

TRANSPORT

As it's the national capital in all but name, getting to İstanbul is easy. There are two international airports, two *otogars* (bus stations) from which international services arrive and depart, and two international rail stations.

Flights, tours and rail tickets can be booked at www.lonelyplanet.com/travel_services.

AIR

Airlines

Most of İstanbul's airline offices are in the streets around Taksim Square, particularly Cumhuriyet Caddesi (see [Map p115](#)), but Turkish Airlines has offices around the city. Travel agencies can also sell air tickets and make reservations. The two major airlines flying domestic routes are [Turkish Airlines](#) (www.thy.com) and [Onur Air](#) (www.onurair.com.tr), though newcomers [Atlasjet](#) (www.atlasjet.com), [Fly Air](#) (www.flyair.com.tr) and [Pegasus Airlines](#) (www.flypgs.com) are also flying routes.

Airports

The city's main airport, [Atatürk International Airport](#) (Atatürk Hava Limanı; flight information ☎ 212-465 3000, 212-465 5555; www.ataturkairport.com), is in Yeşilköy,

23km west of Sultanahmet (the heart of Old İstanbul). The international terminal (Dış Hatlar) is polished and organised. Close by, the domestic terminal (İç Hatlar) is smaller but no less efficient. The city's second international airport, [Sabiha Gökçen International Airport](#) (☎ 216-585 5000; www.sgairport.com) at Kurtköy on the Asian side of the city, is popular with low-cost European airlines, but is nowhere near as convenient to get to and from.

There are car-hire desks, exchange offices, a pharmacy, ATMs and a PTT at the international arrivals area at Atatürk International Airport. There is also a 24-hour [Tourist Information Office](#) (☎ 212-663 0793) that can supply maps, advice and brochures. A 24-hour supermarket is found in the walkway to the metro. The 24-hour left-luggage service charges YTL12 to YTL15 per suitcase per 24 hours; you'll find the booth to your right as you exit customs.

One of the few annoying things about Atatürk Airport is that travellers must pay to use a trolley on either side of immigration. You can pay in lira (YTL1) or euros (€1), which you get back when you return the trolley.

There's a bank, mini-market and PTT at Sabiha Gökçen. Use of trolleys there is free of charge.

CLIMATE CHANGE & TRAVEL

Climate change is a serious threat to the ecosystems that humans rely upon, and air travel is the fastest-growing contributor to the problem. Lonely Planet regards travel, overall, as a global benefit, but believes we all have a responsibility to limit our personal impact on global warming.

Flying & Climate Change

Pretty much every form of motorised travel generates carbon dioxide (the main cause of human-induced climate change) but planes are far and away the worst offenders, not just because of the sheer distances they allow us to travel, but because they release greenhouse gases high into the atmosphere. The statistics are frightening: two people taking a return flight between Europe and the US will contribute as much to climate change as an average household's gas and electricity consumption over a whole year.

Carbon Offset Schemes

Climatecare.org and other websites use 'carbon calculators' that allow travellers to offset the level of greenhouse gases they are responsible for with financial contributions to sustainable travel schemes that reduce global warming – including projects in India, Honduras, Kazakhstan and Uganda.

Lonely Planet, together with Rough Guides and other concerned partners in the travel industry, support the carbon offset scheme run by climatecare.org. Lonely Planet offsets all of its staff and author travel.

For more information check out our website: www.lonelyplanet.com.

GETTING INTO TOWN

Atatürk International Airport

A taxi from the airport to Sultanahmet or Taksim Square costs around YTL25, more if it's between midnight and 6am or if there's heavy traffic.

There's a quick, cheap Light Rail Transit (LRT) service from the airport to Zeytinburnu, from where it's easy to connect with the tram to Sultanahmet, Eminönü and Kabataş (for Taksim Square). The station is on the lower ground floor beneath the international departures hall – follow the 'Rapid Transit' signs down the escalators and right to the station. A ticket to Aksaray costs a mere YTL1.30. Services depart every 10 minutes or so from 5.40am until 1.40am. When you get off the light rail, the tram platform is right in front of you. You'll need to buy another ticket (YTL1.30) and pass through the turnstiles to board. If you miss the stop at Zeytinburnu (try not to), you can continue on the LRT to Aksaray and then walk to the Yusufpaşa tram stop. To find this, exit the station, cross over busy Anadoluhisari Bulvarı and turn right at the Murat Paşa mosque. A short walk will bring you to another major street, Turgut Özal Caddesi (Millet Caddesi), where the tram stop is located. Cross to the stop near the opposite side of the road. Ticket kiosks are located at the tram stop. The tram makes its way down Divan Yolu to Sultanahmet and then terminates at Eminönü. The entire trip from the airport takes around 50 to 60 minutes to Sultanahmet, 60 to 70 minutes to Eminönü and 85-95 minutes to Taksim.

If you are staying near Taksim Square, the [Havaş airport bus](#) (☎ 212-243 3399; www.havas.com.tr) from Atatürk International Airport is your best bet. This departs from outside the arrivals hall. Buses leave at 5am, 6am and then every 30 minutes until 1am; the trip takes between 40 minutes and one hour, depending on traffic. Tickets cost YTL9 (25% more after midnight or before 6am) and the bus stops outside the [Havaş ticket office](#) ([Map p115](#)) on Cumhuriyet Caddesi, just off Taksim Square.

Many hotels will provide a free pick-up service from Atatürk Airport if you stay with them for three nights or more. There are also a number of cheap (but very slow) shuttle bus services from hotels to the airport for your return trip. These charge around YTL7 – check details with your hotel.

Sabiha Gökçen International Airport

Taxis from this airport to the city are expensive. To Taksim you'll be looking at between YTL50 and YTL60; more if it's after midnight or if the traffic is heavy. To Sultanahmet you'll be looking at anywhere between YTL60 and YTL80 depending on the time of day and the traffic conditions.

The [Havaş airport bus](#) (☎ 212-243 3399; www.havas.com.tr) travels from the airport to the Yapı Kredi Plaza in Levent 25 minutes after the arrival of many, but not all, flights. Tickets cost YTL9.50 and the trip takes approximately one hour. From Levent, you can catch a metro to Taksim Square. If you're heading towards the Old City, you'll then need to take the funicular to Kabataş and the tram from Kabataş to Sultanahmet. The service occasionally travels to Taksim – check with the driver.

Hotels rarely provide free pick-up services from Sabiha Gökçen. Shuttle bus services from hotels to the airport for return trips charge around YTL26 but only leave once or twice per day – check details with your hotel.

BOAT

Cruise Ships

Cruise ships arrive at the [Karaköy International Maritime Passenger Terminal](#) ([Map p103](#); ☎ 212-249 5776), just near the Galata Bridge.

Ferries & Seabuses

The most enjoyable way to get around town is by ferry. Crossing between the Asian and European shores, these vessels are as efficient as they are popular with locals. The [İstanbul Deniz Otobüsleri](#) (☎ 212-444 4436; www.ido.com.tr) has fare and timetable information or you can pick up a printed timetable at any of the ferry docks.

On the European side, the major ferry docks are at the mouth of the Golden Horn (Eminönü, Sirkeci and Karaköy), and at Kabataş, 2km past the Galata Bridge, at the end of the tram line from the airport and Sultanahmet.

Information regarding ferry service times is found throughout the Transport chapter and in the Excursions chapter ([p217](#)). The ferries run to two annual timetables: winter (mid-September to mid-June) and summer (mid-June to mid-September). Printed timetables are available from all ferry terminals and an online timetable (in Turkish) is available at www.tdi.com.tr. Tickets (*jetons*) are cheap (usually YTL1.30) and it's possible to use Akbil (see [p233](#)) on most routes.

FERRY TRAVEL

Ferries ply the following routes:

- Eminönü–Üsküdar
- Eminönü–Kadıköy (some stop at Haydarpaşa)
- Sirkeci–Harem (daily car ferry from 7am, then every half-hour until 9.30pm)
- Üsküdar–Karaköy–Eminönü–Kasımpaşa–Fener–Balat–Hasköy–Ayvansaray–Sütlüce–Eyüp
- Eminönü–Moda–Bostancı
- Eminönü–Anadolu Kavağı (Bosphorus Excursions Ferry)
- İstinye–T.Burnu–Emirgan–Kanlıca–Anadolu Hisarı–Kandilli–Bebek–Arnavutköy–Çengelköy
- Kabataş–Kadıköy–Kınalıada–Burgazada–Heybeliada–Büyükdada (Princes' Islands ferry)
- Kabataş–Üsküdar
- Kabataş–Kadıköy
- Beşiktaş–Üsküdar
- Beşiktaş–Kadıköy
- Karaköy–Kadıköy (some stop at Haydarpaşa)
- Karaköy–Üsküdar
- Sarıyer–Rumeli Kavağı–Anadolu Kavağı–Poyraz
- Sirkeci–Harem

There are also *deniz otobüsü* (fast catamaran or seabus) services, but these ply routes that are of less interest to the traveller; they are also more expensive than the ferries. The most useful seabus routes are Bostancı–Karaköy–Eminönü and Bostancı–Princes' Islands.

BUS

The **International İstanbul Bus Station** (Uluslararası İstanbul Otogar; ☎ 212-658 0505) is the city's main bus station for both intercity and international routes. Called simply the *otogar* (bus station), it's in the western district of Esenler, just south of the expressway and about 10km west of Sultanahmet. The LRT service from Aksaray stops here (Otogar stop) on its way from the airport; you can catch this to Aksaray and then connect with a tram to Sultanahmet. If you're going to Beyoğlu, bus 830 leaves from the centre of the *otogar* between 5.45am and 1.40am every three to 25 minutes (depending on the time of day) and takes about an hour to reach Taksim Square. A taxi will cost approximately YTL20 to Sultanahmet, YTL25 to Taksim.

Many bus companies offer a free *servis* (shuttle bus) between the *otogar* and Taksim Square or Sultanahmet. If you're booking a ticket out of İstanbul from a bus office in

Taksim (or elsewhere), ask about this service. You'll be asked to front up at the bus office around an hour before your bus is due to leave and a minibus will pick you up and take you from the office to your bus at the *otogar*. If you've just arrived by bus in İstanbul, ask your bus driver about the *servis*. One should be waiting close by to drop you at Sultanahmet or Taksim Square.

There's a smaller bus station on the Asian shore of the Bosphorus at **Harem** (Map pp46–7; ☎ 216-333 3763), south of Üsküdar and north of Haydarpaşa train station. If you're arriving in İstanbul by bus from anywhere on the Asian side of Turkey, it's always quicker to get out at Harem and take the car ferry to Sirkeci/Eminönü (every 30 minutes from 7.30am to 9.30pm); if you stay on the bus until the *otogar*, you'll add at least an hour to your journey. If you're going the other way, you may want to *catch* your bus here, instead of at the *otogar*; check if this is possible at the bus office.

City Buses

The bus system in İstanbul is extremely efficient. The major bus stands are at Taksim Square, Beşiktaş, Aksaray, Rüstempaşa (Eminönü), Kadıköy and Üsküdar, and most services run between 6.30am and 11.30pm. Destinations and main stops on city bus routes are shown on a sign on the right (kerb) side of the bus (*otobüs*) or on the electronic display at its front.

İETT buses are run by the city and you must have a ticket (YTL1.30) before boarding. Buy tickets from the white booths near major stops and bus, tram and metro stations, or from some nearby shops for a small mark-up (look for 'İETT *otobüs bileti satılır*'). Think about buying enough to last you throughout your stay in the city. You can also use your Akbil (p233) and save some money. Blue private buses regulated by the city called *Özel Halk Otobüsü* run the same routes; these accept cash (pay the conductor) and some accept Akbil.

İETT

İstanbul Elektrik Tramvay ve Tünel (İETT) is responsible for running the public bus, tram, LRT and metro systems in the city. Its excellent website (www.iETT.gov.tr) has useful timetable and route information in Turkish and English. The site also has information on the Akbil system.

AKBİL

İstanbul's public transport system is excellent and the Akbil system is one of its best features. If you're staying in the city for a week or more you should consider getting yourself one of these computerised debit fare tags and save yourself time and money when hopping on and off trams, trains, ferries and buses all around the city. Daily (*günlük*), weekly (*haftalık*), 15-day (*15 günlük*) and monthly (*aylık*) Akbil tags are available at the Akbil Gişesi booths at Sirkeci, Eminönü, Aksaray or Taksim Square bus stands for a deposit of YTL7.50 (daily), YTL40 (weekly), YTL60 (15-day) and YTL100 (monthly). When you have your tag, you can charge it with any amount from YTL4 (daily), YTL20 (weekly), YTL30 (15-day) and YTL50 (monthly) at any Akbil booth or at machines at the Tünel, funicular or metro stations. Press the card's metal button into the fare machine on a bus, ferry, LRT, train or tram and – beep – the fare is automatically deducted from your line of credit. Some turnstiles have a display that shows your Akbil's credit balance as you pass through. Akbil fares are 10% lower than cash or ticket fares. You'll get your deposit back when you return the device.

Intercity & International Buses

Many bus offices are in Beyoğlu, near Taksim Square, on Mete and İnönü Caddesi, as well as at the *otogar* (see *opposite*). This is a list of the top national lines:

Kamil Koç (Map p107; ☎ 252 7223; www.kamilkoç.com.tr) in Turkish; İnönü Caddesi 31, Taksim) Services most major cities throughout Turkey.

Ulusoy (Map p107; ☎ 244 6375; www.ulusoy.com.tr; İnönü Caddesi 59, Taksim) Ulusoy runs twice-weekly buses to and from Greece, Germany and France, as well as services to most major cities in Turkey.

Varan Turizm (Map p107; ☎ 212-251 7474; www.varan.com.tr; İnönü Caddesi 29B, Taksim) Varan is a premium line with routes to major Turkish cities and to several points in Europe, including Athens.

CAR Driving

It makes no sense to drive in İstanbul. The traffic is hectic, free parking is scarce and drivers can be aggressive. If you have a car, we suggest leaving it at your hotel or in a car park (*otopark*) and using public transport, except perhaps for excursions out of the city.

Drivers must have a valid driving licence. An International Driving Permit (IDP) is required for stays of more than three months, or if your licence is from a locality that a Turkish police officer is likely to find obscure. Drive on the right-hand side of the road. The speed limit is 50km/h in urban areas and 120km/h on motorways.

The **Türkiye Turing ve Otomobil Kurumu** (Turkish Touring & Automobile Club; ☎ 212-282 8140; www.turing.org.tr; Oto Sanayi Sitesi Yani, Çamlık Caddesi 4, Levent) has licence and other information you'll need to hire a car or bring your own vehicle into the country.

Between 9am and 5pm it offers a **breakdown service** (☎ 212-278 6214).

Hire

You need to be at least 21 years old, with a year's driving experience, to be able to rent a car. You must pay with a major credit card, or you will be required to make a large cash deposit. Most rental cars have standard gearshift; you'll pay more to have automatic transmission and air-conditioning.

Rental cars are moderately expensive in Turkey, partly due to huge excise taxes paid when the cars are purchased. A week's rental will be between YTL490 and YTL560, depending on the type of car and the time of year. Child safety seats are usually available for an extra charge.

Mandatory third-party liability insurance and KDV (value-added tax) are included in the standard charge. Optional collision damage waiver, theft protection and SOS personal accident and health insurance are also offered by all companies for an extra cost.

If your car incurs any accident damage, or if you cause any, do not move the car before finding a police officer and asking for a *kaza raporu* (accident report). The officer may ask you to submit to a breath-alcohol test. Contact your car-rental company within 48 hours. Your insurance coverage may be void if it can be shown that you were operating under the influence of alcohol or other drugs, were speeding, or if you did not submit the required accident report within 48 hours.

The agencies listed below are among many with 24-hour booths at the arrivals hall in Atatürk Airport's international terminal: **Avis** (Map p115; head office ☎ 212-246 5256; www.avis.com.tr; Hilton Hotel Arcade, Cumhuriyet Caddesi 107, Elmadağ); Atatürk International Airport (☎ 212-662 0852)

MARVELLOUS MARMARAY

Marmaray (www.marmaray.com) is an ambitious public transport infrastructure project aimed at relieving Istanbul's serious traffic congestion. It involves rebuilding the rail line that currently stretches between Yeşilköy on the coast and Sirkeci Station on the Golden Horn; the stretch between Yedikule and Sirkeci will go underground. The line will continue from Sirkeci underneath the Bosphorus to another new underground station in Üsküdar, on the Asian side of the city, before terminating at Söğütlüçesme, past Kadıköy.

The project's completion date is slated as 2010, but this is proving a challenge due to the many important archaeological finds that have been made during excavation works, which are slowing the process down. These include the site of a Byzantine harbour complete with boats at Yenikapı and an ancient port and bazaar at Üsküdar.

Budget (Map p115; head office ☎ 212-296 3196; www.budget.com; Cumhuriyet Caddesi 12, Gezi Apartmanı Kat 4, Elmadağ); Atatürk International Airport (☎ 212-663 0808)

Hertz (Map p127; head office ☎ 216-349 3040; www.hertz.com; Bağdat Caddesi 146, Feneryolu, Kadıköy); Atatürk International Airport (☎ 212-465 5999)

National (Map p115; Taksim office ☎ 212-254 7719; www.nationalcar.com; Şehit Muhtar Mah Aydede Sokak 1/2, Taksim); Atatürk International Airport (☎ 212-465 3546)

DOLMUŞ

A *dolmuş* is a shared minibus; it waits at a specified departure point until it has a full complement of passengers (in Turkish, *dolmuş* means full), then follows a fixed route to its destination. Destinations are displayed in the window of the *dolmuş*. Passengers flag down the driver to get on and indicate to the driver when they want to get off, usually by saying 'inecek var'. Fares vary (pay on board) and are slightly more expensive than those on the municipal buses, but *dolmuşes* are almost as comfortable as taxis, run later into the night in many instances and sometimes ply routes that buses don't service.

FUNICULAR & CABLE-CAR

There are two funiculars (*fünküleri*) and one cable-car (*teleferic*) in the city.

An antique funicular called the Tünel carries passengers between Karaköy, at the base of the Galata Bridge, to Tünel Square, the southwestern end of İstiklal Caddesi. It was closed for restoration at the time of research.

The second funicular carries passengers from Kabataş – at the end of the tram line from Zeytinburnu, through the Old City and over the Galata Bridge – to Taksim Square in Taksim, where it connects to the metro.

A cable-car runs between the waterside at Eyüp to the Pierre Loti Café.

All are short trips (approximately three minutes) and cost YTL1.30. Akbil can be used.

LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT (LRT)

The excellent LRT service connects Aksaray with the airport, stopping at 15 stations, including the *otogar*, along the way. Trains leave every 10 minutes or so from 5.40am to 1.40am. There are plans to extend the service to Yenikapı. Tickets cost YTL1.30 and Akbil can be used.

METRO

From Taksim there is a service stopping at Osmanbey, Şişli, Gayrettepe, Levent and Levent 4. The full trip takes 25 minutes. Services run every five minutes or so from 6.15am to 12.30am Monday to Thursday, 6.15am to 1am on Friday and Saturday and 6.30am to 12.20am on Sunday. Tickets cost YTL1.30 and Akbil can be used.

See [left](#) for details of the one-stop Tünel underground system between Karaköy and Tünel Square and the new funicular from Kabataş to Taksim Square.

TAXI

Istanbul is full of taxis. Some drivers are lunatics; others are con artists – most are neither. If you're caught with the first category and you're about to go into meltdown, say 'yavaş!' (careful/slow down!). Drivers in the second of these categories – the con artists – are unfortunately reasonably common. All taxis have digital meters and must run them, but some of these drivers ask for a flat fare, or pretend the meter doesn't work so they can gouge you at the end of the run. The best way to counter this is to tell them no meter, no ride.

A base rate (drop rate, flag fall) is levied during the daytime (*gündüz*); the night-time (*gece*) rate, from midnight to 6am, is 50% higher. Meters, with LCD displays, flash 'gündüz' or 'gece' when they are started. Occasionally, drivers try to put the night-time (*gece*) rate on during the day, so watch out.

Few taxis have seatbelts. If you catch a taxi over either of the Bosphorus Bridges, it is your responsibility to cover the toll. The driver will add this to your fare.

TRAIN

Long-Distance Trains

All trains from Europe terminate at **Sirkeci Railway Station** (Map p63; ☎ 212-527 0051; Ankara Caddesi, Sirkeci), right next to Eminönü. Outside the station's main door there's a convenient tram up the hill to Sultanahmet, Beyazıt and Zeytinburnu and across the Galata Bridge to Kabataş, from where you can catch a funicular to Taksim Square.

International services from Sirkeci include the Bosfor Ekspres service leaving at 10pm on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, going to Budapest (YTL185.40, 33 hours). There is also a slow daily service (the Dostlu/Filia Ekspres) to Thessaloniki (YTL89.30, 16 hours) departing at 8pm, where you can connect with trains to Athens.

Trains from the Asian side of Turkey, and from points east and south, terminate at **Haydarpaşa Railway Station** (Map p127; ☎ 216-336 4470; Haydarpaşa İstasyon Caddesi, Kadıköy), on the Asian shore of the Bosphorus close to Kadıköy. Ignore anyone who suggests you should take a taxi to or from Haydarpaşa. The ferry from the station is cheap, convenient, pleasant and speedy. Taxis across the Bosphorus are expensive and slow.

Services from Haydarpaşa include eight daily departures to Ankara (YTL11.75

to YTL100). International services from Haydarpaşa include the Transasya Espress to Tehran (YTL98), leaving at 10.55pm on Wednesday; and the Toros Espress to Aleppo (YTL57), leaving at 8.55pm on Sunday.

Haydarpaşa has a left-luggage room (*emanet*), a restaurant serving alcoholic beverages, numerous snack shops, left-luggage lockers, bank ATMs and a small post office (PTT).

Local Trains

There are two suburban train lines (*banliyö treni*) in Istanbul. The first rattles along the Sea of Marmara shore from Sirkeci Railway Station, around Seraglio Point to Cankurtaran, Kumkapı, Yenikapı and a number of stations before it terminates past Atatürk International Airport at Halkalı. This is currently being rebuilt (see the Marvellous Marmaray boxed text, [opposite](#)). The second runs from Haydarpaşa railway station to Gebze, via Bostancı. The trains are dirty and decrepit but reasonably reliable (nearly every half-hour) and cheap (YTL1.30 to YTL1.50). Akbil can be used.

TRAM

An excellent tramway (*tramvay*) service runs from Zeytinburnu (where it connects with the airport LRT) to Sultanahmet and Eminönü, and then across the Galata Bridge to Karaköy (to connect with the Tünel) and Kabataş (to connect with the funicular to Taksim Square). Trams run every five minutes from 6am to midnight. The fare is YTL1.30 and Akbil can be used.

A two-stop antique tram runs along İstiklal Caddesi between Tünel and Taksim Squares in Beyoğlu.

A tram also runs between Kadıköy Square on the Asian side and the exclusive residential suburb of Moda.

DIRECTORY

BUSINESS HOURS

Opening hours vary wildly across businesses and services in İstanbul. Actual opening hours are cited with every restaurant, bar, shop and museum listing throughout this book. The following is a very general guide:

Banks 8.30am to noon and 1.30pm to 5pm Monday to Friday.

Grocery shops 6am or 7am to 7pm or 8pm.

Offices Government and business hours are usually 8am or 9am to noon and 1.30pm to 5pm Monday to Friday; however during Ramazan (p239) the work day is shortened.

Post Offices 8.30am to 12.30pm and 1.30pm to 5.30pm.

Shops 9am to 6pm or 7pm Monday to Saturday; some shops close for lunch (noon to 1.30pm or 2.30pm); some stay open late and others are open seven days.

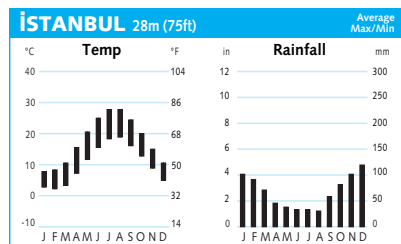
CHILDREN

Your child (*çocuk*) or children (*çocuklar*) will be treated indulgently in İstanbul. Given the high Turkish birth rate, they'll have lots of company, too. The larger hotels can arrange for day-care (*kreş*) and baby-sitting services. Charges are usually negotiated directly with the childcare centre or baby-sitter. Chains like Mothercare have opened large stores in major shopping malls such as Cevahir and Akmerkez, and stock everything you could possibly need. Disposable nappies (*bebek bezi*) and formula are sold at supermarkets. The best brands of nappies are Prima and Huggies.

Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children* offers useful general advice for families travelling with children.

CLIMATE

The best times to visit İstanbul are around spring and autumn, roughly from April to



May and from September to October, when the climate is perfect. During July and August it is hot and steamy; a lot of İstanbullular head for the west and south coasts over these months. Chill winter winds and snow are common in winter.

CONSULATES

Embassies (*büyükelçiliği*) are in Ankara, the national capital. The following countries are among many who have consulates (*konsoloslugu*) in İstanbul:

Australia (☎ 212-243 1333; Asker Ocağı Caddesi 15, Suzer Plaza Kat 2, Elmadağ, Şişli)

Canada (Map p107; ☎ 212-251 9838; İstiklal Caddesi 373/5, Beyoğlu)

Egypt (☎ 212-324 2180; Akasyalı Sokak 26, 4 Levent)

France (Map p107; ☎ 212-334 8730; İstiklal Caddesi 8, Taksim)

Germany (Map p107; ☎ 212-334 6100; İnönü Caddesi 16/18, Taksim)

Greece (Map p107; ☎ 212-245 0596; Turnacıbaşı Sokak 32, Galatasaray)

Iran (Map p107; ☎ 212-513 8230; Ankara Caddesi 1/2, Çağaloğlu)

Israel (☎ 212-317 6500; Yapı Kredi Plaza, Blok C, Kat 7, Levent)

Italy (Map p107; ☎ 212-243 1024; Palazzo di Venezia, Tomtom Kaptan Sokak 15, Galatasaray)

Japan (☎ 212-317 4600; Büyükdere Caddesi, Tekfen Tower 4, Levent)

Netherlands (Map p107; ☎ 212-393 2121; İstiklal Caddesi 393, Tünel)

Spain (☎ 212-270 2465; Karanfil Aralığı Sokak 16, Levent)

Syria (Map p115; ☎ 212-232 6721; Maçka Caddesi 59, Rallı Apt 3, Nişantaşı)

UK (Map p107; ☎ 212-334 6400; Meşrutiyet Caddesi 34, Tepebaşı)

USA (☎ 212-335 9000; Kaplıcalar Mevkii 2, İstinye)

COURSES

Belly Dancing

Les Arts Turcs (Map p50; ☎ 212-458 1318, 212-520 7743; www.lesartsturcs.com; İncilli Çavuş Sokak 37, Kat 3, Sultanahmet;

☎ 10am-8pm) can organise private lessons in Turkish-style belly dancing for YTL80 per hour for one or two participants.

Cooking

See p157 for details of cooking courses in İstanbul.

Handicrafts

The historic **Caferağa Medresesi** (Map p63; ☎ 212-513 3601; www.tkhv.org; Caferiye Sokak, Sultanahmet) is the home of the Turkish Cultural Services Foundation, which runs courses for locals and travellers in techniques such as calligraphy, miniature painting, marbling, binding and glass painting. Courses are organised into 2½-hour sessions one day per week over three months and cost YTL360. It also occasionally organises day courses costing YTL36.

Language

The best-known Turkish-language courses for native English speakers are run by **Taksim Dilmer** (☎ 212-292 9696; www.dilmer.com; Tank Zafer Tunaya Sokak 18, Taksim). On offer are eight-week courses (96 hours total) costing YTL670; four-week courses (80 hours total) costing YTL560; and eight-week evening courses (72 hours total) costing YTL500. Classes have a maximum of 14 students. Other language schools include **EF Language School** (www.turkishlesson.com), **Spoken Turkish** (www.spokenenglish.com) and **Tömer** (www.tomer.com.tr).

CUSTOMS REGULATIONS

İstanbul's Atatürk International Airport uses the red and green channel system, randomly spot-checking passengers' luggage. Items valued over US\$15,000 must be declared and may be entered in your passport to guarantee that you take the goods out of the country. You're allowed to bring two bottles of wine, one carton (200) of cigarettes, 1.5kg of coffee and 10 cigars (100 cigars if they are purchased from the duty-free shop at the airport arrivals hall). There's no limit to the amount of Turkish liras or foreign currency you can bring into the country. It's illegal to take antiquities out of the country. Check www.gumruk.gov.tr for more information.

ELECTRICITY

Electricity in İstanbul is supplied at 220V, 50Hz, as in Europe. Plugs (*fış*) are of the

European variety, with two round prongs. There are infrequent power cuts across the city, so it's a good idea to travel with a torch (flashlight) in your bag or pocket. Check www.kropla.com for more information.

EMERGENCY

Ambulance (☎ 112)

Fire (☎ 110)

Police (☎ 155)

Tourism police (☎ 212-527 4503)

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

Homosexuality isn't illegal in Turkey, but neither is it officially legal. There's an ambivalent attitude towards it among the general population, though there are sporadic reports of violence towards gays, and conservative İstanbullular frown upon open displays of affection between persons of the same sex.

Lambda (Map p107; ☎ 212-245 7068; www.lambdaistanbul.org; Katip Çelebi Mah. Tel Sokak 28/6 Kat 5, Beyoğlu) is the Turkish branch of the international Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Liberation Group. It organises occasional events at its **information centre** (☎ 3-8pm weekdays, 1-8pm weekends).

The monthly *Time Out İstanbul* mag includes gay and lesbian listings. **Kaos GL** (www.geocities.com/kaosgl) is the country's only gay and lesbian magazine; it's published in Turkish only.

Pride Travel Agency (Map p50; ☎ 212-527 0671; www.travelagencyturkey.com; İncilli Çavuş Sokak 33/11, Ateş Pasajı Kat 2, Sultanahmet) is a well-regarded gay-owned and gay-run travel agency specialising in booking accommodation and tours for gay travellers.

For more information about gay and lesbian issues in the city, see the boxed text, p183.

HEALTH

Food & Water

Travellers in Turkey experience a fair amount of travellers diarrhoea (the sultan's revenge) and it's possible that you'll pick up a bout in İstanbul, particularly if you eat street food (see the boxed text Fancy Some Bacteria with That?, p148).

DINING PRECAUTIONS

In lokantas choose dishes that look freshly prepared and sufficiently hot.

Beware of milk products and dishes containing milk that have not been properly

refrigerated. If you want a rice pudding (*süt-lac*) or some such dish with milk in it, choose a shop that has lots of them in the window, meaning that a batch has been made recently. In general, choose things from trays, pots etc that are fairly full rather than almost empty. Eating some fresh yogurt every day can also help to keep your digestive system in good condition.

DRINKING PRECAUTIONS

Tap water in İstanbul is chlorinated, but is still not guaranteed to be safe (most locals don't drink it). Spring water is sold everywhere in 0.33L, 1.5L and 3L plastic bottles and is very cheap.

Illnesses

FOOD POISONING & TRAVELLERS DIARRHOEA

Food-poisoning symptoms are headaches, nausea and/or stomachache, diarrhoea, fever and chills. If you get food poisoning, go to bed and stay warm. Drink lots of fluids; preferably hot tea without sugar or milk. Chamomile tea (*papatya çayı*) can ease a queasy stomach.

Simple things like a change of water, food or climate can all cause a mild bout of diarrhoea, but a few rushed toilet trips with no other symptoms is not indicative of a major problem.

Dehydration is the main danger with any diarrhoea, particularly in children or the elderly, as dehydration can occur quite quickly.

Gut-paralysing drugs such as loperamide or diphenoxylate can be used to bring relief from the symptoms, although they do not actually cure the problem. Only use these drugs if you do not have access to toilets, eg if you *must* travel. Note that these drugs are not recommended for children under 12 years.

If you experience diarrhoea with blood or mucus (dysentery), any diarrhoea with fever, profuse watery diarrhoea, persistent diarrhoea not improving after 48 hours or severe diarrhoea, antibiotics may be required. These symptoms suggest a more serious cause of diarrhoea and in these situations gut-paralysing drugs should be avoided. A stool test may be necessary to diagnose what bug is causing your diarrhoea, so seek medical help urgently.

Fluid replacement is important. Weak black tea with a little sugar, soda water, or soft drinks allowed to go flat and diluted 50% with bottled water are all good. You need to drink at least the same volume of fluid that you are

losing in bowel movements and vomiting. Urine is the best guide to the adequacy of replacement – if you have small amounts of concentrated urine, you need to drink more. Keep drinking small amounts often. Stick to a bland diet as you recover.

Other Health Risks

Turks smoke like chimneys. If you are asthmatic or allergic and have difficulty coping with cigarette smoke, you'll find İstanbul challenging because there are so few places to escape it. Nonsmoking restaurants and bars are almost unknown, taxi drivers smoke incessantly and few hotels have designated nonsmoking rooms.

Vaccinations

You need no special inoculations before entering Turkey unless you're coming from an endemic or epidemic area. However, do discuss your requirements with a doctor. Consider typhoid fever and hepatitis A and B vaccinations if you plan to travel off the beaten track in Turkey; also make sure that your tetanus/diphtheria and polio vaccinations are up to date (boosters are necessary every 10 years).

A rabies vaccination should be considered for those who plan to stay for a month or longer in Turkey, where rabies is common. Rabid dogs have been a problem in İstanbul in the recent past, but the council now vaccinates dogs (the yellow tag on the ear shows they've been vaccinated) and the danger seems to have been alleviated somewhat.

HOLIDAYS

The official Turkish calendar is the Gregorian (Western) one. Friday is the Muslim holy day, but it is not a holiday. The day of rest, a secular one, is Sunday.

Religious Holidays

Religious festivals, two of which (Şeker Bayramı and Kurban Bayramı) are public holidays, are celebrated according to the Muslim lunar Hejira calendar. As the lunar year is about 11 days shorter than the Gregorian one, Muslim festivals occur 11 days earlier each year.

Muslim days begin at sundown. Thus a Friday holiday will begin on Thursday at sunset and last until Friday at sunset.

For major religious and civic holidays there is also a half-day vacation for preparation,

called *arife*, preceding the start of a festival; shops and offices close about noon, and the festival begins at sunset.

Day-to-day business in İstanbul shuts down during religious holidays, and roads and flights out of town are full of locals escaping to the coast or mountains. Hotels in town and flights into the city can be busy with people from other parts of Turkey and the Middle East who have decided to escape to İstanbul.

RAMAZAN (RAMADAN)

During the Holy Month of Ramadan, called Ramadan in other Muslim countries, a good Muslim lets *nothing* pass the lips during daylight: no eating, drinking or smoking.

The fast is broken traditionally with flat *pide* (bread). Lavish *iftar* (breaking of the fast) dinners are given and may last far into the night. Before dawn, drummers circulate throughout the town to awaken the faithful so they can eat before sunrise.

Although many İstanbullular observe the fast, most restaurants and cafés open to serve non-Muslims and locals who are not. It's polite to avoid ostentatious public smoking, eating, drinking and drunkenness during Ramadan.

Ramazan starts on 2 September 2008 and 22 August 2009. The 27th day of Ramazan is *Kadir Gecesi* (Night of Power) when the Quran was revealed and Mohammed appointed the Messenger of God.

Also see the boxed text Ramazan in the Hippodrome, p57.

ŞEKER BAYRAMI

This is a three-day festival at the end of Ramazan. *Şeker* (shek-eh) is sugar or candy. During this festival children traditionally go door to door asking for sweet treats, Muslims exchange greeting cards and pay social calls, and everybody enjoys drinking lots of tea in broad daylight after fasting for Ramazan. The festival is a national holiday when banks and offices are closed, and hotels, buses, trains and planes are heavily booked.

KURBAN BAYRAMI

Called Eid al-Adha in Arabic countries, this is the most important religious holiday of the year. Meaning Sacrifice Holiday, it is a four-day festival commemorating Abraham's near-sacrifice of his son on Mt Moriah (Genesis 22; Quran, Sura 37). Right after the early morning prayers on the actual day of Bayram, the head of the household sacrifices a sheep. A feast

is prepared, with much of the meat going to charity. Almost everything closes, including banks, and public transport is crowded with families heading for their ancestral homes, usually in the country.

Secular Holidays

Banks, offices and government services close for the day on the five secular public holidays per year. These are New Year's Day (1 January), National Sovereignty & Children's Day (23 April), Youth & Sports Day (19 May), Victory Day (30 August) and Republic Day (29 October).

INTERNET ACCESS

There are internet cafés all over İstanbul, usually filled with adolescents playing computer games. Look for internet cafés that advertise having an ADSL connection; other places can be frustratingly slow. Most hostels and hotels now also offer wi-fi internet access for their guests. For city hotspots, check www.ttnet.tnet.net.tr/eng.

When in a local internet café, you may have to use a Turkish keyboard, in which case you need to be aware that Turkish has two 'i's: the familiar dotted 'i' and the less-familiar dotless 'ı'. Unfortunately the one in the usual place is the dotless 'ı' on a Turkish keyboard; you will need to make sure you use the correct dotted 'i' when typing in a web or email address. To create the @ symbol, hold down the 'q' and the right-hand ALT keys at the same time.

The following places have relatively fast connections and staff who know what they're talking about.

Café Turka Internet Café (Map p50; ☎ 212-514 6551; Divan Yolu Caddesi 22/2, Sultanahmet; per hr YTL2.50; ☹ 9am-2am) This place is always full of backpackers and Sultanahmet locals, who come to check their email and drink tea while lolling on the beanbag chairs. It's on the 2nd floor above SDC Turizm.

Robin Hood Internet (Map p107; ☎ 212-244 8959; Yeni Çarşı Caddesi 24/4, Galatasaray; per hr YTL2; ☹ 9am-11pm Mon-Sat, 11am-10pm Sun) Opposite the Galatasaray Lycée, this friendly place has lots of terminals inside and wi-fi access on its balcony. Coffee, tea and sandwiches are available. It's on the 4th floor up a steep flight of stairs.

MAPS

Lonely Planet produces a handy, laminated İstanbul city map that includes a walking tour.

Free maps in several different languages are usually available from tourist information offices. English maps are sometimes available in the arrivals hall at Atatürk International Airport. For more detailed guidance, look for *Sokak Sokak İstanbul* (İstanbul Street by Street) in bookshops. It costs YTL50.

MEDICAL SERVICES

The fact that Turkey doesn't have reciprocal health-care arrangements with other countries means that having travel insurance is highly advisable.

For minor problems, it's customary to ask at a chemist/pharmacy (*eczane*) for advice. Sign language usually suffices to communicate symptoms and the pharmacist will prescribe treatment on the spot. Drugs requiring a prescription in Western countries are often sold over the counter (except for the most dangerous or addictive ones) and will often be cheaper, too. Ensure you know the generic name of your medicine; the commercial name may not be the same in Turkey. See the Language chapter for a list of medical terms; for a more comprehensive list, get a copy of Lonely Planet's *Turkish Phrasebook*. The word for hospital is '*hastanesi*'.

Most doctors in Turkey speak English and half of all the physicians in İstanbul are women. If a woman visits a male doctor, it's customary to have a companion present during any physical examination or treatment, as there is not always a nurse available to serve in this role.

If it's an emergency and you want to try a public hospital, consider **Taksim Hastanesi** (Emergency Hospital; [Map p107](#); ☎ 212-252 4300; Siraselviler Caddesi, Çhangir; ☹ 24hr) The doctors speak English, and charges are the same whether or not you're a foreign visitor/resident or a Turkish citizen.

Though they are expensive, it's probably easiest to visit one of the private hospitals listed below if you need medical care when in İstanbul. The standard of care given by these places is generally quite high and you will have no trouble finding staff who speak English.

Alman Hastanesi (German Hospital; [Map p107](#); ☎ 212-293 2150; Siraselviler Caddesi 119, Taksim; ☹ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-5pm Sat) This hospital is a few hundred metres south of Taksim Square on the left-hand side. It has eye and dental clinics, German administration and English-speaking staff. A standard consultation costs YTL120. Credit cards are accepted.

American Hastanesi (American Hospital; [off Map p115](#); ☎ 212-311 2000; Güzelbahçe Sokak 20, Nişantaşı ☹ 24hr emergency department) About 2km northeast of Taksim Square, this hospital has a US administration (all doctors speak English) and a dental clinic. A standard consultation costs YTL140. Credit cards are accepted.

MONEY

The unit of currency is the *Yeni Türk Lirası* (New Turkish Lira; YTL). Coins come in amounts of 1, 5, 10, 25 and 50 kuruş and notes in 5, 10, 20, 50 and 100 lira.

In this book, we have cited prices for hotels and organised tours in euros, as this reflects the reality on the ground. All other prices are in YTL.

Also see the exchange-rate table in the Quick Reference section on the inside front cover.

ATMs

Automated teller machines (ATMs, cash-points) are common in İstanbul. Virtually all of them offer instructions in English, French and German and will pay out Turkish liras when you insert your bank debit (cash) card. ATMs will also pay cash advances on Visa and Mastercard. The limit on cash withdrawals is generally YTL600 to YTL800 per day, though this varies from bank to bank.

All of the major Turkish banks and some smaller banks have ATMs; Akbank and Yapı Kredi are the most common. The specific machine you use must be reliably connected to the major ATM networks' computers via telephone lines. Look for stickers with the logos of these services (Cirrus, Maestro, Plus Systems etc) affixed to the machine. If the connection is not reliable, you may get a message saying that the transaction was refused by your bank (which may not be true) and your card will (hopefully) be returned to you.

Changing Money

There are 24-hour exchange bureaux (*döviz bürosu*) in the arrivals hall at Atatürk International Airport that offer rates comparable to those offered by bureaux in the city. Count the money you're given carefully and save your currency-exchange receipts (*bordero*), as you may need them to reconvert Turkish liras at the end of your stay.

US dollars and euros are easily changed at exchange bureaux. They are also often accepted as payment without being changed.

Rates are similar whichever bureau you go to, with the possible exception of those in the tourist precinct of Sultanahmet. Bureaux are open long hours (at a minimum, between 9am and 7pm). You will usually need to show your passport when changing cash.

As Turkish liras are fully convertible, there is no black market.

Credit Cards

Most hotels, car-rental agencies, shops, pharmacies, entertainment venues and restaurants will accept Visa and Mastercard; Amex isn't as widely accepted as the others and Diner's isn't accepted often. Budget hostels and hotels, and basic eateries such as *lokantas*, *pideci*s, *kebabçis* and *börekçis*, usually accept cash only.

Travellers Cheques

If you have travellers cheques, you will have to change them at a bank or post office. Exchange bureaux do not handle them. You'll need to show your passport.

NEWSPAPERS & MAGAZINES

Local daily newspapers are in full lurid colour featuring scantily clad women squeezed between the advertisements. The journalistic content is best left unmentioned. Of prime interest to visitors is the *Turkish Daily News* ([www.turkishdailynews.com.tr](#)), an English-language daily newspaper published in Ankara and sold for YTL1.50 in İstanbul. It has some international news and an oversupply of self-important editorial opinion and is in hot competition with two newish English-language dailies: the *New Anatolian* ([www.thenewanatolian.com](#); YTL1) and *Today's Zaman* ([www.todayszaman.com](#); YTL1.50).

The *Guide İstanbul* is published bi-monthly and runs listings of restaurants, shops and other services. Features can be interesting, but often read as advertorial. It costs YTL5.50.

There are monthly Turkish and English editions of the *Time Out İstanbul* ([www.timeout.com.tr](#)) magazine. Like the *Guide İstanbul*, this has a large listings section. Its features are particularly interesting, and it is the best source of details about upcoming events in town. It costs YTL4. Time Out also publishes an annual shopping guide (in Turkish).

The glossy magazine *Cornucopia* has excellent restaurant reviews and articles on Anatolian arts, culture, history and literature. It's published three times per year and costs YTL20.

You can also buy the big international papers such as the *International Herald Tribune*, *Le Monde* and the *Guardian* from newsstands. Be sure to check the date on any international paper before you buy it. The best selection of international magazines can be found at the Remzi Kitabevi bookshops at Akmerkez and Kanyon (see [p143](#)).

ORGANISED TOURS

The following companies offer tours of the city: **Kirkit Voyage** ([Map p50](#); ☎ 212-518 2282; [www.kirkit.com](#); Amiral Taffid Sokak 12, Cankurtaran; tours €23-50; ☹ 10am-8pm) This small agency in the middle of the main hotel district in Sultanahmet specialises in tailoring walking tours for groups of two or more. You can choose from its 'Classic İstanbul', 'Ottoman İstanbul', 'Byzantine İstanbul' and 'Old Pera: The Hills of Beyoğlu' half- and full-day tours, as well as specialised tours such as 'İstanbul: The Unusual Way', which explores *hans* (caravansaries) around the Grand Bazaar. Other tours visit sights by public transport and minibus. It can also organise private guides (€110 per day, €80 per half-day).

Les Arts Turcs ([Map p50](#); ☎ 212-458 1318, 212-520 7743; [www.lesartsturcs.com](#); İncili Çavuş Sokak 37, Kat 3, Sultanahmet; tours €35-85; ☹ 10am-8pm) This friendly company, which has a strong arts and culture bias, organises a wide range of 'off-the-beaten-path walking tours' of neighbourhoods around the city. There are special tours of Jewish, Armenian and Greek neighbourhoods and to the Princes' Islands. It also runs a highly recommended tour to a Dervish ceremony in Fatih (see [p109](#)). At the time of research, the company was planning to relocate its office to İshakpaşa Caddesi 6, Cankurtaran, next to the entrance to Topkapı Palace ([Map p63](#)).

Senkron Travel Agency ([Map p50](#); ☎ 212-638 8340; [www.senkrontours.com](#); Arasta Bazaar 51, Sultanahmet; tours €25-60; ☹ 8am-9pm) This professional outfit offers 10 different bus tours, including a day tour of the Bosphorus and Dolmabahçe Palace and one of the Christian highlights of the city.

POST

Post offices, marked by black-on-yellow signs, are traditionally known as PTTs (*peh-teh-teh*; *Posta*, *Telefon*, *Telegraf*). İstanbul's **Central Post Office** (Merkez Postane; [Map p63](#); Şehinşah Pehlivi Caddesi, Eminönü) is several blocks southwest of Sirkeci Railway Station. It has a section open 24 hours a day, where you can make phone calls, buy stamps and send and receive faxes.

There's a **PTT booth** ([Map p50](#)) outside Aya Sofya on Aya Sofya Meydanı in Sultanahmet, which is open 9am to 4pm Tuesday to Sunday. There are PTTs in the **law courts** ([Map p50](#)) on İmran

Öktem Caddesi in Sultanahmet; off İstiklal Caddesi at **Galatasaray Square** (Map p107); near the **Galata Bridge** (Map p103) in Karaköy; and in the southwestern corner of the **Kapalı Çarşı** (Map p78) near the Havuzlu Restaurant on Gani Çelebi Sokak.

The *yurtdışı* slot is for mail to foreign countries, *yurtiçi* is for mail to other Turkish cities, and *şehirçi* is for mail within İstanbul. Mail delivery is fairly reliable. Postcards to Europe cost YTL1 and to all other destinations YTL1.10.

If you decide to ship something home, don't close your parcel before it has been inspected by a customs official. Take packing and wrapping materials with you to the post office. Parcels sent by surface mail to Europe cost YTL25 for the first kilogram, then YTL3.50 for every extra kilogram; mailing to the US and Australasia is more expensive.

The easiest way to send a parcel is by courier; there is a **DHL office** (☎ 212-444 0040) conveniently located on Cumhuriyet Caddesi just north of Taksim Square. Be prepared for a hefty charge, though.

SAFETY

Pedestrian Safety

As a pedestrian, give way to cars and trucks in all situations, even if you have to jump out of the way. The sovereignty of the pedestrian is recognised in law but not out on the street.

Police

Blue-clad officers are part of a national force designated by the words *polis* or *emniyet* (security). Under normal circumstances you will have little to do with them. If you do encounter them, they will judge you partly by your personal appearance. If you look tidy and 'proper', they'll be on your side. If you're dressed carelessly they may not be as helpful.

Other blue-clad officers with peaked caps are market inspectors (*belediye zabıtası*). You won't have much to do with them.

Racial Discrimination

Turkey is not ethnically diverse. Its racial mix is mostly among subgroups of the Caucasian group, with admixtures (sometimes ancient) of Asian races. Recent immigration has largely been from Russia and Eastern Europe. This means that travellers who are

Asian or black stand out as being different and can be treated unacceptably as a consequence. As well as harassment, there have been isolated incidents of violence towards blacks, allegedly at the hands of individual members of the police force.

Theft & Robbery

Theft is not generally a big problem and robbery (mugging) is comparatively rare, but don't let İstanbul's relative safety lull you. Take normal precautions. Areas to be particularly careful in include Aksaray/Laleli, the city's red-light district; the Grand Bazaar (pick-pocket central); İstiklal Caddesi in Beyoğlu; and Galipdede Caddesi in Tünel, where bag snatching sometimes occurs.

Traffic Accidents

It's worth mentioning that Turkey has one of the world's highest motor-vehicle accident rates. Drive very defensively. A massive safety campaign is under way, but its full effects will not be felt for some years.

TELEPHONE & FAX

If you are in European İstanbul and wish to call a number in Asian İstanbul, you must dial 0, followed by ☎ 216. If you are in Asian İstanbul and wish to call a number in European İstanbul use ☎ 212. Do not use a prefix (that is, don't use the 0 or 212/6) if you are calling a number on the same shore.

Country code (☎ 90)

European İstanbul (☎ 212)

Asian İstanbul (☎ 216)

Code to make an intercity call (☎ 0 + local code)

International access code (☎ 00)

Directory inquiries (☎ 118)

International operator (☎ 115)

Türk Telekom (www.telekom.gov.tr) has a monopoly on landline services, and it provides an efficient if costly service. You can direct-dial within Turkey and overseas with little difficulty.

If you're only going to make one or two local calls, it's best to look for a booth with a sign reading *kontrollü telefon* (metered telephone); after making your call here the phone's owner will read the meter and charge you accordingly. The cost of a local call depends on what the phone's owner charges for each *kontör* (unit).

Public phones are located outside PTTs, in most major public buildings, in public squares and in train and ferry stations. You'll need to buy a phonecard to use one (see below).

Fax

Most PTTs will send and hold faxes for you.

Mobile Phones

Mobile reception is very good in İstanbul and locals have embraced the technology wholeheartedly. All mobile numbers start with a four-figure code beginning with ☎ 05.

If you want to use your home phone here you should note that Turkey uses the standard GSM network operating on 900Mhz or 1800Mhz. Most mobiles can connect with **Turkcell** (www.turkcell.com.tr), **Telsim** (www.telsim.com.tr) or **Avea** (www.avea.com.tr) networks. If you want to buy a prepaid SIM card (*hazır kart*) while you're here, we suggest you stick to these three big networks. To buy a SIM card you'll need to show your passport to the dealer and fill out an application form. The dealer will then send this through to the network provider so that your account can be activated.

Phonecards

There are two types of phonecard (*telefon kartı*): the regular floppy version (*manyetik kart*) or a rigid 'smart kart'. They cost about the same and are both available at telephone shops or centres. To use these cards you call the national toll-free number, put in the PIN number on the card and make your call. Readily available phonecards usually come in denominations of 50-*kontör* (YTL3.75), 100-*kontör* (YTL7.50), 200-*kontör* (YTL15) and 350-*kontör* (YTL19). You'll need a 350-*kontör* card to make an international call. You can't use these cards with mobile phones. Reduced rates for international calls are in effect from 10pm to 9am and all day Sunday.

TIME

İstanbul time is East European Time, two hours ahead of Coordinated Universal Time (UTC, alias GMT), except in the warm months, when clocks are turned ahead one hour. Daylight-saving (summer) time usually begins at 1am on the last Sunday in March and ends at 2am on the last Sunday in October.

Turks use the 24-hour clock.

TOILETS

In most public toilets you must pay around YTL0.50. Instead of providing toilet paper, these toilets are equipped with a tap and receptacle for water or a little copper tube that spurts water where needed. Some toilets are tiled holes in the ground rather than sit-down numbers.

Basic public toilets can be found near the big tourist attractions and transport hubs. Some are dirty, others quite acceptable. Every mosque also has a toilet.

TOURIST INFORMATION

The **Ministry of Culture & Tourism** (www.kultur.gov.tr) runs the following tourist information offices: **Atatürk International Airport** (☎ 212-573 4136; ☎ 24hr) In the international-arrivals area.

Beyazıt Square (Hürriyet Meydanı; Map p78; ☎ 212-522 4902; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat)

Elmadag (Map p115; ☎ 212-233 0592; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) In the arcade in front of the İstanbul Hilton Hotel, just off Cumhuriyet Caddesi near Taksim Square.

Karaköy International Maritime Passenger Terminal (Map p103; ☎ 212-249 5776; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat)

Sultanahmet (Map p50; ☎ 212-518 8754; ☎ 9am-5pm) At the northeastern end of the Hippodrome.

All usually stock free maps and brochures. At the time of research, there was some talk that the Beyazıt Square office would close.

TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

İstanbul can be challenging for mobility-impaired travellers. Roads are potholed and pavements are often crooked and cracked. Fortunately, the city is making attempts to rectify this state of affairs.

Government-run museums are free of charge for disabled visitors and many have wheelchair access. Airlines and most four- and five-star hotels have wheelchair access and at least one room set up for disabled guests. All public transport is free for the disabled and both the LRT and *tramvay* (see p235) can be accessed by people in wheelchairs.

VISAS

At the time of research, nationals of the following countries (among others) could enter Turkey for up to three months with only a

valid passport (no visa is required): Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland.

Nationals of the following countries (among others) could enter for up to three months upon purchase of a visa sticker at their point of arrival (ie not at an embassy in advance): Australia, Belgium, Canada, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, UK and USA.

Nationals of Norway, Hungary and many Eastern European and Central Asian countries could enter for up to one month upon purchase of a visa sticker at their point of arrival.

Your passport must have at least three months' validity remaining, or you may not be admitted into Turkey. If you arrive at Atatürk International Airport, get your visa from the booth to the left of the 'Other Nationalities' counter in the customs hall before you go through immigration. You can pay in Turkish lira, euros or US dollars; customs officials sometimes insist on correct change. An ATM machine dispensing Turkish liras is next to the counter, but it's not always working. The fees change, but at the time of research Australians, Americans and Britons paid €15 and Canadians paid €45.

Visa Extensions

There are single- and multiple-entry visas. Single-entry visas are valid for three months from the day of entry; multiple-entry visas are valid for three-month blocks during a one-year period. Depending on your nationality, you may be able to extend your visa. Most visitors wanting to extend their stay for a few months avoid bureaucratic tedium by taking a quick overnight trip to Greece (Thessaloniki or Rhodes), returning to Turkey the next day with a new three-month stamp in their passports. See the website of the [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](http://www.mfa.gov.tr) (www.mfa.gov.tr) for the latest information.

WOMEN TRAVELLERS

Travelling in İstanbul as a female is easy and enjoyable provided you follow some simple guidelines. Tailor your behaviour and your clothing to your surrounds – outfits that

are appropriate for neighbourhoods such as Beyoğlu and along the Bosphorus (skimpy tops, tight jeans etc) are not appropriate in conservative suburbs such as Balat and Fener, for instance. In general, we suggest you dress in a reasonably demure fashion; showing lots of bare leg and cleavage can lead to attention and occasional lewd behaviour on the part of local men.

Women should be careful when walking alone at night, especially in Aksaray/Laleli, Eminönü and Karaköy. It's a good idea to sit in the back seat of taxis rather than next to the driver. If approached by a Turkish man in circumstances that upset you, try saying *Ayıp!* (ah-*yuhp*), which means 'Shame on you!'

You'll have no trouble finding tampons, sanitary napkins and condoms in pharmacies and supermarkets in İstanbul. Bring a shawl to cover your head when visiting mosques.

WORK

After sampling the manifold delights of İstanbul, many travellers decide to stay. Jobs aren't all that easy to find (Turkey has a very high unemployment level) and most of these people end up teaching English at one of the many private colleges or schools; others get work as nannies (check www.anglonannies.com) or in the tourism industry.

If you want to get a job at one of the well-paid private language schools, you'll need to have a Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) certificate or equivalent, and a graduate degree (it doesn't matter what it's in).

Other jobs are advertised in the *Turkish Daily News* and on the expat websites www.mymerhaba.com, www.expatinturkey.com and <http://craigslist.org>.

For loads of practical information and advice about information on living, buying real estate, working and doing business in Turkey, get yourself a copy of Pat Yale's excellent *A Handbook for Living in Turkey*, published by İstanbul-based Çitlembik Publications and available in most of the city's English-language bookshops.

DEİK (www.deik.org.tr) is the Foreign Economic Relations Board of Turkey. Its website has useful links and economic and business information.

LANGUAGE

Turkish is the dominant language in the Turkic language group, and is distantly related to Finnish and Hungarian. In 1928, Atatürk did away with Arabic script and adopted a Latin-based alphabet that was better suited to easy learning and correct pronunciation. He also instituted a language-reform process to purge Turkish of Arabic and Persian borrowings, returning it to its 'authentic' roots. The result is a logical, systematic and expressive language with only one irregular noun, *su* (water), one irregular verb, *olmek* (to be) and no gender. It's so logical, in fact, that Turkish grammar formed the basis for the development of Esperanto, an ill-fated artificial international language. Word order and verb formation in Turkish are very different from what you'll find in Indo-European languages like English. Words are formed by agglutination, meaning that affixes are joined to a root word – one scary example is *Avustralyalılaştıramadıklarımızdanmısınız?*, which means 'Are you one of those whom we could not Australianise?' This makes it somewhat difficult to learn at first, despite its elegant logic.



In Istanbul's tourist areas you'll usually have little trouble finding someone who speaks English, but a few words in Turkish will be very well received and bring just reward for your having made the effort. If you want to learn more Turkish than we've included here, pick up a copy of Lonely Planet's comprehensive but user-friendly *Turkish Phrasebook*.

PRONUNCIATION

Once you learn a few basic rules, you'll find Turkish pronunciation quite simple to master. Despite oddities such as the soft 'g' (ğ) and undotted 'i' (ı), it's a phonetically consistent language – there's generally a clear one-letter/one-sound relationship.

It's important to remember that each letter is pronounced; vowels don't combine to form diphthongs and consonants don't combine to form other sounds (such as 'th', 'gh' or 'sh' in English). It therefore follows that **h** in Turkish is always pronounced as a separate letter. For example, your Turkish friend Ahmet is 'ahh-met' not 'aa-met', and the word *rehber* (guide) is pronounced 'reh-ber' not 're-ber'.

Here are some of the letters in Turkish that may cause initial confusion:

â	a faint 'y' sound in the preceding consonant
ı, i	a short 'i', as in 'hit' or 'sit'
ı, ı	a neutral vowel; as the 'a' in 'ago'
ö, ö	as the 'e' in 'her' said with pursed lips (but with no 'r' sound)
u, u	as the 'oo' in 'book'
ü, ü	an exaggerated rounded-lip 'you'
ç, c	as the 'j' in 'jet'
ç, ç	as the 'ch' in 'church'
ğ, g	always hard as in 'go' (not as in 'gent')
ğ, ğ	silent; lengthens preceding vowel

J, j	as the 'z' in 'azure'
ş, ş	as the 'sh' in 'show'

SOCIAL

Meeting People

Hello.

Merhaba.

Goodbye.

Allaha ismarladık. (said by one departing)

Güle güle. (said by one staying)

Please.

Lütfen.

Thank you (very much).

Çok teşekkür ederim.

Yes/No.

Evet/Hayır.

Do you speak English?

İngilizce konuşuyor-musunuz?

Do you understand (me)?

Anlıyormusunuz?

Yes, I understand.

Anlıyorum.

No, I don't understand.

Anlamıyorum.

Could you please ...?

Lütfen ...?

repeat that

speak more

slowly

write it down

tekrarlar mısınız

daha yavaş konuşur

musunuz

yazar mısınız

Going Out

What's on ...?

... görülecek neler var?

locally	Yerel olarak
this weekend	Bu hafta sonu
today	Bugün
tonight	Bu gece

Where are the ...?

... nerede?

clubs	Klüpler
gay venues	Gey klüpleri
places to eat	Yemek yenilebilecek yerler
pubs	Birahaneler

Is there a local entertainment guide?
Buranın yerel eğlence rehberi var mı?

PRACTICAL

Question Words

Who?	Kim?
What?	Ne?
When?	Ne zaman?
Where?	Nerede?
How?	Nasıl?

Numbers & Amounts

1	bir
2	iki
3	üç
4	dört
5	beş
6	altı
7	yedi
8	sekiz
9	dokuz
10	on
11	on bir
12	on iki
13	on üç
14	on dört
15	on beş
16	on altı
17	on yedi
18	on sekiz
19	on dokuz
20	yirmi
21	yirmi bir
22	yirmi iki
30	otuz
40	kırk
50	elli
60	altmış

70	yetmiş
80	seksen
90	doksan
100	yüz
1000	bin
2000	iki bin
1,000,000	milyon

Days

Monday	Pazartesi
Tuesday	Salı
Wednesday	Çarşamba
Thursday	Perşembe
Friday	Cuma
Saturday	Cumartesi
Sunday	Pazar

Banking

I'd like to ...

... istiyorum.

cash a cheque	Çek bozdurmak
change money	Para bozdurmak
change a travellers cheque	Seyahat çeki bozdurmak

Where's the nearest ...?

... nerede?

ATM	Bankamatik/ATM
foreign-exchange office	Döviz bürosu

Post

Where is the (main) post office?
(Merkez) Postane nerede?

I want to send a ...

Bir ... göndermek istiyorum.

fax	faks
parcel	paket
postcard	kartpostal

I want to buy ...

... satın almak istiyorum.

an aerogram	Telsiz telgraf
an envelope	Zarf
a stamp	Pul

Phones & Mobiles

I want to buy a phone card.

Telefon kartı istiyorum.

I want to make ...

... istiyorum.

a (local) call	(Yerel) bir görüşme yapmak
----------------	----------------------------

reverse-charge/
collect call

Ödemeli görüşme
yapmak

I'd like a/an ...

... istiyorum.

charger for my

phone

mobile/cell

phone for hire

prepaid mobile/
cell phone

SIM card for

your network

Cep telefonum için

şarj aleti

Cep telefonu kiralamak

Kontrollü cep telefonu

Buradaki şebeke için

SİM kart

Internet

Where's the local internet café?

En yakın internet kafe nerede?

I'd like to ...

... istiyorum.

check my email

get internet

access

E-postama bakmak

İnternete girmek

Transport

What time does the ... leave?

... ne zaman kalkacak?

bus	Otobüs
ferry	Feribot
plane	Uçak
train	Tren

What time's the ... bus?

... (otobüs) ne zaman?

first	İlk
last	Son
next	Sonraki

Is this taxi free?

Bu taksi boş mu?

Please put the meter on.

Lütfen taksimetreyi çalıştırın.

How much is it to ...?

... ne kadar?

Please take me to (this address).

Lütfen beni (şu adrese) götürün.

EMERGENCIES

It's an emergency!

Bu acil bir durum!

Could you please help?

Yardım edebilir misiniz lütfen?

Call the police/a doctor/an ambulance!

Polis/Doktor/Ambulans çağır(ın).

Where's the police station?

Polis karakolu nerede?

HEALTH

Where's the nearest ...?

En yakın ... nerede?

chemist (night)	(nöbetçi) eczane
dentist	diş hekimi
doctor	doktor
hospital	hastane

I need a doctor (who speaks English).
(İngilizce konuşan) bir doktora ihtiyacım var.

Symptoms

I have (a) ...

... var.

diarrhoea	Ishalim
fever	Ateşim
headache	Ibaş ağrısı
pain	Ağrım/sancım

FOOD

Can you recommend a ...

İyi bir ... tavsiye edebilir misiniz?

bar	bar
café	kafe
restaurant	restoran

Is service included in the bill?

Hesaba servis dahil mi?

For more detailed information on food and dining out, see p149.

GLOSSARY

Here, with definitions, are some useful words and abbreviations.

ada(sı) – island
aile salonu – family room; for couples, families and women in a Turkish restaurant
altgeçidi – pedestrian subway/underpass
arabesk – music that's a mix of folk, classical and fasıl traditions
aşık – Turkish troubadours
Asya – Asian Istanbul
Avrupa – European Istanbul
ayran – a yogurt drink

bahçe(sı) – garden
balık – fish
banliyö treni (s), banliyö trenleri (pl) – suburban (or commuter) train
belediye – town hall
bey – 'Mr'; follows the name
birahane – beer hall
boğaz – strait
bordro – exchange receipt
börek – flaky pastry that can be sweet or savoury
börekçi – place selling pastries
büfe – snack bar
bulvarı – often abbreviated to 'bul'; boulevard or avenue
büyük tur – long tour

caddesi – often abbreviated to 'cad'; street
caïque – long, thin rowboat
çalışma vizesi – work visa
çamaşır – laundry; underwear
camii – mosque
çarşı(sı) – market, bazaar
çay bahçesi – tea garden
cicim – embroidered mat
çift – pair
çocuk – child
çorba – soup

darüşşifa – hospital
deniz – sea
deniz otobüsü – catamaran; sea bus
Dikkat! Yavaş! – Careful! Slow!
dolmuş – shared taxi (or minibus)
döner kebap – meat roasted on a revolving, vertical spit
dondurma – ice cream
döviz bürosu – currency-exchange office

eczane – chemist/pharmacy

ekmek – bread
emanet – left luggage
emniyet – security
eyvan – vaulted hall opening onto a central court in a *medrese* or mosque
ezan – the Muslim call to prayer

fasıl – energetic folk music played in taverns or *meyhanes*
fatyon – horse-drawn carriage
feribot – ferry
fiş – electricity plug

gazino – open-air Turkish nightclub (not for gambling)
gece – night
gişe – ticket booth
göbektaşı – hot platform in Turkish bath
gözleme – Turkish pancake
gündüz – daytime

hamam(i) – Turkish steam bath
harem – family/women's quarters of a residence
hat(tı) – route
hazır yemek lokanta – ready-made-food restaurant
hisar(i) – fortress or citadel

ikamet tezkeresi – residence permit, known as 'pink book'
imam – prayer leader; Muslim cleric; teacher
imaret – soup kitchen
iskele(sı) – landing place, wharf, quay

jeton – token (for telephones)

kadın – wife
kale(sı) – fortress, citadel
kapı(sı) – door, gate
karagöz – shadow-puppet theatre
kat – storey (of a building)
KDV – katma değer vergisi; value-added tax (VAT)

kebaççı – place selling kebaps
kilim – pileless woven rug
köfte – Turkish meatballs
köfteci – place selling grilled meatballs
köprü – bridge
köy(ü) – village
küçük tur – short tour
kürsü – prayer-reader's platform
kuru temizleme – dry cleaning

lahmacun – Arabic soft pizza
liman(i) – harbour

lokanta – restaurant
lokum – Turkish delight

mahalli hamam – neighbourhood Turkish bath
mahfil – high, elaborate chair
Maşallah – Wonder of God! (said in admiration or to avert the evil eye)
medrese – theological school
menba suyu – spring water
merkez postane – central post office
mescit – prayer room/small mosque
Mevlevi – whirling dervish
meydan(i) – public square, open place
meyhanes – wine shops, taverns
müezzin – the official who sings the *ezan*
müze(sı) – museum

nargileh – water pipe

ocakbaşı – grill
oda(sı) – room
otel – hotel
otogar – bus station
otopark – car park
otostop – hitch
otoyol – multilane toll highway

padişah – Ottoman emperor, sultan
pastane – also pastahane; pastry shop, patisserie
 pazari – weekly market, bazaar
pide – Turkish pizza
pideci – pizzeria
polis – police
PTT – Posta, Telefon, Telgraf; post, telephone and telegraph office

rakı – aniseed-flavoured grape brandy

saz – traditional Turkish long-necked string instrument
sebil – fountain
sedir – low sofa
şehir – city; municipal area
sema – Sufic religious ceremony
servis ücreti – service charge
servis yolu – service road
sıcak şarap – mulled wine
şile bezi – an open-weave cotton cloth with hand embroidery
sinema – cinema
şiş kebab – grilled, skewered meat
sokak, sokağı – often abbreviated to 'sk' or 'sok'; street or lane
su – water
Sufi – Muslim mystic, member of a mystic (dervish) brotherhood
sultan – sovereign
sumak – flat-woven rug with intricate detail
sünnet odası – circumcision room

tabhane – hostel
tarikati – a Sufic order
tatıcı – specialist dessert place
TC – Türkiye Cumhuriyeti (Turkish Republic); designates an official office or organization
telekart – telephone debit card
tuğra – sultan's monogram, imperial signature

ücretsiz servis – free service

valide sultan – queen mother

yardımcı – assistant
yeni otogar – new bus station
yıldız – star

yol(u) – road, way

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