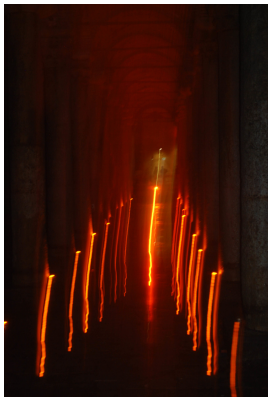
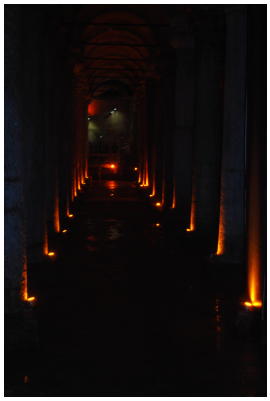




Dome and mosaic

The basilica cistern

Made famous by **Dan Brown's book "Inferno"**, then by **Ron Howard**'s eponymous movie, the basilica cistern is an underground water reservoir built in the 6th century. It has more than 300 columns of 9m high. It can hold up to 80'000 m3 of water. A true haven of coolness, especially in summer.

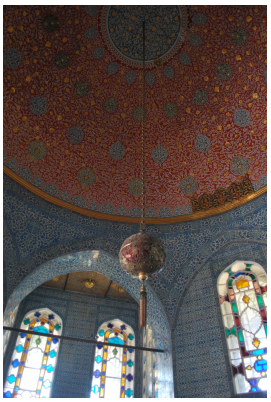





Light effects around the columns of the cistern

The palace of Topkapi

Topkapi Palace was the seat of the Ottoman Sultanate until the **XIXth century**. Today it is a museum and above all a gigantic garden which is worth a visit if you like floral art. The palace is located at the extreme eastern point, going up from the Sultanahmet district.



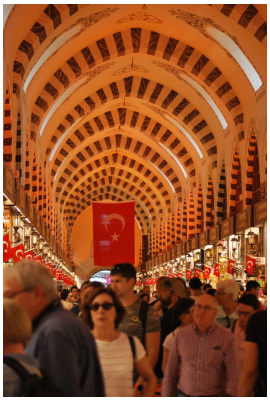




Palace, gildings and mosaics

The Big Bazaar

Originally, the big bazaar was a warehouse. Today it has become the place to be when you want to do business. You meet all kinds of people, from art dealers to spice sellers, from craftsmen to businessmen. All have something to sell and meet in this maze of stores. Tourists come to stroll around in search of a bargain or simply to have a bite to eat. It is a unique place in the world that should not be missed.





The maze of shopping galleries of the Big Bazaar




Spice and exotic fruit stalls





Byzantine lamps store

Street craft and gastronomy

Artisans and merchants play a vital role in the local economy. The natives are not about to trade their businesses for shopping malls in the suburbs. And tourists are asking for more.





Sweetness and know-how

Cruise on the Bosphorus

We are not going to finish the weekend without having sailed on the Bosphorus. There are plenty of tour operators offering cruises, from a simple stroll to a dinner concert. And at nightfall, it's even better.








Cruise on the Bosphorus