

1 Istanbul



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- 3 Istanbul, historically known as [Byzantium](#) and [Constantinople](#), is the [largest city](#) in [Turkey](#) and the country's economic, cultural and historic center.
- 4 The city straddles the [Bosphorus](#) strait, and lies in both [Europe](#) and [Asia](#), with a population of over 15 million residents, comprising 19% of the population of Turkey.
- 5 Istanbul is the most populous city in Europe, and the world's [fifteenth-largest city](#).
- 6 Founded as [Byzantium](#) by Megarian colonists in 660 BCE (before common era), and renamed as [Constantinople](#) in 330 CE, the city grew in size and influence, becoming a beacon of the Silk Road and one of the most important cities in history.
- 7 It served as an imperial capital for almost sixteen centuries, during the [Roman/Byzantine](#) (330-1204), [Latin](#) (1204-1261), [Byzantine](#) (1261-1453), and [Ottoman](#) (1453-1922) empires.
- 8 It was instrumental in the advancement of [Christianity](#) during Roman and Byzantine times, before its transformation to an Islamic stronghold following the [Fall of Constantinople](#) in 1453 CE.
- 9 In 1923, after the [Turkish War of Independence](#), [Ankara](#) replaced the city as the capital of the newly formed [Republic of Turkey](#).
- 10 In 1930 the city's name was officially changed to Istanbul, an appellation [Greek](#) speakers used since the eleventh century to colloquially refer to the city.
- 11 Over 13.4 million foreign visitors came to Istanbul in 2018, eight years after it was named a [European Capital of Culture](#), making the city the world's fifth-most popular tourist destination.
- 12 Istanbul is home to several [UNESCO World Heritage Sites](#), and hosts the headquarters of numerous Turkish companies, accounting for more than thirty percent of the country's economy.

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42 **Toponymy**

- 43 The first known name of the city is [Byzantium](#) ([Greek](#): Βυζάντιον, Byzántion), the name given to it at its foundation by [Megarean](#) colonists around 660 BCE.
- 44 Megaran colonists claimed a direct line back to the founders of the city, Byzas, the son of the god Poseidon and the nymph Ceroëssa.

- 45 Modern excavations has raised the possibility that the name Byzantium might reflect the sites of native Thracian settlements that preceded the fully fledged town.
- 46 Constantinople comes from the Latin name Constantinus, after [Constantine the Great](#), the Roman emperor who refounded the city in 324 CE.
- 47 Constantinople remained the most common name for the city in the West until the 1930s, when Turkish authorities began to press for the use of "Istanbul" in foreign languages.
- 48 Kostantiniyye ([Ottoman Turkish](#): قسطنطينيه), Be Makam-e Qonstantiniyyah al-Mahmiyyah (meaning "the Protected Location of Constantinople") and İstanbul were the names used alternatively by the Ottomans during their rule.
- 49 The name İstanbul (Turkish pronunciation: is commonly held to derive from the [Medieval Greek](#) phrase "εἰς τὴν", which means "to the city" and is how Constantinople was referred to by the local Greeks.
- 50 This reflected its status as the only major city in the vicinity.
- 51 The importance of Constantinople in the Ottoman world was also reflected by its Ottoman name "Der Saadet" meaning the "gate to Prosperity" in Ottoman.
- 52 An alternative view is that the name evolved directly from the name Constantinople, with the first and third syllables dropped.
- 53 Some Ottoman sources of the 17th century, such as [Evliya Çelebi](#), describe it as the common Turkish name of the time; between the late 17th and late 18th centuries, it was also in official use.
- 54 The first use of the word "İslambol" on coinage was in 1730 during the reign of Sultan [Mahmud I](#).
- 55 In modern [Turkish](#), the name is written as İstanbul, with a dotted İ, as the [Turkish alphabet](#) distinguishes between a [dotted and dotless İ](#).
- 56 In English the stress is on the first or last syllable, but in Turkish it is on the second syllable (tan).
- 57 A person from the city is an İstanbullu (plural: İstanbullular), although Istanbulite is used in English.

58 *History*

- 59 [Neolithic](#) artifacts, uncovered by archeologists at the beginning of the 21st century, indicate that Istanbul's historic peninsula was settled as far back as the 6th millennium BCE.
- 60 That early settlement, important in the spread of the [Neolithic Revolution](#) from the Near East to Europe, lasted for almost a millennium before being inundated by rising water levels.
- 61 The first human settlement on the Asian side, the Fikirtepe mound, is from the [Copper Age](#) period, with artifacts dating from 5500 to 3500 BCE, On the European side, near the point of the peninsula ([Sarayburnu](#)), there was a Thracian settlement during the early 1st millennium BCE.

62 Modern authors have linked it to the Thracian toponym Lygos, mentioned
by [Pliny the Elder](#) as an earlier name for the site of Byzantium.

63 The history of the city proper begins around 660 BCE, when Greek
settlers from Megara established Byzantium on the European side of the
Bosphorus.

64 The settlers built an acropolis adjacent to the Golden Horn on the site of
the early Thracian settlements, fueling the nascent city's economy.

65 The city experienced a brief period of Persian rule at the turn of the 5th
century BCE, but the Greeks recaptured it during the Greco-Persian Wars.

66 Byzantium then continued as part of the Athenian League and its
successor, the Second Athenian League, before gaining independence in
355 BCE.

67 Long allied with the Romans, Byzantium officially became a part of the
Roman Empire in 73 CE.

68 Byzantium's decision to side with the Roman usurper Pescennius Niger
against Emperor Septimius Severus cost it dearly; by the time it
surrendered at the end of 195 CE, two years of siege had left the city
devastated.

69 Five years later, Severus began to rebuild Byzantium, and the city
regained – and, by some accounts, surpassed – its previous prosperity.

70 **Rise and fall of Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire**

71 *Main article: [Constantinople](#)*

72 **Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic eras**

73 Following the conquest of Constantinople, [Mehmed II](#) immediately set
out to revitalize the city.

74 Cognizant that revitalization would fail without the repopulation of the
city, [Mehmed II](#) welcomed everyone-foreigners, criminals, and runaways-
showing extraordinary openness and willingness to incorporate outsiders
that came to define Ottoman political culture.

75 He also invited people from all over [Europe](#) to his capital, creating a
cosmopolitan society that persisted through much of the Ottoman period.

76 Revitalizing Istanbul also required a massive program of restorations, of
everything from roads to [aqueducts](#).

77 Like many monarchs before and since, [Mehmed II](#) transformed Istanbul's
urban landscape with wholesale redevelopment of the city center.

78 There was a [huge new palace](#) to rival, if not overshadow, [the old one](#), a
new covered market (still standing as the [Grand Bazaar](#)), porticoes,
pavilions, walkways, as well as more than a dozen new mosques.

79 [Mehmed II](#) turned the ramshackle old town into something that looked
like an imperial capital.

80 ... snip, snip ...

- 81 The Ottoman Empire joined [World War I](#) (1914–1918) on the side of the [Central Powers](#) and was ultimately defeated.
- 82 The [deportation of Armenian intellectuals on 24 April 1915](#) was among the major events which marked the start of the [Armenian Genocide](#) during WWI.
- 83 Due to Ottoman and Turkish policies of [Turkification](#) and [ethnic cleansing](#), the city's [Christian](#) population declined from 450,000 to 240,000 between 1914 and 1927.
- 84 The [Armistice of Mudros](#) was signed on 30 October 1918 and the [Allies occupied Constantinople](#) on 13 November 1918.
- 85 The [Ottoman Parliament](#) was dissolved by the Allies on 11 April 1920 and the Ottoman delegation led by [Damat Ferid Pasha](#) was forced to sign the [Treaty of Sèvres](#) on 10 August 1920.
- 86 Following the [Turkish War of Independence](#) (1919–1922), the [Grand National Assembly of Turkey](#) in [Ankara](#) abolished the [Sultanate](#) on 1 November 1922, and the last [Ottoman Sultan](#), [Mehmed VI](#), was declared [persona non grata](#).
- 87 Leaving aboard the [British warship HMS Malaya](#) on 17 November 1922, he went into exile and died in [Sanremo, Italy](#), on 16 May 1926.
- 88 The [Treaty of Lausanne](#) was signed on 24 July 1923, and the [occupation of Constantinople](#) ended with the departure of the last forces of the [Allies](#) from the city on 4 October 1923.
- 89 Turkish forces of the Ankara government, commanded by [Şükrü Naili Pasha](#) (3rd Corps), entered the city with a ceremony on 6 October 1923, which has been marked as the Liberation Day of Istanbul ([Turkish](#): İstanbul'un Kurtuluşu) and is commemorated every year on its anniversary.
- 90 On 29 October 1923 the Grand National Assembly of Turkey declared the establishment of the Turkish Republic, with Ankara as its capital.
- 91 [Mustafa Kemal Atatürk](#) became the Republic's first [President](#).
- 92 According to historian Philip Mansel:
- 93 after the departure of the dynasty in 1925, from being the most international city in Europe, Constantinople became one of the most nationalistic....
- 94 Unlike Vienna, Constantinople turned its back on the past.
- 95 Even its name was changed.
- 96 Constantinople was dropped because of its Ottoman and international associations.
- 97 From 1926 the post office only accepted Istanbul; it appeared more Turkish and was used by most Turks.
- 98 A [1942 wealth tax](#) assessed mainly on non-Muslims led to the transfer or liquidation of many businesses owned by religious minorities.
- 99 From the late 1940s and early 1950s, Istanbul underwent great structural change, as new public squares, boulevards, and avenues were

constructed throughout the city, sometimes at the expense of historical buildings.

The population of Istanbul began to rapidly increase in the 1970s, as people from Anatolia migrated to the city to find employment in the many new factories that were built on the outskirts of the sprawling metropolis.

This sudden, sharp rise in the city's population caused a large demand for housing, and many previously outlying villages and forests became engulfed into the [metropolitan area](#) of Istanbul.



Geography

Istanbul is located in north-western Turkey and straddles the strait Bosphorus, which provides the only passage from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean via the Sea of Marmara.

Historically, the city has been ideally situated for trade and defense: The confluence of the Sea of Marmara, the Bosphorus, and the Golden Horn provide both ideal defense against enemy attack and a natural toll-gate.

Several picturesque islands – Büyükada, Heybeliada, Burgazada, Kınalıada, and five smaller islands – are part of the city.

Istanbul's shoreline has grown beyond its natural limits.

Large sections of Caddebostan sit on areas of landfill, increasing the total area of the city to 5,343 square kilometers (2,063 sq mi).

Despite the myth that seven hills make up the city, there are in fact more than 50 hills within the city limits.

Istanbul's tallest hill, Aydos, is 537 meters (1,762 ft) high.

The nearby [North Anatolian Fault](#) is responsible for much earthquake activity, although it doesn't physically pass through the city itself.

[North Anatolian Fault](#) caused the earthquakes in [1766](#) and [1894](#).

The threat of major earthquakes plays a large role in the city's infrastructure development, with over 500,000 vulnerable buildings demolished and replaced since 2012.

The city has repeatedly upgraded its [building codes](#), most recently in 2018, requiring [retrofits](#) for older buildings and [higher engineering standards](#) for new construction.

Climate

Istanbul has borderline [Mediterranean climate](#), [humid subtropical climate](#) and [oceanic climate](#) with generally cool winters and warm to hot summers (mean temperature peaking at 70.7 °F in August).

Spring and fall are usually mild, with varying conditions dependent on wind direction.

Istanbul's weather is strongly influenced by the Sea of Marmara to the

south, and the Black Sea to the north.

- 119 This moderates temperature swings and produces a mild year-round climate with little seasonal temperature variation.
- 120 Because of its hilly topography and maritime influences, Istanbul exhibits a multitude of distinct [microclimates](#).
- 121 Within the city, rainfall varies widely owing to the rain shadow of the hills in Istanbul, from around 635 millimeters (25.0 in) on the southern fringe at Florya to 1,167 millimeters (45.9 in) on the northern fringe at Bahçeköy. ¶¶¶
- 122 [Lake-effect snow](#) is common and forms when cold air, upon contact with the Black Sea, develops into moist and unstable air that ascends to form snow squalls along the lee shores of the Black Sea.
- 123 These snow squalls are heavy snow bands and occasionally thunder-snows, with accumulation rates approaching 2.0–3.1 in per hour. ¶¶¶
- 124 The highest recorded temperature at the [official](#) downtown observation station in [Sarıyer](#) was 107 °F and on 13 July 2000.
- 125 The lowest recorded temperature was 3 °F on 9 February 1929.
- 126 The highest recorded snow cover in the city center was 80 31 in on 4 January 1942, and 41 in in the northern suburbs on 11 January 2017. ¶¶¶

127 **Cityscape**

- 128 The [Fatih](#) district, which was named after Sultan [Mehmed the Conqueror](#) ([Turkish](#): Fatih Sultan Mehmed), corresponds to what was, until the Ottoman conquest in 1453, the whole of the city of [Constantinople](#) (today is the capital district and called the historic peninsula of Istanbul) on the southern shore of the [Golden Horn](#), across the medieval [Genoese](#) citadel of [Galata](#) on the northern shore.
- 129 The Genoese fortifications in Galata were largely demolished in the 19th century, leaving only the [Galata Tower](#), to make way for the northward expansion of the city.
- 130 Galata ([Karaköy](#)) is today a quarter within the [Beyoğlu](#) (Pera) district, which forms Istanbul's commercial and entertainment center and includes [İstiklal Avenue](#) and [Taksim Square](#). ¶¶¶
- 131 [Dolmabahçe Palace](#), [the seat of government during the late Ottoman period](#), [is in the Beşiktaş district on the European shore of the Bosphorus strait, to the north of Beyoğlu](#).
- 132 [The Sublime Porte \(B – b-ı Âli\)](#), [which became a metonym for the Ottoman government, was originally used to describe the Imperial Gate \(B – b-ı Hüm – yun\)](#) at the outermost courtyard of the [Topkapı Palace](#); but after the 18th century, the Sublime Porte (or simply Porte) began to refer to the gate of the Sadrazamlık (Prime Ministry) compound in the [Cağaloğlu](#) quarter near Topkapı Palace, where the offices of the [Sadrazam](#) ([Grand Vizier](#)) and other [Viziers](#) were, and where foreign diplomats were received.
- 133 The former village of [Ortaköy](#) is within Beşiktaş and gives its name to the [Ortaköy Mosque](#) on the Bosphorus, near the [Bosphorus Bridge](#).

134 Lining both the European and Asian shores of the Bosphorus are the historic [yalıs](#), luxurious chalet mansions built by Ottoman aristocrats and elites as summer homes.

135 Farther inland, outside the city's inner ring road, are [Levent](#) and [Maslak](#), Istanbul's main business districts. ¶¶¶

136 During the Ottoman period, [Üsküdar](#) (then Scutari) and [Kadıköy](#) were outside the scope of the urban area, serving as tranquil outposts with seaside yalıs and gardens.

137 But in the second half of the 20th century, the Asian side experienced major urban growth; the late development of this part of the city led to better infrastructure and tidier urban planning when compared with most other residential areas in the city.

138 Much of the Asian side of the Bosphorus functions as a suburb of the economic and commercial centers in European Istanbul, accounting for a third of the city's population but only a quarter of its employment.

139 As a result of Istanbul's exponential growth in the 20th century, a significant portion of the city is composed of [gecekondu](#) (literally "built overnight"), referring to illegally constructed squatter buildings.

140 At present, some gecekondu areas are being gradually demolished and replaced by modern mass-housing compounds.

141 Moreover, large scale [gentrification](#) and [urban renewal](#) projects have been taking place, such as the one in [Tarlabaşı](#); some of these projects, like the one in [Sulukule](#), have faced criticism.

142 The Turkish government also has ambitious plans for an expansion of the city west and northwards on the European side in conjunction with plans for a [third airport](#); the new parts of the city will include four different settlements with specified urban functions, housing 1.5 million people. ¶¶¶

143 Istanbul does not have a primary urban park, but it has several green areas.

144 Gülhane Park and Yıldız Park were originally included within the grounds of two of Istanbul's palaces – Topkapı Palace and Yıldız Palace – but they were repurposed as public parks in the early decades of the Turkish Republic.

145 Another park, [Fethi Paşa Korusu](#), is on a hillside adjacent to the [Bosphorus Bridge](#) in Anatolia, opposite Yıldız Palace in Europe.

146 Along the European side, and close to the [Fatih Sultan Mehmet Bridge](#), is [Emirgan Park](#), which was known as the Kyparades ([Cypress](#) Forest) during the Byzantine period.

147 In the Ottoman period, it was first granted to [Nişancı Feridun Ahmed Bey](#) in the 16th century, before being granted by Sultan [Murad IV](#) to the [Safavid Emir](#) Güne Han in the 17th century, hence the name Emirgan.

148 The 47-hectare (120-acre) park was later owned by [Khedive Ismail Pasha](#) of [Ottoman Egypt and Sudan](#) in the 19th century.

149 Emirgan Park is known for its diversity of plants and an annual [tulip](#) festival is held there since 2005.

150 The [AKP](#) government's decision to replace [Taksim Gezi Park](#) with a replica of the Ottoman era [Taksim Military Barracks](#) (which was transformed into the [Taksim Stadium](#) in 1921, before being demolished in 1940 for building Gezi Park) sparked a series of [nationwide protests in 2013](#) covering a wide range of issues.

151 Popular during the summer among Istanbulites is [Belgrad Forest](#), spreading across 5,500 hectares (14,000 acres) at the northern edge of the city.

152 The forest originally supplied water to the city and remnants of reservoirs used during Byzantine and Ottoman times survive. ¶¶¶

153 Architecture

154 Istanbul is primarily known for its Byzantine and Ottoman architecture, and despite its development as a [Turkish](#) city since 1453, contains both Christian and ancient monuments. ¶¶¶

155 There are three ancient monuments in the city.

156 The most ancient is the [Egyptian Obelisk](#).

157 Built of red granite, 31 m (100 ft) high, it came from the [Temple of Karnak](#) at [Luxor](#), erected in 1500 BC.

158 It was brought to Istanbul in 357 CE by the order of [Constantius II](#) and put up in the [Hippodrome](#).

159 When re-erected, the [Egyptian Obelisk](#) was mounted on a decorative base, with a statue that depicted [Theodosius I](#) and his courtiers.

160 Next in age is the [Serpentine Column](#), from 479 BCE.

161 It was brought from [Delphi](#) in the time of Augustus and also erected in the [Hippodrome](#).

162 The slightly smaller Column of Constantine Porphyrogenitus, was another of Augustus's trophies.

163 Built of porphyry, 35 m (115 ft) high, it came from Heliopolis, erected in 330 CE to inaugurate the new Byzantine capital.

164 Originally part of a sculpture of Emperor [Constantine the Great](#) dressed as [Apollo](#), the column first stood at the entrance to the [Forum of Constantine](#). ¶¶¶

165 There are traces of the Byzantine era throughout the city, from ancient churches that were built over early Christian meeting places like [Chora Church](#), [Hagia Irene](#) to public places like the Hippodrome, the [Augustaion](#).

166 It is the Hagia Sophia, however, that fully conveys the period of Constantinople as a city without parallel in Christendom. ¶¶¶

167 [Hagia Sophia](#), topped by a dome 31 meters (102 ft) in diameter over a square space defined by four arches, is the pinnacle of the [Byzantine](#) architecture.

168 [Hagia Sophia](#) stood as the world's largest cathedral in the world until it was converted into a mosque in the 15th century.

169 The minarets date from that period. ۱۱۱۱

170 Over the next four centuries, the Ottomans transformed of Istanbul's urban landscape with a vast building scheme building towering mosques and ornate palaces.

171 Blue Mosque, another landmark of the city, faces Haghia Sophia in Sultanahmet Square. ۱۱۱۱

172 Among the oldest surviving examples of [Ottoman architecture](#) in Istanbul are the [Anadoluhisari](#) and [Rumelihisari](#) fortresses, which assisted the Ottomans during their siege of the city.

173 Over the next four centuries, the Ottomans made an indelible impression on the skyline of Istanbul, building towering mosques and ornate palaces. ۱۱۱۱

174 [Topkapı Palace](#), dating back to 1465, is the oldest seat of government surviving in Istanbul.

175 [Mehmet II](#) built the original palace as his main residence and the seat of government.

176 The present palace grew over the centuries as a series of additions enfolding four courtyards and blending [neoclassical](#), [rococo](#), and [baroque](#) architectural forms.

177 In 1639 [Murat IV](#) made some of the most lavish additions, including the [Baghdad Kiosk](#), to commemorate his [conquest of Baghdad](#) the previous year.

178 Government meetings took place here until 1786, when the seat of government was moved to the Sublime Porte.

179 After several hundred years of royal residence, it was abandoned in 1853 in favor of the baroque [Dolmabahçe Palace](#).

180 [Topkapı Palace](#) became public property following the [abolition of monarchy](#) in 1922.

181 After extensive renovation, it became one of Turkey's first national museums in 1924. ۱۱۱۱

182 The imperial mosques include Fatih Mosque, Bayezid Mosque, Yavuz Selim Mosque, Süleymaniye Mosque, Sultan Ahmed Mosque (the Blue Mosque), and Yeni Mosque, all of which were built at the peak of the Ottoman Empire, in the 16th and 17th centuries.

183 In the following centuries, and especially after the Tanzimat reforms, Ottoman architecture was supplanted by European styles.

184 An example of which is the imperial Nuruosmaniye Mosque.

185 Areas around İstiklal Avenue were filled with grand European embassies and rows of buildings in Neoclassical, Renaissance Revival and Art Nouveau styles, which went on to influence the architecture of a variety of structures in Beyoğlu – including churches, stores, and theaters – and official buildings such as [Dolmabahçe Palace](#). ۱۱۱۱

186 **5 Administration**

187 Since 2004, the municipal boundaries of Istanbul have been coincident

with the boundaries of its province.

- 188 The city, considered capital of the larger Istanbul Province, is administered by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (MMI), which oversees the [39 districts](#) of the city-province. ¶¶¶
- 189 The current city structure can be traced back to the Tanzimat period of reform in the 19th century, before which [Islamic judges](#) and imams led the city under the auspices of the [Grand Vizier](#).
- 190 Following the model of French cities, this religious system was replaced by a mayor and a citywide council composed of representatives of the confessional groups ([millet](#)) across the city.
- 191 Pera (now Beyoğlu) was the first area of the city to have its own director and council, with members instead being longtime residents of the neighborhood.
- 192 Laws enacted after the [Ottoman constitution of 1876](#) aimed to expand this structure across the city, imitating the twenty [arrondissements of Paris](#), but they were not fully implemented until 1908, when the city was declared a province with nine constituent districts.
- 193 This system continued beyond the founding of the Turkish Republic, with the province renamed a belediye (municipality), but the municipality was disbanded in 1957.

194 **6 Demographics**

- 195 Throughout most of its history, Istanbul has ranked among the largest cities in the world.
- 196 By 500 CE, Constantinople had somewhere between 400,000 and 500,000 people, edging out its predecessor, Rome, for the [world's largest city](#).
- 197 Constantinople jostled with other major historical cities, such as [Baghdad](#), [Chang'an](#), [Kaifeng](#) and [Merv](#) for the position of the world's largest city until the 12th century.
- 198 It never returned to being the world's largest, but remained the [largest city](#) in Europe from 1500 to 1750, when it was surpassed by [London](#). ¶¶¶
- 199 The [Turkish Statistical Institute](#) estimates that the population of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality was 15,519,267 at the end of 2019, hosting 19 percent of the country's population.
- 200 64.4% of the residents live on the European side and 35.6% on the Asian side. ¶¶¶
- 201 Istanbul ranks as the [seventh-largest city proper](#) in the world, and the [second-largest urban agglomeration](#) in Europe, after [Moscow](#).
- 202 The city's annual population growth of 1.5 percent ranks as one of the highest among the seventy-eight largest metropolises in the [Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development](#).
- 203 The high population growth mirrors an urbanization trend across the country, as the second and third fastest-growing OECD metropolises are the Turkish cities of [Izmir](#) and Ankara. ¶¶¶

204 Istanbul experienced especially rapid growth during the second half of
the 20th century, with its population increasing tenfold between 1950
and 2000.

205 This growth was fueled by internal and international migration.

206 Istanbul's foreign population with a residence permit increased
dramatically, from 43,000 in 2007 to 856,377 in 2019.

207 6.1 Religious and ethnic groups

208 Main article: [Religion in Istanbul](#)

209 See also: [Assyrians in Turkey](#), [Kurds in Istanbul](#), [Bosniaks in Turkey](#), [Greeks in Turkey](#), [Armenians in Turkey](#), [Jews in Turkey](#), and [Albanians in Turkey](#)

210 Istanbul has been a cosmopolitan city throughout much of its history, but
it has become more homogenized since the end of the Ottoman era.

211 [Arabs](#) form the city's one of the largest ethnic minorities, with an estimated
population of more than 2 million.

212 Following Turkey's support for the [Arab Spring](#), Istanbul emerged as a
hub for dissidents from across the [Arab world](#), including former
presidential candidates from Egypt, Kuwaiti MPs, and former ministers
from Jordan, Saudi Arabia (including [Jamal Khashoggi](#)), Syria, and Yemen.

213 The number of [refugees of the Syrian Civil War in Turkey](#) residing in
Istanbul is estimated to be around 1 million. ¶¶¶

214 With estimates ranging from 2 to 4 million, [Kurds](#) form the other largest
ethnic minority in Istanbul.

215 According to a 2006 [KONDA](#) study, Kurds constituted 14.8% of Istanbul's
total population.

216 Although the Kurdish presence in the city dates back to the early
Ottoman period, the majority of Kurds in the city originate from villages in
eastern and southeastern Turkey. ¶¶¶

217 Greeks and [Armenians](#) form the largest Christian population in the city.

218 While Istanbul's Greek population was exempted from the 1923
population exchange with Greece, [changes in tax status](#) and the [1955 anti-Greek pogrom](#)
prompted thousands to leave.

219 Following [Greek migration to the city for work](#) in the 2010s, the Greek
population rose to nearly 3,000 in 2019, still greatly diminished since
1919, when it stood at 350,000. There are today 123,363 Armenians in
Istanbul, down from a peak of 164,000 in 1913. ¶¶¶

220 The majority of the Levantines (Turkish: Levanten) in Istanbul and [İzmir](#) are
the descendants of traders/colonists from the Italian [maritime republics](#) of
the [Mediterranean](#) (especially [Genoa](#) and [Venice](#)) and [France](#), who
obtained special rights and privileges called the [Capitulations](#) from the
Ottoman sultans in the 16th century.

221 The community had more than 15,000 members during [Atatürk's](#)
presidency in the 1920s and 1930s, but today is reduced to only a few
hundreds, according to Italo-Levantine writer [Giovanni Scognamiglio](#).

222 They continue to live in Istanbul (mostly in [Karaköy](#), [Beyoğlu](#) and

[Nişantaşı](#)), and Izmir (mostly in [Karşıyaka](#), [Bornova](#) and [Buca](#)).¹¹¹

223 Istanbul became one of the world's most important [Jewish](#) centers in the
16th and 17th century.

224 Romaniote and Ashkenazi communities existed in Istanbul before the
conquest of Istanbul, but it was the arrival of Sephardic Jews that ushered
a period of cultural flourishing.

225 Sephardic Jews settled in the city after their expulsion from Spain and
Portugal in 1492 and 1497.

226 Sympathetic to the plight of Sephardic Jews, [Bayezid II](#) sent out the
[Ottoman Navy](#) under the command of admiral [Kemal Reis](#) to Spain in
1492 in order to evacuate them safely to Ottoman lands.

227 In marked contrast to [Jews in Europe](#), [Ottoman Jews](#) were allowed to
work in any profession.

228 [Ottoman Jews](#) in Istanbul excelled in commerce, and came to particularly
dominate the medical profession.

229 By 1711, using the printing press, books came to be published in [Spanish](#)
and [Ladino](#), Yiddish, and Hebrew.

230 In large part due to emigration to Israel, the Jewish population in the city
dropped from 100,000 in 1950 to 25,000 in 2020.

231 **7 Politics**

232 Politically, Istanbul is seen as the most important administrative region in
Turkey.

233 Many politicians, including President [Recep Tayyip Erdoğan](#), are of the
view that a political party's performance in Istanbul is more significant
than its general performance overall.

234 This is due to the city's role as Turkey's financial center, its large electorate
and the fact that Erdoğan himself was [elected Mayor of Istanbul](#) in 1994.

235 In the run-up to [local elections in 2019](#), Erdoğan claimed 'if we fail in
Istanbul, we will fail in Turkey'.¹¹²

236 The [contest in Istanbul](#) carried deep political, economic and symbolic
significance for Erdoğan, whose [election of mayor of Istanbul in 1994](#) had
served as his launchpad.

237 For [Ekrem İmamoğlu](#), winning [the mayorship of Istanbul](#) was a huge
moral victory, but for Erdoğan it had practical ramifications: His party,
[AKP](#), lost control of the \$4.8 billion municipal budget, which had
sustained patronage at the point of delivery of many public services for
25 years.¹¹³

238 More recently, Istanbul and many of Turkey's metropolitan cities are
following a trend away from the government and their right-wing
ideology.

239 In 2013 and 2014, [large-scale anti-AKP government protests](#) began in
İstanbul and spread throughout the nation.

240 This trend first became evident electorally in the [2014 mayoral election](#)
where the center-left opposition candidate won an impressive 40% of the
vote, despite not winning.

241 The first government defeat in Istanbul occurred in the [2017](#)
[constitutional referendum](#), where Istanbul voted 'No' by 51.4% to 48.6%.

242 The AKP government had supported a 'Yes' vote and won the vote
nationally due to high support in rural parts of the country.

243 The biggest defeat for the government came in the [2019 local elections](#),
where their candidate for Mayor, former Prime Minister [Binali Yıldırım](#),
was defeated by a very narrow margin by the opposition candidate
[Ekrem İmamoğlu](#).

244 İmamoğlu [won the vote](#) with 48.77% of the vote, against Yıldırım's
48.61%.

245 Similar trends and electoral successes for the opposition were also
replicated in [Ankara](#), [Izmir](#), [Antalya](#), [Mersin](#), [Adana](#) and other metropolitan
areas of Turkey. ¶¶¶

246 Administratively, Istanbul is divided into 39 districts, more than any other
province in Turkey.

247 As a province, Istanbul sends 98 [Members of Parliament](#) to the [Grand](#)
[National Assembly of Turkey](#), which has a total of 600 seats.

248 For the purpose of parliamentary elections, Istanbul is divided into [three](#)
[electoral districts](#); two on the European side and [one on the Asian side](#),
electing 28, 35 and 35 MPs respectively.

249 **8 Economy**

250 Istanbul had the [eleventh-largest economy](#) among the world's urban
areas in 2018, and is responsible for 30 percent of Turkey's industrial
output, 31 percent of GDP, and 47 percent of tax revenues.

251 The city's [gross domestic product](#) adjusted by [PPP](#) stood at US\$537.507
billion in 2018, with manufacturing and services accounting for 36
percent and 60 percent of the economic output respectively.

252 Istanbul's productivity is 110 percent higher than the national average.

253 Trade is economically important, accounting for 30 percent of the
economic output in the city.

254 In 2019, companies based in Istanbul produced exports worth \$83.66
billion and received imports totaling \$128.34 billion; these figures were
equivalent to 47 percent and 61 percent, respectively, of the national
totals. ¶¶¶

255 Istanbul, which straddles the Bosphorus strait, houses international ports
that link Europe and Asia.

256 The Bosphorus, providing the only passage from the Black Sea to the
Mediterranean, is the world's busiest and narrowest strait used for
international navigation, with more than 200 million tons of oil passing
through it each year.

257 [International conventions guarantee passage](#) between the Black and the

Mediterranean seas, even when tankers carry oil, [LNG/LPG](#), chemicals, and other flammable or explosive materials as cargo.

258 In 2011, as a workaround solution, the then Prime Minister Erdoğan presented [Canal Istanbul](#), a project to open a new strait between the Black and Marmara seas.

259 While the project was still on Turkey's agenda in 2020, there has not been a clear date set for it. ¶¶¶

260 Shipping is a significant part of the city's economy, with 73.9 percent of exports and 92.7 percent of imports in 2018 executed by sea.

261 Istanbul has three major shipping ports - the [Port of Haydarpaşa](#), the Port of Ambarlı, and the Port of Zeytinburnu - as well as several smaller ports and oil terminals along the Bosphorus and the Sea of Marmara.

262 Haydarpaşa, at the southeastern end of the Bosphorus, was Istanbul's largest port until the early 2000s.

263 Since then operations were shifted to Ambarlı, with plans to convert Haydarpaşa into a tourism complex.

264 In 2019, Ambarlı, on the western edge of the urban center, had an annual capacity of 3,104,882 [TEUs](#), making it the third-largest cargo terminal in the Mediterranean basin. ¶¶¶

265 Istanbul has been an international banking hub since the 1980s, and is home to the only [stock exchange](#) in Turkey.

266 [Borsa Istanbul](#) was originally established as the Ottoman Stock Exchange in 1866.

267 In 1995, keeping up with the financial trends, Borsa Istanbul has moved its headquarters from [Bankalar Caddesi](#) - traditionally the financial center of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey, - to the district of [Maslak](#), which hosts the headquarters of the majority of Turkish banks.

268 By 2022, Borsa Istanbul is scheduled to move to a new planned district in [Ataşehir](#), which will host the headquarters of Turkish banks, including the [Central Bank](#) that is currently headquartered in [Ankara](#).

269 Whereas 2.4 million foreigners visited the city in 2000, there were 13.4 million foreign tourists in 2018, making Istanbul the world's fifth most-visited city.

270 Istanbul is, after [Antalya](#), Turkey's second-largest international gateway, receiving a quarter of the nation's foreign tourists.

271 Istanbul has more than fifty museums, with [Topkapı Palace](#), the most visited museum in the city, bringing in more than \$30 million in revenue each year. ¶¶¶

272 **9 Culture**

273 Istanbul was historically known as a cultural hub, but its cultural scene stagnated after the Turkish Republic shifted its focus toward [Ankara](#).

274 The new national government established programs that served to orient Turks toward musical traditions, especially those originating in Europe,

but musical institutions and visits by foreign classical artists were primarily centered in the new capital.

275 Much of Turkey's cultural scene had its roots in Istanbul, and by the 1980s and 1990s Istanbul reemerged globally as a city whose cultural significance is not solely based on its past glory. ¹¹¹

276 By the end of the 19th century, Istanbul had established itself as a regional artistic center, with Turkish, European, and Middle Eastern artists flocking to the city.

277 Despite efforts to make Ankara Turkey's cultural heart, Istanbul had the country's primary institution of art until the 1970s.

278 When additional universities and art journals were founded in Istanbul during the 1980s, artists formerly based in Ankara moved in.

279 [Beyoğlu](#) has been transformed into the artistic center of the city, with young artists and older Turkish artists formerly residing abroad finding footing there.

280 Modern art museums, including [İstanbul Modern](#), the [Pera Museum](#), [Sakıp Sabancı Museum](#) and [Santralİstanbul](#), opened in the 2000s to complement the exhibition spaces and auction houses that have already contributed to the cosmopolitan nature of the city.

281 These museums have yet to attain the popularity of older museums on the historic peninsula, including the [İstanbul Archaeology Museums](#), which ushered in the era of modern museums in Turkey, and the [Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum](#). ¹¹¹

282 The first film screening in Turkey was at [Yıldız Palace](#) in 1896, a year after the technology publicly debuted in Paris.

283 Movie theaters rapidly cropped up in Beyoğlu, with the greatest concentration of theaters being along the street now known as [İstiklal Avenue](#).

284 Istanbul also became the heart of [Turkey's nascent film industry](#), although Turkish films were not consistently developed until the 1950s.

285 Since then, Istanbul has been the most popular location to film Turkish dramas and comedies.

286 The Turkish film industry ramped up in the second half of the century, and with [Uzak](#) (2002) and [My Father and My Son](#) (2005), both filmed in Istanbul, the nation's movies began to see substantial international success.

287 Istanbul and its picturesque skyline have also served as a backdrop for several foreign films, including [From Russia with Love](#) (1963), [Topkapi](#) (1964), [The World Is Not Enough](#) (1999), and [Mission Istanbul](#) (2008). ¹¹¹

288 Coinciding with this cultural reemergence was the establishment of the Istanbul Festival, which began showcasing a variety of art from Turkey and around the world in 1973.

289 From this flagship festival came the [International Istanbul Film Festival](#) and the [İstanbul International Jazz Festival](#) in the early 1980s.

290 With its focus now solely on music and dance, the Istanbul Festival has
been known as the [Istanbul International Music Festival](#) since 1994.

291 The most prominent of the festivals that evolved from the original Istanbul
Festival is the [Istanbul Biennial](#), held every two years since 1987.

292 Its early incarnations were aimed at showcasing Turkish visual art, and it
has since opened to international artists and risen in prestige to join the
elite [biennales](#), alongside the [Venice Biennale](#) and the [São Paulo Art
Biennial](#).¹¹¹

293 9.1 Leisure and entertainment

294 Istanbul has [numerous shopping centers](#), from the historic to the modern.

295 The [Grand Bazaar](#), in operation since 1461, is among the world's oldest
and largest covered markets.

296 [Mahmutpasha Bazaar](#) is an open-air market extending between the
Grand Bazaar and the [Egyptian Bazaar](#), which has been Istanbul's major
spice market since 1660.

297 [Galleria Ataköy](#) ushered in the age of modern shopping malls in Turkey
when it opened in 1987.

298 Since then, malls have become major shopping centers outside the
historic peninsula.

299 [Akmerkez](#) was awarded the titles of "Europe's best" and "World's best"
shopping mall by the [International Council of Shopping Centers](#) in 1995
and 1996; [Istanbul Cevahir](#) has been one of the continent's largest since
opening in 2005; [Kanyon](#) won the Cityscape Architectural Review Award
in the Commercial Built category in 2006.

300 [İstinye Park](#) in [İstinye](#) and [Zorlu Center](#) near [Levent](#) are among the newest
malls which include the stores of the world's top fashion brands.

301 [Abdi İpekçi Street](#) in [Nişantaşı](#) and [Bağdat Avenue](#) on the Anatolian side
of the city have evolved into high-end shopping districts.¹¹²

302 Istanbul is known for its historic [seafood](#) restaurants.

303 Many of the city's most popular and upscale seafood restaurants line the
shores of the [Bosphorus](#) (particularly in neighborhoods like [Ortaköy](#),
[Bebek](#), [Arnavutköy](#), [Yeniköy](#), [Beylerbeyi](#) and [Çengelköy](#)).

304 [Kumkapı](#) along the [Sea of Marmara](#) has a pedestrian zone that hosts
around fifty fish restaurants.

305 The [Princes' Islands](#), 15 kilometers (9 mi) from the city center, are also
popular for their seafood restaurants.

306 Because of their restaurants, historic summer mansions, and tranquil, car-
free streets, the Prince Islands are a popular vacation destination among
Istanbulites and foreign tourists.

307 Istanbul is also famous for its sophisticated and elaborately-cooked
dishes of the [Ottoman cuisine](#).

308 Following the influx of immigrants from southeastern and eastern Turkey,
which began in the 1960s, the foodscape of the city has drastically

changed by the end of the century; with influences of Middle Eastern cuisine such as [kebab](#) taking an important place in the food scene.

- 309 Restaurants featuring foreign cuisines are mainly concentrated in the [Beyoğlu](#), [Beşiktaş](#), [Şişli](#), and [Kadıköy](#) districts. ¶¶¶
- 310 Istanbul has active [nightlife](#) and historic [taverns](#), a signature characteristic of the city for centuries if not millennia.
- 311 Along [İstiklal Avenue](#) is the [Çiçek Pasajı](#), now home to winehouses (known as *meyhanes*), pubs, and restaurants.
- 312 İstiklal Avenue, originally known for its taverns, has shifted toward shopping, but the nearby Nevizade Street is still lined with winehouses and pubs.
- 313 Some other neighborhoods around İstiklal Avenue have been revamped to cater to Beyoğlu's nightlife, with formerly commercial streets now lined with pubs, cafes, and restaurants playing live music.
- 314 Other focal points for Istanbul's nightlife include [Nişantaşı](#), [Ortaköy](#), [Bebek](#), and [Kadıköy](#). ¶¶¶

315 **10 Sports**

- 316 Istanbul is home to some of Turkey's oldest sports clubs.
- 317 Beşiktaş JK, established in 1903, is considered the oldest of these sports clubs.
- 318 Due to its initial status as Turkey's only club, Beşiktaş occasionally represented the Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic in international sports competitions, earning the right to place the Turkish flag inside its team logo.
- 319 Galatasaray SK and Fenerbahçe SK have fared better in international competitions and have won more Süper Lig titles, at 22 and 19 times, respectively.
- 320 Galatasaray and Fenerbahçe have a long-standing rivalry, with Galatasaray based in the European part and Fenerbahçe based in the Anatolian part of the city.
- 321 Istanbul has seven basketball teams – Anadolu Efes, Beşiktaş, Darüşşafaka, Fenerbahçe, Galatasaray, İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyespor and Büyükçekmece – that play in the premier-level [Turkish Basketball Super League](#). ¶¶¶
- 322 Many of Istanbul's sports facilities have been built or upgraded since 2000 to bolster the city's bids for the [Summer Olympic Games](#).
- 323 [Atatürk Olympic Stadium](#), the largest multi-purpose stadium in Turkey, was completed in 2002 as an [IAAF](#) first-class venue for [track and field](#).
- 324 The stadium hosted the [2005 UEFA Champions League Final](#) and will host the [2020 UEFA Champions League Final](#).
- 325 [Şükrü Saracoğlu Stadium](#), Fenerbahçe's home field, hosted the [2009 UEFA Cup Final](#) three years after its completion.

326 [Türk Telekom Arena](#) opened in 2011 to replace [Ali Sami Yen Stadium](#) as Galatasaray's home turf, while [Vodafone Park](#), opened in 2016 to replace [BJK İnönü Stadium](#) as the home turf of Beşiktaş, hosted the [2019 UEFA Super Cup](#) game.

327 All four stadiums are elite [Category 4](#) (formerly five-star) UEFA stadiums.

328 The Sinan Erdem Dome, among the largest indoor arenas in Europe, hosted the final of the 2010 FIBA World Championship, the 2012 IAAF World Indoor Championships, as well as the 2011-12 Euroleague and 2016-17 EuroLeague Final Fours.

329 Prior to the completion of the Sinan Erdem Dome in 2010, Abdi İpekçi Arena was Istanbul's primary indoor arena, having hosted the finals of EuroBasket 2001.

330 Several other indoor arenas, including the Beşiktaş Akatlar Arena, have also been inaugurated since 2000, serving as the home courts of Istanbul's sports clubs.

331 The most recent of these is the 13,800-seat Ülker Sports Arena, which opened in 2012 as the home court of Fenerbahçe's basketball teams.

332 Despite the construction boom, five bids for the Summer Olympics – in 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, and 2020 – and national bids for [UEFA Euro 2012](#) and [UEFA Euro 2016](#) have ended unsuccessfully.

333 The [TVF Burhan Felek Sport Hall](#) is one of the major volleyball arenas in the city and hosts clubs such as [Eczacıbaşı VitrA](#), [Vakıfbank SK](#), and [Fenerbahçe](#) who have won numerous [European](#) and [World Championship](#) titles.

334 Between 2005 and 2011, [Istanbul Park](#) racing circuit hosted the annual [Formula One Turkish Grand Prix](#).

335 Istanbul Park was also a venue of the [World Touring Car Championship](#) and the [European Le Mans Series](#) in 2005 and 2006, but the track has not seen either of these competitions since then.

336 It also hosted the [Turkish Motorcycle Grand Prix](#) between 2005 and 2007.

337 Istanbul was occasionally a venue of the [F1 Powerboat World Championship](#), with the last race on the Bosphorus strait on 12-13 August 2000.

338 ^[unreliable source?] The last race of the [Powerboat P1 World Championship](#) on the Bosphorus took place on 19-21 June 2009.

339 Istanbul Sailing Club, established in 1952, hosts races and other sailing events on the waterways in and around Istanbul each year.

340 **11 Media**

341 Most state-run radio and television stations are based in Ankara, but Istanbul is the primary hub of Turkish media.

342 The industry has its roots in the former Ottoman capital, where the first Turkish newspaper, Takvim-i Vekayi (Calendar of Affairs), was published in 1831.

343 The Cağaloğlu street on which the newspaper was printed, B – b-ı Âli Street, rapidly became the center of Turkish print media, alongside Beyoğlu across the Golden Horn. ¶¶¶

344 Istanbul now has a wide variety of periodicals.

345 Most nationwide newspapers are based in Istanbul, with simultaneous Ankara and İzmir editions.

346 [Hürriyet](#), [Sabah](#), [Posta](#) and [Sözcü](#), the country's top four papers, are all headquartered in Istanbul, boasting more than 275,000 weekly sales each.

347 *Hürriyet's* English-language edition, [Hürriyet Daily News](#), has been printed since 1961, but the English-language [Daily Sabah](#), first published by *Sabah* in 2014, has overtaken it in circulation.

348 Several smaller newspapers, including popular publications like [Cumhuriyet](#), [Milliyet](#) and [Habertürk](#) are also based in Istanbul.

349 Istanbul also has long-running [Armenian language](#) newspapers, notably the dailies [Marmara](#) and [Jamanak](#) and the bilingual weekly [Agos](#) in Armenian and Turkish. ¶¶¶

350 Radio broadcasts in Istanbul date back to 1927, when Turkey's first radio transmission came from atop the Central Post Office in Eminönü.

351 Control of this transmission, and other radio stations established in the following decades, ultimately came under the state-run [Turkish Radio and Television Corporation](#) (TRT), which held a monopoly on radio and television broadcasts between its founding in 1964 and 1990.

352 Today, TRT runs four national radio stations; these stations have transmitters across the country so each can reach over 90 percent of the country's population, but only Radio 2 is based in Istanbul.

353 Offering a range of content from educational programming to coverage of sporting events, Radio 2 is the most popular radio station in Turkey.

354 Istanbul's airwaves are the busiest in Turkey, primarily featuring either Turkish-language or English-language content.

355 One of the exceptions, offering both, is [Açık Radyo](#) (94.9 FM).

356 Among Turkey's first private stations, and the first featuring foreign popular music, was Istanbul's [Metro FM](#) (97.2 FM).

357 The state-run Radio 3, although based in Ankara, also features English-language popular music, and English-language news programming is provided on NTV Radyo (102.8 FM). ¶¶¶

358 TRT-Children is the only TRT television station based in Istanbul.

359 Istanbul is home to the headquarters of several Turkish stations and regional headquarters of international media outlets.

360 Istanbul-based Star TV was the first private television network to be established following the end of the TRT monopoly; Star TV and Show TV (also based in Istanbul) remain highly popular throughout the country, airing Turkish and American series.

361 Kanal D and ATV are other stations in Istanbul that offer a mix of news and series; NTV (partnered with US media outlet MSNBC) and Sky Turk – both

based in the city – are mainly just known for their news coverage in Turkish.

362 The [BBC](#) has a regional office in Istanbul, assisting its Turkish-language news operations, and the American news channel [CNN](#) established the Turkish-language [CNN Türk](#) there in 1999. ^{¶¶¶}

363 **12 Education**

364 In 2015, more than 57,000 students attended [7,934 schools](#), including the renowned [Galatasaray High School](#), [Kabataş Erkek Lisesi](#), and [Istanbul Lisesi](#).

365 [Galatasaray High School](#) was established in 1481 and is the oldest public high school in Turkey. ^{¶¶¶}

366 Some of the most renowned and highly ranked universities in Turkey are in Istanbul.

367 [Istanbul University](#), the nation's oldest institute of higher education, dates back to 1453 and its dental, law, medical schools were founded in the nineteenth century. ^{¶¶¶¶}

368 Istanbul has more than 93 colleges and universities, with 400,000 students enrolled in 2016.

369 The city's largest private universities include [Sabancı University](#), with its main campus in [Tuzla](#), [Koç University](#) in [Sarıyer](#), [Özyeğin Üniversitesi](#) near [Altunizade](#).

370 Istanbul's first private university, [Koç University](#), was founded as late as 1992, because private universities were officially outlawed in Turkey before the [1982 amendment](#) to the constitution. ^{¶¶¶}

371 Four public universities with a major presence in the city, [Boğaziçi University](#), [Galatasaray University](#), [Istanbul Technical University](#) (the world's third-oldest university dedicated entirely to engineering), [Istanbul University](#) provide education in [English](#) (all but Galatasaray University) and [French](#). ^{¶¶¶}

372 Istanbul is also home to several conservatories and art schools, including [Mimar Sinan Academy of Fine Arts](#), founded in 1882. ^{¶¶¶}

373 **13 Public services**

374 Main article: [Utilities in Istanbul](#) ^{¶¶¶¶}

375 Further information: [Telecommunications in Turkey](#) and [Health care in Turkey](#) ^{¶¶¶¶}

376 Istanbul's first [water supply](#) systems date back to the city's early history, when [aqueducts](#) (such as the [Valens Aqueduct](#)) deposited the water in the city's numerous [cisterns](#).

377 At the behest of [Suleiman the Magnificent](#), the [Kırkçeşme](#) water supply network was constructed; by 1563, the network provided 4,200 cubic meters (150,000 cu ft) of water to 158 sites each day.

378 In later years, in response to increasing public demand, water from various springs was channeled to public fountains, like the [Fountain of Ahmed III](#), by means of supply lines.

379 Today, Istanbul has a chlorinated and filtered water supply and a [sewage treatment](#) system managed by the Istanbul Water and Sewerage Administration (İstanbul Su ve Kanalizasyon İdaresi, İSKİ). ^{xxx}

380 The Silahtarağa Power Station, a coal-fired power plant along the Golden Horn, was the sole source of Istanbul's electricity between 1914, when its first engine room was completed, and 1952.

381 Following the founding of the Turkish Republic, the plant underwent renovations to accommodate the city's increasing demand; its capacity grew from 23 megawatts in 1923 to a peak of 120 megawatts in 1956.

382 Capacity declined until the power station reached the end of its economic life and shut down in 1983.

383 The state-run Turkish Electrical Authority (TEK) briefly – between its founding in 1970 and 1984 – held a monopoly on the generation and distribution of electricity, but now the authority – since split between the Turkish Electricity Generation Transmission Company (TEAŞ) and the Turkish Electricity Distribution Company (TEDAŞ) – competes with private [electric utilities](#). ^{xxx}

384 The Ottoman Ministry of Post and Telegraph was established in 1840 and the first post office, the Imperial Post Office, opened near the courtyard of Yeni Mosque.

385 By 1876, the first international mailing network between Istanbul and the lands beyond the Ottoman Empire had been established.

386 Sultan Abdülmecid I issued Samuel Morse his first official honor for the telegraph in 1847, and construction of the first telegraph line – between Istanbul and Edirne – finished in time to announce the end of the [Crimean War](#) in 1856.

387 A nascent telephone system began to emerge in Istanbul in 1881 and after the first manual [telephone exchange](#) became operational in Istanbul in 1909, the Ministry of Post and Telegraph became the Ministry of Post, Telegraph, and Telephone.

388 [GSM](#) cellular networks arrived in Turkey in 1994, with Istanbul among the first cities to receive the service.

389 Today, [mobile](#) and [landline](#) service is provided by private companies, after [Türk Telekom](#), which split from the Ministry of Post, Telegraph, and Telephone in 1995, was privatized in 2005.

390 Postal services remain under the purview of what is now the Post and Telegraph Organization (retaining the acronym PTT). ^{xxx}

391 In 2000, Istanbul had 137 hospitals, of which 100 were private.

392 Turkish citizens are entitled to subsidized healthcare in the nation's state-run hospitals.

393 As public hospitals tend to be overcrowded or otherwise slow, private hospitals are preferable for those who can afford them.

394 Their prevalence has increased significantly over the last decade, as the
percentage of outpatients using private hospitals increased from 6
percent to 23 percent between 2005 and 2009.

395 Many of these private hospitals, as well as some of the public hospitals,
are equipped with high-tech equipment, including [MRI](#) machines, or
associated with medical research centers.

396 Turkey has more hospitals accredited by the US-based [Joint Commission](#)
than any other country in the world, with most concentrated in its big
cities.

397 The high quality of healthcare, especially in private hospitals, has
contributed to a recent upsurge in [medical tourism](#) to Turkey (with a 40
percent increase between 2007 and 2008).

398 Laser [eye surgery](#) is particularly common among medical tourists, as
Turkey is known for specializing in the procedure. ¶¶

399 **14 Transportation**

400 *Main article: [Public transport in Istanbul](#) ¶¶¶*

401 Istanbul's motorways network are the [O-1](#), [O-2](#), [O-3](#), [O-4](#) and [O-7](#). By the
end of 2019, the total length of Istanbul Province's [toll motorways](#)
network (*otoyollar*) is 513 km and highways network (*devlet yollari*) is 327
km, totaling 840 km of expressway roads (minimum 2x2 lanes), excluding
secondary roads and urban streets.

402 The density of expressway network is 15.7 km/100 km² (2019).

403 The O-1 forms the city's inner [ring road](#), traversing the [15 July Martyrs](#)
([First Bosphorus](#)) [Bridge](#), and the O-2 is the city's outer ring road, crossing
the [Fatih Sultan Mehmet \(Second Bosphorus\) Bridge](#).

404 The O-2 continues west to [Edirne](#) and the O-4 continues east to Ankara.

405 The O-2, O-3, and O-4 are part of [European route E80](#) (the Trans-
European Motorway) between Portugal and the [Iran-Turkey border](#).

406 In 2011, the first and second bridges on the Bosphorus carried 400,000
vehicles each day.

407 The [O-7](#) or Kuzey Marmara Otoyolu, is a motorway that bypass Istanbul to
the north.

408 The O-7 motorway from Kinali Gişeleri to Istanbul Park Service has 139
km, with 8 lanes (4x4).

409 The completed section of highway crosses the [Bosphorus Strait](#) via the
[Yavuz Sultan Selim \(Third Bosphorus\) Bridge](#), entered service on 26
August 2016.

410 The O-7 motorway connects [Istanbul Atatürk Airport](#) with [Istanbul Airport](#).

411 Environmentalist groups worry that the third bridge will endanger the
remaining green areas to the north of Istanbul.

412 Apart from the three Bosphorus Bridges, the dual-deck, 14.6-kilometer
(9.1 mi) [Eurasia Tunnel](#) (which entered service on 20 December 2016)

under the Bosphorus strait also provides road crossings for motor vehicles between the Asian and European sides of Turkey. ""

413 Istanbul's local public transportation system is a network of [commuter trains](#), [trams](#), [funiculars](#), [metro](#) lines, buses, [bus rapid transit](#), and ferries.

414 Fares across modes are integrated, using the [contactless Istanbulkart](#), introduced in 2009, or the older [Akbi](#) electronic ticket device.

415 [Trams in Istanbul](#) date back to 1872, when they were horse-drawn, but even the first electrified trams were decommissioned in the 1960s.

416 Operated by Istanbul Electricity, Tramway, and Tunnel General Management (İETT), trams slowly returned to the city in the 1990s with the introduction of [a nostalgic route](#) and a faster [modern tram line](#), which now carries 265,000 passengers each day.

417 The [Tünel](#) opened in 1875 as the world's second-oldest subterranean rail line (after London's [Metropolitan Railway](#)).

418 It still carries passengers between [Karaköy](#) and İstiklal Avenue along a steep 573-meter (1,880 ft) track; a more modern funicular between Taksim Square and [Kabataş](#) began running in 2006. ""

419 The [Istanbul Metro](#) comprises five lines (the [M1](#), [M2](#), [M3](#) and [M6](#) on the European side, and the [M4](#) and [M5](#) on the Asian side) with several other lines (the [M7](#), [M8](#), [M9](#) and [M11](#)) and extensions under construction.

420 The two sides of Istanbul's metro are connected under the Bosphorus by the [Marmaray Tunnel](#), inaugurated in 2013 as the first rail connection between Thrace and Anatolia, having 13.5 km length.

421 The Marmaray tunnel together with the suburban railways lines along the [Sea of Marmara](#), is part of intercontinental [commuter rail](#) line in Istanbul, from [Halkalı](#) on the European side to [Gebze](#) on the Asian side.

422 Marmaray rail line has 76.6 km, and the full line opened on 12 March 2019.

423 Until then, buses provide transportation within and between the two-halves of the city, accommodating 2.2 million passenger trips each day.

424 The [Metrobus](#), a form of bus rapid transit, crosses the Bosphorus Bridge, with dedicated lanes leading to its termini.

425 [İDO](#) (Istanbul Seabuses) runs a combination of all-passenger ferries and car-and-passenger ferries to ports on both sides of the Bosphorus, as far north as the Black Sea.

426 With additional destinations around the Sea of Marmara, İDO runs the largest municipal ferry operation in the world.

427 The city's main cruise ship terminal is the [Port of Istanbul](#) in Karaköy, with a capacity of 10,000 passengers per hour.

428 Most visitors enter Istanbul by air, but about half a million foreign tourists enter the city by sea each year. ""

429 International rail service from Istanbul launched in 1889, with a line between [Bucharest](#) and Istanbul's [Sirkeci Terminal](#), which ultimately became famous as the eastern terminus of the [Orient Express](#) from [Paris](#).

430 Regular service to Bucharest and [Thessaloniki](#) continued until the early 2010s, when the former was interrupted for Marmaray construction and the latter was halted due to [economic problems in Greece](#).

431 After Istanbul's [Haydarpaşa Terminal](#) opened in 1908, it served as the western terminus of the [Baghdad Railway](#) and an extension of the [Hejaz Railway](#); today, neither service is offered directly from Istanbul.

432 Service to Ankara and other points across Turkey is normally offered by [Turkish State Railways](#), but the construction of Marmaray and the [Ankara-Istanbul high-speed line](#) forced the station to close in 2012.

433 New stations to replace both the Haydarpaşa and Sirkeci terminals, and connect the city's disjointed railway networks, are expected to open upon completion of the Marmaray project; until then, Istanbul is without intercity rail service.

434 Private bus companies operate instead.

435 Istanbul's main bus station is the largest in Europe, with a daily capacity of 15,000 buses and 600,000 passengers, serving destinations as distant as [Frankfurt](#).^{¶¶}

436 Istanbul had three large international airports, two of which are currently in active service for [commercial passenger flights](#).

437 The largest is the new [Istanbul Airport](#), opened in 2018 in the [Arnavutköy](#) district to the northwest of the city center, on the [European](#) side, near the [Black Sea](#) coast.

438 All scheduled commercial passenger flights were transferred from [Istanbul Atatürk Airport](#) to Istanbul Airport on 6 April 2019, following the closure of Istanbul Atatürk Airport for scheduled passenger flights.

439 The [IATA airport code](#) IST was also transferred to the new airport.

440 Once all phases are completed in 2025, the airport will have six sets of runways (eight in total), 16 taxiways, and will be able to accommodate 200 million passengers a year.

441 The transfer from the airport to the city is via the [O-7](#), and it will eventually be linked by two lines of the [Istanbul Metro](#).^{¶¶¶}

442 [Sabiha Gökçen International](#), 45 kilometers (28 mi) southeast of the city center, on the Asian side, was opened in 2001 to relieve Atatürk.

443 Dominated by [low-cost carriers](#), Istanbul's second airport has rapidly become popular, especially since the opening of a new international terminal in 2009; the airport handled 14.7 million passengers in 2012, a year after [Airports Council International](#) named it the world's fastest-growing airport.

444 Atatürk had also experienced rapid growth, as its 20.6 percent rise in passenger traffic between 2011 and 2012 was the highest among the world's top 30 airports.^{¶¶}

445 [Istanbul Atatürk Airport](#), located 24 kilometers (15 mi) west of the city center, on the European side, near the [Marmara Sea](#) coast, was formerly the city's largest airport.

446 After its closure to commercial flights in 2019, it was briefly used by cargo
aircraft and the official state aircraft owned by the Turkish government,
until the demolition of its runway began in 2020.

447 It handled 61.3 million passengers in 2015, which made it the [third-
busiest airport in Europe](#) and the [eighteenth-busiest in the world](#) in that
year. ¶¶¶

448 **14.1 Air pollution from traffic**

449 [Air pollution in Turkey](#) is acute in İstanbul with cars, buses and taxis
causing frequent urban [smog](#), as it is one of the few European cities
without a [low-emission zone](#).

450 As of 2019 the city's mean [air quality](#) remains of a level so as to affect the
heart and lungs of healthy street bystanders during peak traffic hours, and
almost 200 days of pollution were measured by the [air pollution sensors](#)
at [Sultangazi](#), [Mecidiyeköy](#), Alibeyköy and [Kağıthane](#).

451 **15 Twin towns**

452 ▪ [List of twin towns and sister cities of Istanbul](#)

453 **See also**

454 ▪ [Outline of Istanbul](#)

455 ▪ [1766 Istanbul earthquake](#)