

The Kohler City Guide Series

Istanbul, Turkey

A designer's guide to where to eat, sleep, drink, and explore

The stuff of legend is history in Turkey — Troy, Asklepieion, Pergamon, Sardis, Hattusa, Cappadocia — and the gateway to all of it is the fabled city of Istanbul. Those looking to experience this cultural and historical crossroads will find the contemporary city inextricably interwoven with its own past.

By Shonquis Moreno



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What to see and do

Although a temporary location has been set up in Beyoğlu, the original Istanbul Modern museum is closed for three years for construction of its new building, so skip instead to the **Sakıp Sabancı** (sakipsabancimuzesi.org), a waterfront mansion housing a private modern art collection and historical calligraphic art. Confluences of good food, live music, design, and art can be found in former beer factory **Bomontiada** (bomontiada.com) and its exhibition and art center ALT, as well as at **SALT Galata** (saltonline.org), an archive of visual and material culture past and future, with galleries, a bookstore and library, and the worthy **Neolokal** (neolokal.com) restaurant.



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Galerist Tepebaşı (galerist.com.tr) backgrounds avant-garde art with frescoes excavated from its old ceilings and walls, but for ancient frescoes and intricate golden mosaics, linger at the Byzantine **Chora Museum**, a former church and later mosque (kariye.muze.gov.tr/en/museum). Also worthwhile is a trip to the sprawling city's edge to see Emre Arolat's elemental **Sancaklar Mosque** (becemece.bel.tr/en-us/Projelerimiz/DiniTesisler/Pages/Sancaklar-Camii.aspx), made of stone, water, and light, in stark contrast with the city's other new mosques, which are often vanity projects of a neo-Ottoman elite. Tabanlıoğlu Architects' recent renovation of the **Bayazit State Library** (fb.com/BDK1884) preserves historical architecture under modern veils of glass. Luxuriate at the **Ayasofya Hürrem Sultan Hamamı** (ayasofyahamami.com), a 16th-century Turkish bath that has undergone major restorations over the last decade. Due to its popularity, a reservation is essential and can be made online or in person.



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Where to shop

Browse the charmingly cluttered antique shops of Çukurcuma, in general, and **A La Turca House** (alaturcahouse.com), in particular. Rolls of ancient carpets, textiles, maps, art, armor, jewelry, and more inhabit this 19th-century neo-Italianate townhouse. On Sundays, hunt for anything from vintage tea glasses and wartime paraphernalia to vinyl and clothes at the **Feriköy Antique Market** (ferikoyantikapazari.com).

Designer Nilüfer Karaca's skylit boutique **Antijen** (niluferkaraca.com.tr) sells fashion handmade in an atelier at the back. At **Jennifer's Hamam** (jennifershamam.com), a Canadian is helping to preserve the nearly extinct cottage industry of Turkish textiles, commissioning, designing and selling locally sourced linens hand-woven on old-style shuttle looms. Almost as colorful is the freshly made lokum, aka Turkish delight, displayed in the wood-framed windows of 242-year-old candy store **Hacı Bekir** (hacibekir.com).

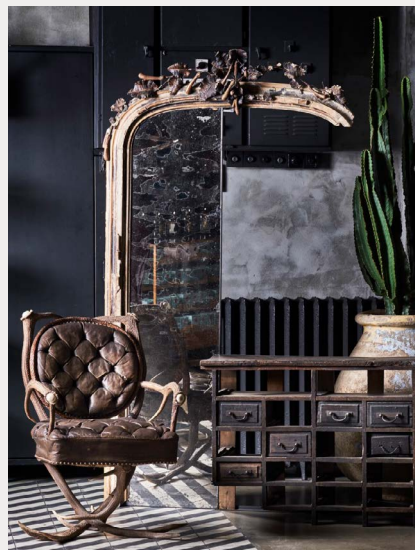
- A Made of stone, water, and light, architect Emre Arolat's Sancaklar Mosque is a worthwhile trip away from the city's center. Image by Cemal Emden
- B The architecture of Istanbul reflects the myriad of cultures and influences that have made their mark on the city over the centuries
- C-D Jennifer's Hamam is the project of a Canadian looking to preserve hand-woven Turkish textiles. Images courtesy of Jennifer's Hamam
- E A La Turca House is home to a vast collection of antiques for sale. Image courtesy of A La Turca House
- F The historic Bayazit State Library has recently been renovated, its historical architecture such as the reading room preserved under glass. Image by Emre Dörter
- G The courtyard of the Bayazit State Library. Image by Emre Dörter
- H-I At Antijen, contemporary styles by local designer Nilüfer Karaca can be bought off the rack or made to order. Images by Ahmet Deniz Photography

J-L The striking Sanayi 313 is a concept store and eatery focusing on seasonal, foraged food. Images by Ibrahim Ozbunar

M-P The city's rich history combines with chic amenities at Soho House, which occupies a renovated 19th-century palazzo. Images courtesy of Soho House Istanbul

Where to eat and drink

Try one or both of two dining rooms that feel like living rooms: **Cuma** (*cuma.cc*), modern and hip, with a first-rate chef in the kitchen, and **Perispri** (*perispri.com*), a wine and coffee bar housed in an art gallery that straddles the ancient city walls and resembles the luxe mid-century home of a well-to-do White Turk. Up the road, under the gaze of an Atatürk portrait, order seafood, meze and *rakı* at old-school *meyhane* **Balat Sahil** (*Balat Mahallesi, Mürselpaşa Cd. No:245, Fatih*) or, with savvy locals, savor meze at the blue-tiled **Karaköy Lokantasi** (*karakoylokantasi.com*). At **Sensus Wine & Food Boutique** (*sensuwine.com*), imbibe the full-bodied pleasure of a young Turkish



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wine industry or, for those who don't drink and want to rub shoulders with the conservative clique, visit the Kuruçeşme outpost of **Huqqa** (*huqqa.com.tr*), a day-to-late-night narghile (hookah) restaurant. In a tiny alley off shopping street İstiklal, pull up a stool at **Mandabatmaz** (*mandabatmaz.com.tr*) and enjoy thick, muddy Turkish coffee.

At **Asitane** (*asitanerestaurant.com*) you'll find authentic Ottoman palace cuisine, while for seasonal, foraged fare head to trendy concept shop-cum-eatery **Sanayi 313** (*sanayi313.com*). Vast city views, nightly DJs and relaxation can be found at **Backyard and Backbar** (*backyard.com.tr*).

For superior seafood in a bare-bones waterfront setting, ferry over to the Asian side of the Bosphorus to **İsmet Baba** (*ismetbaba.com.tr*) in Kuzguncuk, the city's historical paradigm of syncretism, where church, synagogue, and mosque co-exist amidst charming wooden houses and cafes.



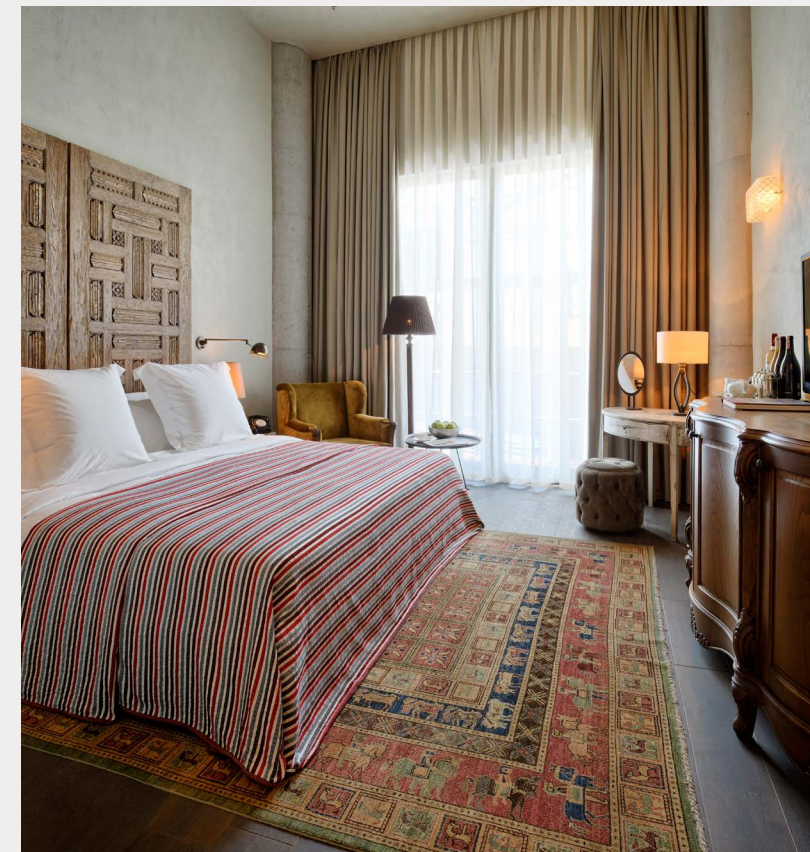
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Where to sleep

If palatial luxury's your style, book one of the 11 (formerly sultan's) suites in the renovated 19th-century **Çırağan Palace Kempinski** (*kempinski.com*) or, for a different type of romance, the renovated **Pera Palace Hotel** (*perapalace.com*), built in 1892 for Orient Express passengers. Conscientious travelers might opt for the rustic-modern, solar-powered **Adahan** (*adahanistanbul.com*), which was sustainably restored and its rooms kitted out with all-natural materials. **Soho House Istanbul** (*sohohouseistanbul.com*) boasts a speakeasy, a screening room, 87 bedrooms, gym, spa, and a Cecconi's restaurant, but the real gem of this magnificently restored 19th-century palazzo is its main bar. If you'd like to escape the city without actually leaving, ferry over to the largest of the Princes' Islands within view of the Istanbul shore, and take a phaeton to the domed, century-old **Splendid Palace Hotel** (*splendidhotel.net*), a national monument recently and splendidly refurbished.