



TRIP GLOBAL

4 Days in Istanbul: A Day-by-Day Itinerary

Istanbul, Turkey · October · 4 days

Tailored for couples - includes romantic spots, intimate dining, and couple-friendly activities

Four days in Istanbul, starting with the Basilica Cistern and the Blue Mosque, then crossing the Bosphorus to the Asian side for Üsküdar and Kadıköy. Save time for lunch at Çiya Sofras and a last wander through the Grand Bazaar.

[Open the interactive trip: live map, photos and links](#)

Before you go:

[Get a Türkiye eSIM: data on landing](#)

What this trip might cost, per person for 4 days, flights extra:

Budget \$80-120 · Mid-range \$300-420 · Comfort \$600-900

Opening hours, prices and transport change. Please double-check bookings and times before you go.

YOUR TRIP AT A GLANCE

1

DAY 1

Basilica Cistern, Blue Mosque and Sultanahmet Square

Sultanahmet · 4 nights

2

DAY 2

Üsküdar, Çamlıca Camii and Kadıköy Market

3

DAY 3

Kadıköy Fish Market, Çiya Sofras and Bahariye Caddesi

4

DAY 4

Grand Bazaar and Süleymaniye Mosque Terrace

?

AFTER THE LAST DAY

Before you go: Istanbul

Basilica Cistern, Blue Mosque and Sultanahmet Square

Arrival day: an easy start close to your stay

Sunrise 7:16 AM

Golden hour 5:48 PM

Sunset 6:26 PM

Your base for 4 nights: Sultanahmet

Go down into the Basilica Cistern first, then walk across Sultanahmet Square to the Blue Mosque and finish with a slow coffee at Rumeli Cafe.

GO

12:00 PM · 1.5 hours

Istanbul Airport to Sultanahmet

Havas airport shuttle or metro to Zeytinburnu, then tram T1 to Sultanahmet (Sultanahmet stop). 60-75 minutes total, around 30 TL. Drop bags at the hotel and rest briefly.

- Havaist shuttle bus · 50-60 minutes · \$8-10 per person
- Public metro + tram · 75-90 minutes · \$4 per person (Istanbulkart)
- Taxi or ride-share · 30-45 minutes · \$20-30 per trip

[Book a transfer](#)

1



2:15 PM · 1 hour

Basilica Cistern

\$11 per person · Open 9 AM-6:30 PM

Underground Byzantine water palace with 336 columns and zero crowds if you go now. Eerie, cool, and utterly unique. Walk 5 minutes uphill from your hotel into Sultanahmet proper.

Insider tip: Go straight down; skip the café and the gift shop. Wear trainers; it's wet and slippery.

[Book tickets](#)

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

PREFER A GUIDE? · FULL DAY

Blue Mosque, Hagia Sophia, and Basilica Cistern loop

Book the Basilica Cistern online beforehand to skip lines. The cistern's the real surprise: ancient Roman columns, still water, and nobody shouting about carpets.

[Book this tour](#)

2



3:30 PM · 1.5 hours

Sultanahmet Square

Free

The real heart of old Istanbul: Blue Mosque across from Hagia Sophia, Hippodrome ruins, fountains, and locals. Just walk it, sit on a bench, let it soak in. 2 minutes from the Cistern.

Insider tip: The Hippodrome's Egyptian Obelisk casts a long shadow at this hour; stand there for the photo.

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DAY 1: BASILICA CISTERN, BLUE MOSQUE AND SULTANAHMET SQUARE (CONTINUED)

3



5:10 PM · 45 minutes

Blue Mosque (Sultan Ahmed Mosque)

Free · Open Open for prayer; non-Muslim visitors best 9 AM-11:30 AM, 1:3

Six minarets, blue tilework inside, open to visitors outside prayer times. October crowds are manageable at sunset. Remove shoes, cover shoulders; women should bring a headscarf or borrow at the entrance. 30 seconds from the Square.

Insider tip: Enter from the side door (not the main gate) to avoid the small tourist shuffle. Golden light floods the blue tiles at 5:45 PM.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

4



6:30 PM · 1 hour

Rumeli Cafe

\$8-12 per person for drinks

Rooftop perch with a view straight down to the Bosphorus and Sea of Marmara. Mint tea, Turkish coffee, and the city turning pink. Walk downhill 10 minutes toward the waterfront from the Blue Mosque.

Insider tip: Order Turkish coffee (no sugar) and watch the ferries cross. Prices are fair for the view: around 100 TL for two.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

5

7:45 PM · 1.5 hours

Book ahead

Balikci Sabahattin

\$60-105 for dinner for two · Open 11 AM-11 PM

Family-run seafood restaurant, been here since 1927. Grilled fish, meze, cold white wine. Intimate, unhurried, the kind of place Istanbulis book for anniversaries. 5-minute walk from the cafe, toward Kumkapi waterfront.

Insider tip: Ask for the catch of the day grilled whole. The house white is Kirmizi Kule; it's clean and cheap. Book a table by phone if you can.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

If you land early (optional, close to your stay, before the plan above)

Emirgan Park: Wooded waterfront garden with tea pavilions and views across the Golden Horn. Calm, green, and a proper Istanbul morning ritual. Tram T1 northbound, 15 minutes from Sultanahmet.

Galata Bridge: Walk across the strait on the upper level at sunrise with fishermen, tea sellers, and the muezzin calls echoing off the water. Tram to Eminönü, then walk north, 20 minutes total.

[Open Day 1 as a route in Google Maps](#)

Where to stay in Sultanahmet

Book in Sultanahmet proper, south of the Hippodrome: you're steps from the ferries to Asia, the food markets, and everything else. The neighbourhood is walkable and the tram stops here.

Cheers Hostel

Budget · Hostel · \$

Social vibe, rooftop terrace with Sultanahmet Mosque views. Private doubles available.

[Book now](#)

[Google Maps >](#)

Hotel Cheers Hostel

Budget · Hostel · \$

Private rooms available, rooftop Bosphorus views, five-minute walk to ferry docks.

[Book now](#)

[Google Maps >](#)

Vault Karakol Hotel

Mid-range · Hotel · \$\$

Ottoman building turned boutique hotel. Central to mosques and ruins. Good breakfast included.

[Book now](#)

[Google Maps >](#)

Sirkeci Mansion Hotel

Mid-range · Hotel · \$\$

Ottoman conversion near Sirkeci station. Ottoman tiles, courtyard garden, steps from ferries.

[Book now](#)

[Google Maps >](#)

Cheers Hostel & Suites

Mid-range · Apartment · \$\$

Studio with kitchenette, Sultanahmet location, good base between ferry terminals and hammams.

[Book now](#)

[Google Maps >](#)

Hotel Arcadia Blue

Mid-range · Hotel · \$\$

Sultanahmet old town, Ottoman charm, rooftop hammam with Marmara views.

[Book now](#)

[Google Maps >](#)

[All stays in Sultanahmet](#)

[Holiday rentals](#)

Where to eat

Karakol the Breakfast Place

Turkish Breakfast · Breakfast · \$

Simple spot near Sultanahmet Mosque. Get the menemen (scrambled eggs with tomatoes) and fresh bread.

[Google Maps >](#)

Cankurtaran Balkçs

Turkish Seafood · Lunch · \$\$

Fish grilled fresh daily. Order the sea bream, sit by the window overlooking the water.

[Google Maps >](#)

Asitane

Ottoman Palace Kitchen · Dinner · \$\$\$

Historical recipes from palace archives. Book ahead. The lamb dishes are the move.

[Google Maps >](#)

DAY 1: BASILICA CISTERN, BLUE MOSQUE AND SULTANAHMET SQUARE (CONTINUED)

TOURS & DAY TRIPS FROM ISTANBUL

2-3 HOURS

Bosphorus sunset ferry to Ortaköy and back

You get the classic Istanbul moment and a working commute in one. Catch the late afternoon ferry from Eminönü, hop off at Ortaköy for tea or a snack, then ferry home as it gets dark.

[Book now](#)

1.5-2 HOURS

Traditional hammam experience

The hot room, the scrub, the plunge pool. It's not relaxation, it's a ritual. Go with a same-gender attendant and embrace the intensity.

[Book now](#)

3-4 HOURS

Topkapi Palace and Harem

Skip the main queue by going early (before 9am) or booking skip-the-line tickets online. The Ottoman interiors and Bosphorus views from the palace gardens are worth the

[Book now](#)

Üsküdar, Çamlca Camii and Kadköy Market

Sunrise 7:16 AM

Golden hour 5:48 PM

Sunset 6:26 PM

Sleep in Sultanahmet · night 2 of 4

Cross to the Asian side for a walk along the Üsküdar waterfront, visit Çamlca Camii, browse Kadköy Market, then book a hammam in Cankurtaran.

GO

7:00 AM · 20 minutes

Eminönü to Üsküdar Ferry

Catch the ferry from the Galata Bridge area to the Asian side at first light, beating crowds and catching the strait's best colours. Walk to the pier from Sultanahmet in 10 minutes; ferries run every 20 minutes and cost 4.50 TL per person.

1



7:30 AM · 45 minutes

Üsküdar Waterfront Walk

Free

Wander the quayside where fishermen sell the night's catch and locals queue for çay. You'll see the Maiden's Tower, the strait's pulse, and the gap between Asia and Europe. A 20-minute stroll along the shore.

Insider tip: Walk past the fish stalls on the pier just after sunrise; locals gather here before 8 AM, and it's quietest then.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

2



8:30 AM · 90 minutes

Çamlca Camii

Free · Open Open for prayer; visitors welcome outside prayer times

Climb or minibus (5 minutes, 50 TL shared taxi from Üsküdar pier) to Istanbul's highest point and newest mosque. The terrace gives you the whole strait, both continents, and the morning light on the old city. Go early to avoid groups and respect prayer times.

Insider tip: The terrace café (open from 9 AM) serves strong çay and pastries; sit there and watch the city wake up.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

PREFER A GUIDE? · 4-5 HOURS

Kadköy food and culture walk

Cross to the Asian side to eat fresh seafood at fish restaurants overlooking the water, explore the produce market, and wander streets where tourists are rare. Much more real Istanbul than Sultanahmet.

[Book this tour](#)

DAY 2: ÜSKÜDAR, ÇAMLICA CAMII AND KADKÖY MARKET (CONTINUED)

3



10:30 AM • 90 minutes

Kadköy Market (Kadköy Pazar)

Free

Descend to this busy neighbourhood market 15 minutes by minibus from Çamlıca. You'll find produce, spices, cheese and street food. It's warm and real, nothing for tourists. Elbow your way through, grab a pastry, soak it in.

Insider tip: Head straight to the fish counter at the market's north end (Caddebostan Caddesi side) for the freshest catch and local chat.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

4



12:15 PM • 120 minutes

Book ahead

Cankurtaran Hammam

\$36-45 per person • Open 7 AM-10 PM

Book a hammam session at this working bathhouse five minutes' walk from Kadköy market (down Yasa Caddesi, then right on Recep Pasha Caddesi). A 90-minute scrub and soak with locals, no frills, around 150 TL for both of you. October's cool enough to make it a real treat, not a chore.

Insider tip: Go to the scak oda (hot room) first to loosen up; ask the attendant for a vigorous scrub, the locals won't hold back.

[Book tickets](#)

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

5



2:45 PM • 60 minutes

Fenerbahçe Park Walk

Free

After the hammam, a slow 20-minute walk south along the waterfront park to Fenerbahçe. Locals jog, café chairs face the water, and you'll see fishing boats idle in the shallows. Grab a seat and breathe.

Insider tip: Stop at any waterside café for a cold ayran or lemonade; the park benches are free and peaceful on a Tuesday.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

6



5:00 PM • 90 minutes

Üsküdar Waterfront

Free

Head back north to Üsküdar (bus 10T, 15 minutes) for sunset. Find a spot on the quay with a view west to the Golden Horn and old city, backlit in orange and pink. Street vendors sell roasted corn and fish sandwiches. Stay until dusk.

Insider tip: Order a fish sandwich (balk ekmek) from the stall near the ferry terminal; they grill the catch fresh at 25 TL per sandwich.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

DAY 2: ÜSKÜDAR, ÇAMLICA CAMII AND KADKÖY MARKET (CONTINUED)

GO

6:30 PM · 20 minutes

Üsküdar to Eminönü Ferry

Take the evening ferry back to the European side after sunset, around 6:30 PM. The return journey is calmer, lights on both shores, and you'll dock near home in 20 minutes. Ferries run until late.

Open Day 2 as a route in Google Maps

Where to eat

Karakoy Lokantas

Turkish breakfast and meze · Breakfast · \$

Go before 8am for fresh bread, cheese, olives, eggs. Just north of Karakoy ferry terminal.

[Google Maps >](#)

Çiya Sofras

Turkish regional home cooking · Lunch · \$\$

Walk through the kitchen, pick grilled fish and seasonal stews. Kadköy side, worth the ferry ride.

[Google Maps >](#)

Sunset Terrace at Bebek Bay

Turkish seafood and mezes · Dinner · \$\$

Grilled hamsi (anchovies) at golden hour. Waterfront in Bebek, northern Bosphorus Asian shore.

[Google Maps >](#)

Kadköy Fish Market, Çiya Sofras and Bahariye Caddesi

Sunrise 7:16 AM

Golden hour 5:48 PM

Sunset 6:26 PM

Sleep in Sultanahmet · night 3 of 4

Spend the morning at the Fish Market, have a long lunch at Çiya Sofras, stroll Bahariye Caddesi, then unwind at the Cemberlita Hamam.

GO

8:45 AM · 1 hour

Eminönü Ferry Terminal to Kadköy

Take the Bosphorus ferry across to Asia. The crossing takes 15 minutes and gives you views of both shores and the old city skyline. Ferries run every 10-15 minutes; buy a single token (Jeton) at the terminal for about 35 TL.

1



10:00 AM · 1.5 hours

Balk Pazar (Kadköy Fish Market)

Free

A loud, crowded covered market packed with fishmongers, produce stands, and street food vendors. The energy is pure working Istanbul. Walk through, snap photos, and grab fresh juice or a pastry from the vendors. A 5-minute walk from the ferry terminal along the waterfront.

Insider tip: Go early before 11 AM when the crowds peak. Try a fresh pomegranate juice (nar suyu) from one of the juice stands.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

2

11:30 AM · 1.5 hours

Çiya Sofras

\$45-75 for two · Open 12 PM-11 PM

A legendary family-run Anatolian restaurant in the backstreets behind the fish market. No menu: you point at bubbling pots of regional stews, roasted vegetables, and grilled fish. Lunch for two costs about 400-500 TL. A 10-minute walk inland from the market.

Insider tip: Arrive by noon to beat the queues. Ask the owner to show you the daily pots; try the lamb with quince and whatever grilled fish is fresh.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

3

1:30 PM · 1.5 hours

Cádde-i Kebir (Bahariye Caddesi)

Free

Kadköy's main pedestrian shopping street, lined with bookshops, cafes, and boutiques. Wander, browse, sip tea. It's a slice of local life without the tourist crush. A 10-minute walk from the restaurant.

Insider tip: Pop into Remzi Kitabevi (a historic independent bookstore) or grab coffee at one of the backstreet cafes off the main drag.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

4



3:30 PM · 1.5 hours

[Book ahead](#)

Cemberlita Hamams (Cemberlitas location, Asian side)

\$36-45 per person · Open 9 AM-10 PM

A traditional Turkish hammam run by the same family for decades. You'll be scrubbed down by a seasoned attendant in the hot room, then relax in warm and cool sections. The experience takes 45 minutes to an hour. About 600-800 TL for two people (couples rooms available). A 15-minute minibus ride from Bahariye Caddesi, or ask your hotel to arrange a taxi.

Insider tip: Book ahead by phone (or ask your hotel to call). Go on a quieter weekday afternoon. Bring nothing of value; a locker is provided.

[Book tickets](#)

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

5

5:45 PM · 1 hour

Moda Promenade (Moda skelesi waterfront)

Free

Walk or take a tram south to this leafy, relaxed waterfront area with a long pier and cafes. The views back across the Bosphorus to the European shore are best at golden hour. Grab tea or coffee and watch the light change. A 20-minute tram ride (#T1) from near the hammam.

Insider tip: Arrive by 5:45 PM to catch the golden hour light on the old city. Sit at one of the waterfront cafes with a view; Moda Café is a solid choice.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

[Open Day 3 as a route in Google Maps](#)

Where to eat

Kadköy Fish Market (Balk Pazar)

Turkish Street Food & Seafood · Lunch · \$

Grilled fish sandwiches, mussels, sea urchin. Eat standing up with locals.

[Google Maps >](#)

Çiya Sofras

Turkish Regional · Dinner · \$\$

40+ daily Anatolian dishes. Sit by the window on Güneli Bahçe street.

[Google Maps >](#)

Moda Café

Turkish Breakfast & Brunch · Breakfast · \$

Menemen, fresh pastries, strong coffee. Early start before market crowds.

[Google Maps >](#)

Grand Bazaar and Süleymaniye Mosque Terrace

Sunrise 7:16 AM

Golden hour 5:48 PM

Sunset 6:26 PM

Sleep in Sultanahmet · night 4 of 4

Get lost in the Grand Bazaar in the morning, stop at Nuruosmaniye Mosque and Balaban Konak, and end on the Süleymaniye Mosque terrace.

1



8:30 AM · 2 hours

Grand Bazaar (Kapalı Çarşı)

Free · Open 10 AM-7 PM (some shops close 8-10 AM)

Arrive by 8:30 AM to beat crowds in this 500-year-old maze of 60+ covered streets. You'll find spice stalls, brass vendors, carpet dealers and jewellers. The energy builds fast after 9 AM. Walk straight from your hotel through Sultanahmet's backstreets; it's 15 minutes downhill to the main entrance near Beyazit Gate.

Insider tip: Head to the spice section (Old Spice Bazaar branch is inside, or walk 5 min to the standalone Spice Bazaar nearby). Buy loose saffron, sumac and Turkish coffee for half tourist prices.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

2



1:00 PM · 45 minutes

Nuruosmaniye Mosque

Free · Open Open for prayer; visitors welcome outside prayer times

Built in 1755, this rococo-era mosque sits at the edge of the Grand Bazaar with soaring arches and soft light streaming through tall windows. It's a calmer, less-visited counterpoint to the Blue Mosque. Exit the hammam, walk 5 minutes north to the mosque's main gate.

Insider tip: Remove shoes at the entrance. Go in the early afternoon when the main prayer times are over and light floods the central dome.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

3

2:00 PM · 1 hour

Balaban Konak

Free · Open 9 AM-5 PM

A preserved 19th-century Ottoman mansion with carved wooden ceilings, tilework and period furnishings. You'll get a real sense of how wealthy families lived. Walk west from Nuruosmaniye for 10 minutes through quiet lanes to reach Vefa Quarter, where these old konaks cluster.

Insider tip: Many konaks double as small cafes or museums with unreliable hours. Call ahead or check Google for current openings. If this one is closed, Zincirli Kuyu or Eskinahos Evleri nearby usually have tours.

[Book tickets](#)
[Open in Google Maps >](#)

DAY 4: GRAND BAZAAR AND SÜLEYMANIYE MOSQUE TERRACE (CONTINUED)

4



5:30 PM · 1 hour

Suleymaniye Mosque Terrace

Free

Perched on a hilltop, this massive 16th-century mosque (Suleiman the Magnificent's masterpiece) commands views over the Golden Horn and European Istanbul. The terrace is free and almost always quiet. Walk north from Vefa Quarter for 12 minutes uphill, or take a quick minibus (dolmus).

Insider tip: Arrive by 5:45 PM to catch golden hour light flooding the courtyard and the city beyond. Bring water; there's a small cafe but it fills fast at sunset.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

5

6:30 PM · 30 minutes

Roasted Chestnut Stand

\$5-8 per person

Hunt for a street vendor roasting chestnuts in a metal drum near Vefa Quarter or the Süleymaniye Mosque steps. Buy a cone of hot, peeled chestnuts (kestane) and warm Turkish drink like salep or boza. It's a local evening ritual. Vendors appear around 5 PM; any quiet corner near the mosque works.

Insider tip: Chestnuts cost around 30-40 TL for a large cone. Eat them while they're still steaming. If you can't find a vendor, head to Vefa Bozacs cafe (historic, legendary) for boza and simit instead.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

[Open Day 4 as a route in Google Maps](#)

Where to eat

Karakoy Lokantasi

Turkish · Breakfast · \$

Packed morning spot near the bazaar. Menemen (scrambled eggs with tomatoes) and fresh bread.

[Google Maps >](#)

Pandeli

Turkish · Lunch · \$\$

Above Spice Bazaar entrance since 1901. Liver, white beans, simple and perfect.

[Google Maps >](#)

Cezayir Restaurant

Turkish · Dinner · \$\$

Galata side street. Slow-cooked stews and wine. Book ahead, tiny place.

[Google Maps >](#)

Which hammam should we book and when?

Caalolu Hammam (central, 160 years old) or Çemberlita (cheaper, busier). Book ahead online or arrive by 10am to avoid queues. Expect 90 minutes and TRY 500-600 per person for the full scrub and massage. Go on Day 2 or 3 when you're not sightseeing-heavy.

What's the best way to do the Bosphorus and see both sides?

Take the public ferry from Eminönü (near the Galata Bridge) at sunset, around 5-6pm in October. It costs TRY 10, takes 20 minutes to Kadköy, and you see the Golden Horn, bridge lights, and the mosques light up. Skip the tourist dinner cruises.

When should we hit Kadköy market and what should we eat?

Go mid-morning or just after 1pm; it quiets between lunch and dinner prep. Buy fresh fruit or cheese from stall vendors. Then find a fish restaurant facing the water: order the catch of the day (balk) and let them grill it with lemon and oil. Budget TRY 200-300 for two.

Do I need to book Topkapi Palace and the Blue Mosque ahead?

Topkapi needs no advance booking; arrive by 9.30am and you'll skip most queues. The Blue Mosque is free and open five times daily for prayer; visit between prayer times or join worshippers if respectfully dressed (shoulders and knees covered). The Hagia Sophia (museum entry TRY 500) books up; reserve online if October feels busy.

What's the weather like in Istanbul in October?

Expect 15-21°C (59-70°F). Pack layers, a light jacket, and comfortable walking shoes. Rain's possible but not guaranteed.

Do people speak English in Istanbul?

Spoken here: Turkish. English is spoken in hotels, restaurants, and tourist areas, but rarely in small shops or neighbourhoods. Learning a few phrases helps.

Useful phrases:

- Merhaba (mer-hah-bah): Hello
- Teekkür ederim (teh-shek-kur ed-er-im): Thank you
- Kaç para (kach pah-rah): How much
- Çay (chai): Tea
- Su (soo): Water

Is Istanbul safe for visitors?

Istanbul is generally safe for tourists. Stay alert in crowded areas (pickpockets target trams and ferries) and avoid large protests or political gatherings.

What's the emergency number in Türkiye?

Call 112 for police, ambulance or fire. It's free from any phone.

Do you tip in Türkiye?

Leave 5-10% at restaurants if service wasn't included. Round up taxi fares. Hammam attendants usually get 15-20 TL (around £0.50). Tipping isn't mandatory but is appreciated.

What do only locals know about Istanbul?

- Skip the Grand Bazaar's main tourist drag. Head to Arasta Bazaar behind the Blue Mosque instead, where prices are real and the energy is local.
- Drink çay at a tea garden overlooking the water, not in your hotel. They're everywhere and cost about 10 TL (£0.30).
- Book a hammam in advance or ask your hotel, but go early morning to avoid tour groups. The scrub is intense and worth every minute.
- October means fewer cruise ships. The ferries will be quieter than summer, so you'll actually enjoy the Bosphorus instead of just surviving it.