

GENERAL INFORMATION

Health Requirements

There are no vaccination requirements. Most tap water in the larger towns and cities has been chlorinated, but bottled water is still recommended for drinking. Food from street vendors should be treated with caution. Medical facilities and standard of health care are good at state hospitals and private health insurance is recommended.

Language

Turkish is the official language, but English is widely spoken in the main tourist areas.

Local time

Local time is GMT +2 (GMT +3 from the last Sunday in March to the last Sunday in October).

Currency

There is no limit to the amount of foreign currency that may be brought into Turkey, but as you leave Turkey, it is wise to spend or exchange your Turkish Lira for foreign currency. Currency and Exchange: The currency unit in Turkey is the Turkish Lira (TL). Traveler's checks are not widely accepted and will generally get a less favorable rate of exchange than cash. American Express traveler's checks should be cashed at banks. The best place to exchange cash is around the "Doviz" offices near the Grand Bazaar in Istanbul, but may also be done at P.T.T. (Post) offices in other areas. There are bank machines almost everywhere in Turkey and cash advance offices in tourist areas where you can use a credit or debit card (Visa, MasterCard etc). Larger shops generally accept US dollars, Euros, traveler's checks and credit cards, but small shops will accept only cash and you will need Turkish lira for local convenience stores or grocers. American Express is not widely accepted and personal checks almost impossible to cash. A credit card is necessary to rent a vehicle.

Exchange Rate (Average)

1 USD = 1.50 TL

1 EURO = 2.20 TL

Tipping

Tipping is a way of life in Turkey and it is customary to give some small change for most services, or a small percent of the bill. In bigger hotels and restaurants if a service charge is not added to the bill, it is customary to tip between 10 and 15%. For taxi fares it is enough to round up the bill. Attendants at Turkish baths expect to share about 15% of the total bill if service has been good.

Post and Telecommunications

The international country dialling code for Turkey is +90. The outgoing code is 00, followed by the relevant country code (e.g. 0044 for the United Kingdom). GSM 800/900 and 1800 networks cover most of the country. Internet cafes are available in the main towns and resorts. We recommend using a long distance calling card or buying a telephone card from a local kiosk or post office. For international calls dial the country code preceded by two zeros (i.e. 001 for the U.S. and Canada, 0044 for England etc). When calling from abroad remember that the country code of Turkey is 90. You may have to dial a prefix. For intercity calls within Turkey, you must first dial a 0, then the city code. When making a local call (inside a city or area) omit the city code. Istanbul has two city codes: 212 (European Side), 216 (Asian Side).

International Country Dialling Code for Istanbul = + 90 212

Medical Care

Clinics and hospitals provide round the clock emergency service. The national emergency phone number is 112. Hotels have a doctor on call through the reception. Reciprocal European Union coverage is available at out-patient departments, otherwise private consultation fees are charged.

Electrical Current

220 volts AC, 50Hz. The European two-pin plug is standard.

Smoking

Smoking is forbidden by law with a monetary penalty in public transportation, and in closed public areas.

Opening Hours:

Banks are open from 8.30 until 12.00 and 13.30 until 17.00 (Monday-Friday). Some banks are open during lunch hours. Post Offices in the large cities are open Monday-Saturday 8.00 to midnight and Sunday 9.00 to 19.00. Smaller post offices are open Monday to Saturday from 8.30 to 17.00. Shop hours are generally from 9.00 to 22.00 Monday to Saturday, but mostly every day and later in tourist areas.

Shops

Shops are open from 09h00 to 22h00 Monday to Friday, and 09h00 to 22h00 on Saturdays. In major town centres and in many shopping malls, they stay open during lunch hours, and close later at night, including weekends.

Driving

Vehicles drive on the right side of the road. The use of safety belts is compulsory, and children under 12 must ride in the back seats.

Public transportation

There is a wide inexpensive network in all towns and cities. In Istanbul, you can choose between bus, metro, tramway, railway, within the city or to the suburbs. Trains and express bus service also link the main towns of the country. You must buy a ticket to use public transportation. You can buy tickets from ticket offices.

Check in / out policy

It depends on the hotel's policy.

Weather

In the south and west the weather follows normal Mediterranean climate patterns with warm, mostly dry summers and mild winters. In the high plateau of Central Anatolia the summers are also hot and dry, but winters can be very cold, with varying precipitation (nights are mostly cool). In the north, especially the Black Sea region, rain is frequent, and in the mountains of the east it is an alpine climate. The southeast, on the other hand, has a near desert climate.

Average Temperature on September and October in Istanbul is:

Day: 18 C

Night: 15 C

Local Customs

Turkey is a modern country and dress is generally casual and comfortable. In Istanbul and other large cities including beachside resorts and major tourist centers you may dress as you like except when visiting mosques. Keep in mind that neither shorts/short skirts nor bare shoulders are allowed in the mosques, and that a head covering for women is greatly appreciated. You will be required to remove your shoes upon entering a mosque. Religious customs should be respected, particularly during the month of Ramadan when eating, drinking and smoking during daylight hours and one should be discreet as it is forbidden by the Muslim culture. Dress modestly when visiting mosques or religious shrines. Do not take photographs on or near military and official institutions and always ask permission when taking photographs of people. There is a smoking ban on all forms of public transport and in outdoor venues (including stadiums and playgrounds). By July 2009 this will include cafes, bars and restaurants as well.

Business:

In Turkey, business associates are addressed by their first names. If the associate is male, then his name is followed by 'bey', and 'hanım' is used for females. A formal, conservative dress code is observed in Turkey, and women should be careful to dress particularly conservatively. Gifts are common and are usually something the associate would use in business such as a pen or other office stationary. Business hours throughout Turkey are generally 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday with an hour taken over lunch.

Toilets:

Have small change when visiting a public toilet, as you will pay when exiting. There are two kinds of toilets in Turkey. One is the toilet you are used to at home, available in all hotels and almost everywhere, and the other is a squat toilet. Make sure that your pockets are empty before using the latter. BAY = Men BAYAN = Women

Taxis:

Taxis are yellow. Fare is shown on the meter according to distance. It is best to go by the meter: showing "Gunduz" during the day until around midnight, and "Gece" after midnight to early morning (fare increases 50%). Most taxi drivers do not speak English. Please keep your hotel address with you.

Food:

Turkish cuisine is considered one of the finest in the world and you will mostly encounter fresh meats and vegetables in a clean atmosphere. You will experience a wide variety of regional culinary dishes on a typical tour. Although water is chlorinated in larger cities we highly recommend drinking bottled water only. During the month of Ramadan, meals will be served as usual.

PRIVATE HOSPITAL (Closest to the Swissotel)

Amerikan Hastanesi

Address: Güzelbahçe Sokak, No: 20 Nişantaşı, İstanbul,
Türkiye

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Phone : 90 (212) 444 3 777

Fax : 90 (212) 311 21 90

E-Posta : vkvah@amerikanhastanesi.org

PUBLIC HOSPITAL (Closest to the Swissotel)

Şişli Etfal Devlet Hastanesi

Web: www.sislietfal.gov.tr

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