

= Istanbul =

Istanbul (/ ˈstænˌbʊl / or / ˈstænˌbuːl / or / ˈstænbʊl / ; Turkish : İstanbul [isˈtɒnbuː]) , historically known as Constantinople and Byzantium , is the most populous city in Turkey and the country 's economic , cultural , and historic center . Istanbul is a transcontinental city in Eurasia , straddling the Bosphorus strait (which separates Europe and Asia) between the Sea of Marmara and the Black Sea . Its commercial and historical center lies on the European side and about a third of its population lives on the Asian side . The city is the administrative center of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (coterminous with Istanbul Province) , both hosting a population of around 14 @. @ 7 million residents . Istanbul is one of the world 's most populous cities and ranks as the world 's 8th @-@ largest city proper and the largest European city .

Founded under the name of Byzantium on the Sarayburnu promontory around 660 BCE , the city developed to become one of the most significant in history . After its reestablishment as Constantinople in 330 CE , it served as an imperial capital for almost 16 centuries , during the Roman and Byzantine (330 ? 1204 and 1261 ? 1453) , the Latin (1204 ? 1261) , and the Ottoman (1453 ? 1922) empires . It was instrumental in the advancement of Christianity during Roman and Byzantine times , before the Ottomans conquered the city in 1453 and transformed it into an Islamic stronghold and the seat of the Ottoman Caliphate .

Istanbul 's strategic position on the historic Silk Road , rail networks to Europe and the Middle East , and the only sea route between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean have produced a cosmopolitan populace , although less so since the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923 . Overlooked for the new capital Ankara during the interwar period , the city has since regained much of its prominence . The population of the city has increased tenfold since the 1950s , as migrants from across Anatolia have moved in and city limits have expanded to accommodate them . Arts , music , film , and cultural festivals were established at the end of the 20th century and continue to be hosted by the city today . Infrastructure improvements have produced a complex transportation network .

Approximately 12 @. @ 56 million foreign visitors arrived in Istanbul in 2015 , five years after it was named a European Capital of Culture , making the city the world 's fifth most popular tourist destination . The city 's biggest attraction is its historic center , partially listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site , and its cultural and entertainment hub can be found across the city 's natural harbor , the Golden Horn , in the Beyoğlu district . Considered a global city , Istanbul has one of the fastest @-@ growing metropolitan economies in the world . It hosts the headquarters of many Turkish companies and media outlets and accounts for more than a quarter of the country 's gross domestic product . Hoping to capitalize on its revitalization and rapid expansion , Istanbul has bid for the Summer Olympics five times in twenty years .

= = Toponymy = =

The first known name of the city is Byzantium (Greek : ????????? , Byzántion) , the name given to it at its foundation by Megarean colonists around 660 BCE . The name is thought to be derived from a personal name , Byzas . Ancient Greek tradition refers to a legendary king of that name as the leader of the Greek colonists . Modern scholars have also hypothesized that the name of Byzas was of local Thracian or Illyrian origin and hence predated the Megarean settlement .

After Constantine the Great made it the new eastern capital of the Roman Empire in 330 CE , the city became widely known as " Constantinopolis " (Constantinople) , which , as the Latinized form of " ????????????????? " (Konstantinoúpolis) , means the " City of Constantine " . He also attempted to promote the name " Nova Roma " and its Greek version " ??? ???? " Nea Rom? (New Rome) , but this did not enter widespread usage . Constantinople remained the most common name for the city in the West until the establishment of the Turkish Republic , and Kostantiniyye (Ottoman Turkish ?????????) and 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 . The use of Constantinople to refer to the city during

the Ottoman period (from the mid 14th - 15th century) is now considered politically incorrect , even if not historically inaccurate , by Turks .

By the 19th century , the city had acquired other names used by either foreigners or Turks . Europeans used Constantinople to refer to the whole of the city , but used the name Stamboul ? as the Turks also did ? to describe the walled peninsula between the Golden Horn and the Sea of Marmara . Pera (from the Greek word for " across ") was used to describe the area between the Golden Horn and the Bosphorus , but Turks also used the name Beyoğlu (today the official name for one of the city 's constituent districts) . Islambol (meaning either " City of Islam " or " Full of Islam ") was sometimes colloquially used to refer to the city , and was even engraved on some Ottoman coins , but the belief that it was the precursor to the present name , İstanbul , is belied by the fact that the latter existed well before the former and even predates the Ottoman conquest of the city .

The name İstanbul (Turkish pronunciation : [isˈtanbuː] , colloquially [ɪsˈtambuː]) is commonly held to derive from the Medieval Greek phrase " ἡ εἰς τὴν πόλιν " (pronounced [is tim ˈbolin]) , which means " to the city " and is how Constantinople was referred to by the local Greeks . This reflected its status as the only major city in the vicinity . The importance of Constantinople in the Ottoman world was also reflected by its Ottoman name ' Der Saadet ' meaning the ' gate to Prosperity ' in Ottoman . An alternative view is that the name evolved directly from the name Constantinople , with the first and third syllables dropped . A Turkish folk etymology traces the name to Islam bol " plenty of Islam " because the city was called Islambol (" plenty of Islam ") or Islambul (" find Islam ") as the capital of the Islamic Ottoman Empire . It is first attested shortly after the conquest , and its invention was ascribed by some contemporary writers to Sultan Mehmed II himself . 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 . The first use of the word " Islambol " on coinage was in 1703 (1115 AH) during the reign of Sultan Ahmed III . Nevertheless , the use of the name Constantinople remained common in English into the 20th century , Istanbul became common only after Turkey adapted the Latin alphabet in 1928 and urged other countries to use the city 's Turkish name .

In modern Turkish , the name is written as İstanbul , with a dotted İ , as the Turkish alphabet distinguishes between a dotted and dotless I. In English the stress is on the last syllable (bul) , but in Turkish it is on the second syllable (tan) . A person from the city is an İstanbullu (plural : İstanbullular) , although Istanbulite is used in English .

= = History = =

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 7th millennium BCE . 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 . 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 . Modern authors have linked it to the Thracian toponym Lygos , mentioned by Pliny the Elder as an earlier name for the site of Byzantium .

The history of the city proper begins around 660 BCE , when Greek settlers from Megara established Byzantium on the European side of the Bosphorus . The settlers built an acropolis adjacent to the Golden Horn on the site of the early Thracian settlements , fueling the nascent city 's economy . 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 . Byzantium then continued as part of the Athenian League and its successor , the Second Athenian Empire , before gaining independence in 355 BCE . Long allied with the Romans , Byzantium officially became a part of the Roman Empire in 73 CE . 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 . Five years later , Severus began to rebuild Byzantium , and the city regained ? and , by some accounts , surpassed ? its previous prosperity .

= = = Rise and fall of Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire = = =

Constantine the Great effectively became the emperor of the whole of the Roman Empire in September 324 . Two months later , he laid out the plans for a new , Christian city to replace Byzantium . As the eastern capital of the empire , the city was named Nova Roma ; most called it Constantinople , a name that persisted into the 20th century . On 11 May 330 , Constantinople was proclaimed the capital of the Roman Empire , which was later permanently divided between the two sons of Theodosius I upon his death on 17 January 395 , when the city became the capital of the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire .

The establishment of Constantinople served as one of Constantine 's most lasting accomplishments , shifting Roman power eastward as the city became a center of Greek culture and Christianity . Numerous churches were built across the city , including the Hagia Sophia which was built during the reign of Justinian the Great and remained the world 's largest cathedral for a thousand years . Constantine also undertook a major renovation and expansion of the Hippodrome of Constantinople ; accommodating tens of thousands of spectators , the hippodrome became central to civic life and , in the 5th and 6th centuries , the epicenter of episodes of unrest , including the Nika riots . Constantinople 's location also ensured its existence would stand the test of time ; for many centuries , its walls and seafront protected Europe against invaders from the east and the advance of Islam . During most of the Middle Ages , the latter part of the Byzantine era , Constantinople was the largest and wealthiest city on the European continent and at times the largest in the world .

Constantinople began to decline continuously after the end of the reign of Basil II in 1025 . The final blow was given by the conquest of Villardouin and Enrico Dandolo in 1204 during the Fourth Crusade , where the City was sacked and pillaged . The city subsequently became the center of the Latin Empire , created by Catholic crusaders to replace the Orthodox Byzantine Empire . Hagia Sophia was converted to a catholic church in 1204 . The Byzantine Empire was restored , albeit weakened , in 1261 . Constantinople 's churches , defenses , and basic services were in disrepair , and its population had dwindled to a hundred thousand from half a million during the 8th century . After the reconquest of 1261 , however some of the City 's monuments were restored , like the 2 Deisis mosaics in Aghia Sofia and Kariye were created .

Various economic and military policies instituted by Andronikos II , such as the reduction of military forces , weakened the empire and left it vulnerable to attack . In the mid @-@ 14th @-@ century , the Ottoman Turks began a strategy of gradually taking smaller towns and cities , cutting off Constantinople 's supply routes and strangling it slowly . On 29 May 1453 , after an eight @-@ week siege (during which the last Roman emperor , Constantine XI , was killed) , Sultan Mehmed II " the Conqueror " captured Constantinople and declared it the new capital of the Ottoman Empire . Hours later , the sultan rode to the Hagia Sophia and summoned an imam to proclaim the Islamic creed , converting the grand cathedral into an imperial mosque due to the city 's refusal to surrender peacefully . Mehmed declared himself as the new " Kaysar @-@ i Rûm " (the Ottoman Turkish equivalent of Caesar of Rome) and the Ottoman state was reorganized into an empire .

= = = Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic eras = = =

Following the conquest of Constantinople , Mehmed II immediately set out to revitalize the city , by then also known as Istanbul . He urged the return of those who had fled the city during the siege , and resettled Muslims , Jews , and Christians from other parts of Anatolia . He demanded that five thousand households needed to be transferred to Constantinople by September . From all over the Islamic empire , prisoners of war and deported people were sent to the city : these people were called " Sürgün " in Turkish (Greek : ?????????????) . However , many people escaped again from the city , and there were several outbreaks of plague , so that in 1459 Mehmet allowed the deported Greeks to come back to the city . He also invited people from all over Europe to his capital , creating

a cosmopolitan society that persisted through much of the Ottoman period . Plague continued , however , to be essentially endemic in Istanbul for the rest of the century , as it had been from 1520 , with a few years of respite between 1529 and 1533 , 1549 and 1552 , and from 1567 to 1570 ; epidemics originating in the West and in the Hejaz and southern Russia . Population growth in Anatolia , however , allowed Istanbul to replace its losses and maintain its population of around 500 000 inhabitants down to 1800 . Mehmed II also repaired the city 's damaged infrastructure , including the whole water system , began to build the Grand Bazaar , and constructed Topkapı Palace , the sultan 's official residence . With the transfer of the capital from Edirne (formerly Adrianople) to Constantinople , the new state was declared as the successor and continuation of the Roman Empire .

The Ottomans quickly transformed the city from a bastion of Christianity to a symbol of Islamic culture . Religious foundations were established to fund the construction of ornate imperial mosques , often adjoined by schools , hospitals , and public baths . The Ottoman Dynasty claimed the status of caliphate in 1517 , with Istanbul remaining the capital of this last caliphate for four centuries . Suleiman the Magnificent 's reign from 1520 to 1566 was a period of especially great artistic and architectural achievement ; chief architect Mimar Sinan designed several iconic buildings in the city , while Ottoman arts of ceramics , stained glass , calligraphy , and miniature flourished . The population of Istanbul was 570 000 by the end of the 18th century .

A period of rebellion at the start of the 19th century led to the rise of the progressive Sultan Mahmud II and eventually to the Tanzimat period , which produced political reforms and allowed new technology to be introduced to the city . Bridges across the Golden Horn were constructed during this period , and Istanbul was connected to the rest of the European railway network in the 1880s . Modern facilities , such as a water supply network , electricity , telephones , and trams , were gradually introduced to Istanbul over the following decades , although later than to other European cities . The modernization efforts were not enough to forestall the decline of the Ottoman Empire .

In the early 20th century , the Young Turk Revolution deposed Sultan Abdul Hamid II and a series of wars plagued the ailing empire 's capital . The last of these , World War I , resulted in the British , French , and Italian occupation of Constantinople . The Armenian population of the city was also affected by the deportation of Armenian intellectuals on 24 April 1915 , in which leaders of the Armenian community were arrested and mostly killed as part of the Armenian Genocide . To commemorate the victims of the Armenian Genocide , 24 April has now become the day of remembrance . The final Ottoman sultan , Mehmed VI , was exiled in November 1922 ; the following year , the occupation of Constantinople ended with the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne and the recognition of the Republic of Turkey , declared by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk .

In the early years of the republic , Istanbul was overlooked in favor of Ankara , selected as Turkey 's capital to distance the new , secular country from its Ottoman history . 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 -west Turkey within the Marmara Region on a total area of 5 343 square kilometers (2 063 sq mi) . The Bosphorus , which connects the Sea of Marmara to the Black Sea , divides the city into a European , Thracian side comprising the historic and economic centers and an Asian , Anatolian side . The city is further divided by the Golden Horn , a natural harbor bounding the peninsula where the former Byzantium and Constantinople were founded . The confluence of the Sea of Marmara , the Bosphorus , and the Golden Horn at the

heart of present @-@ day Istanbul has deterred attacking forces for thousands of years and remains a prominent feature of the city 's landscape .

Following the model of Rome , the historic peninsula is said to be characterized by seven hills , each topped by imperial mosques . The easternmost of these hills is the site of Topkapı Palace on the Sarayburnu . Rising from the opposite side of the Golden Horn is another , conical hill , where the modern Beyoğlu district is situated . Because of the topography , buildings in Beyoğlu were once constructed with the help of terraced retaining walls , and roads were laid out in the form of steps . Üsküdar on the Asian side exhibits similarly hilly characteristics , with the terrain gradually extending down to the Bosphorus coast , but the landscape in Şemsipaşa and Ayazma is more abrupt , akin to a promontory . The highest point in Istanbul is Çamlıca Hill , with an altitude of 288 meters (945 ft) . The northern half of Istanbul has a higher mean elevation compared to the south coast , with locations surpassing 200 meters (660 ft) , and some coasts with steep cliffs resembling fjords , especially around the northern end of the Bosphorus , where it opens up to the Black Sea .

Istanbul is situated near the North Anatolian Fault , close to the boundary between the African and Eurasian Plates . This fault zone , which runs from northern Anatolia to the Sea of Marmara , has been responsible for several deadly earthquakes throughout the city 's history . Among the most devastating of these seismic events was the 1509 earthquake , which caused a tsunami that broke over the walls of the city and killed more than 10 @, @ 000 people . More recently , in 1999 , an earthquake with its epicenter in nearby İzmit left 18 @, @ 000 people dead , including 1 @, @ 000 people in Istanbul 's suburbs . The people of Istanbul remain concerned that an even more catastrophic seismic event may be in the city 's near future , as thousands of structures recently built to accommodate Istanbul 's rapidly increasing population may not have been constructed properly . Seismologists say the risk of a 7 @. @ 6 @-@ magnitude or greater earthquake striking Istanbul by 2030 is more than 60 percent .

= = = Climate = = =

In the Köppen - Geiger classification system , Istanbul has a borderline Mediterranean climate (Csa) , humid subtropical climate (Cfa) and oceanic climate (Cfb) , due to its location in a transitional climatic zone . Since precipitation in summer months , ranges from 20 to 65 mm (1 to 3 in) , depending on location , the city cannot be classified as solely Mediterranean or humid subtropical . Due to its size , diverse topography , maritime location and most importantly having a coastline to two different bodies of water to the north and south , Istanbul exhibits microclimates . The northern half of the city , as well as the Bosphorus coastline , express characteristics of oceanic and humid subtropical climates , because of humidity from the Black Sea and the relatively high concentration of vegetation . The climate in the populated areas of the city to the south , located on the Sea of Marmara , is warmer , drier and less affected by humidity . The annual precipitation in the northern half can be twice as much (Bahçeköy , 1166 @. @ 6 mm) , than it is in the southern , Marmara coast (Florya 635 @. @ 0 mm) . There is a significant difference between annual mean temperatures on the north and south coasts as well , Bahçeköy 12 @. @ 8 ° C (55 @. @ 0 ° F) , Kartal 15 @. @ 03 ° C (59 @. @ 05 ° F) . Parts of the province , that are away from both seas exhibit considerable continental influences , with much more pronounced night @-@ day and summer @-@ winter temperature differences . In winter some parts of the province average freezing or below at night .

Istanbul 's persistently high humidity reaches 80 percent most mornings . Because of this , fog is very common , although more so in northern parts of the city and away from the city center . Dense fog disrupts transportation in the region , including on the Bosphorus , and is common during the autumn and winter months when the humidity remains high into the afternoon . The humid conditions and the fog tend to dissipate by midday during the summer months , but the lingering humidity exacerbates the moderately high summer temperatures . During these summer months , high temperatures average around 29 ° C (84 ° F) and rainfall is uncommon ; there are only about fifteen days with measurable precipitation between June and August . The summer months also have the highest concentration of thunderstorms .

Winter is colder in Istanbul than in most other cities around the Mediterranean Basin , with low temperatures averaging $1 \text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ ($34 \text{ }^{\circ}\text{F}$) . Lake @-@ effect snow from the Black Sea is common , although difficult to forecast , with the potential to be heavy and ? as with the fog ? disruptive to the city 's infrastructure . Spring and autumn are mild , but often wet and unpredictable ; chilly winds from the northwest and warm gusts from the south ? sometimes in the same day ? tend to cause fluctuations in temperature . Overall , Istanbul has an annual average of 130 days with significant precipitation , which amounts to 810 millimeters (31 @. @ 9 in) per year . The highest and lowest temperatures ever recorded in the city center on the Marmara coast are $40 \text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ ($105 \text{ }^{\circ}\text{F}$) and $16 \text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ ($3 \text{ }^{\circ}\text{F}$) . The greatest rainfall recorded in a day is 227 millimeters (8 @. @ 9 in) , and the highest recorded snow cover is 80 centimeters (31 in) .

= = Cityscape = =

The Fatih district corresponds to what was , until the Ottoman conquest , the whole of the city , across from the Genoese citadel of Galata . Those Genoese fortifications were largely demolished in the 19th century , leaving only the Galata Tower , to make way for northward expansion of the city . Galata is now part of the Beyo?lu district , which forms Istanbul 's commercial and entertainment center on Taksim Square .

Dolmabahçe Palace , the seat of government during the late Ottoman period , is located in Be?ikta? , just south of Beyo?lu , across from BJK ?nönü Stadium , home to Turkey 's oldest sports club . The main administration building of the Ottoman Empire was the " Sublime Porte " or BaabiAli a huge building in the old City . The former village of Ortaköy is situated within Be?ikta? and gives its name to the Ortaköy Mosque , along the Bosphorus near the First Bosphorus Bridge . Lining the shores of the Bosphorus north of there are yal?s , luxurious chalet mansions originally built by 19th @-@ century aristocrats and elites as summer homes . Farther inland , outside the city 's inner ring road , are Levent and Maslak , Istanbul 's primary economic centers .

During the Ottoman period , Üsküdar and Kad?köy were outside the scope of urban Istanbul , serving as tranquil outposts with seaside yal?s and gardens . During 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 . 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 . As a result of Istanbul 's exponential growth during the 20th century , a significant portion of the city is composed of gecekondu (literally " built overnight ") , referring to illegally constructed squatter buildings . At present , some gecekondu areas are being gradually demolished and replaced by modern mass @-@ housing compounds . Moreover , large scale gentrification and urban renewal projects have been taking place , such as the one in Tarlaba?? ; some of these projects , like the one in Sulukule , have faced criticism . 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 and the city 's Olympic bid ; the new parts of the city will include four different settlements with specified urban functions , housing 1 @. @ 5 million people .

Istanbul does not have a primary urban park , but it does have several green areas . Gülhane Park and Y?id?z Park were originally included within the grounds of two of Istanbul 's palaces ? Topkap? Palace and Y?id?z Palace ? but they were repurposed as public parks in the early decades of the Turkish Republic . Another park , Fethi Pa?a Korusu , is situated on a hillside adjacent to the Bosphorus Bridge in Anatolia , opposite Y?id?z Palace . Along the European side , and closer to the Fatih Sultan Mehmet Bridge , is Emirgan Park ; originally a private estate belonging to Ottoman leaders , the 47 @-@ hectare (120 @-@ acre) park is known for its diversity of plants and an annual tulip festival held since 2005 . Popular during the summer among Istanbulites is Belgrad Forest , spreading across 5 @, @ 500 hectares (14 @, @ 000 acres) at the northern edge of the city . The forest originally supplied water to the city and remnants of reservoirs used during Byzantine and Ottoman times survive .

== Architecture ==

Istanbul is primarily known for its Byzantine and Ottoman architecture , but its buildings reflect the various peoples and empires that have previously ruled the city . Examples of Genoese and Roman architecture remain visible in Istanbul alongside their Ottoman counterparts . Nothing of the architecture of the classical Greek period has survived , but Roman architecture has proved to be more durable . The obelisk erected by Theodosius in the Hippodrome of Constantinople is still visible in Sultanahmet Square , and a section of the Valens Aqueduct , constructed in the late 4th century , stands relatively intact at the western edge of the Fatih district . The Column of Constantine , erected in 330 CE to mark the new Roman capital , stands not far from the Hippodrome .

Early Byzantine architecture followed the classical Roman model of domes and arches , but improved upon these elements , as in the Church of the Saints Sergius and Bacchus . The oldest surviving Byzantine church in Istanbul ? albeit in ruins ? is the Monastery of Stoudios (later converted into the Imrahor Mosque) , which was built in 454 . After the recapture of Constantinople in 1261 , the Byzantines enlarged two of the most important churches extant , Chora Church and Pammakaristos Church . The pinnacle of Byzantine architecture , and one of Istanbul 's most iconic structures , is the Hagia Sophia . Topped by a dome 31 meters (102 ft) in diameter , the Hagia Sophia stood as the world 's largest cathedral for centuries , and was later converted into a mosque and , as it stands now , a museum .

Among the oldest surviving examples of Ottoman architecture in Istanbul are the Anadoluhisar? and Rumelihisar? fortresses , which assisted the Ottomans during their siege of the city . Over the next four centuries , the Ottomans made an indelible impression on the skyline of Istanbul , building towering mosques and ornate palaces . The largest palace , Topkap? , includes a diverse array of architectural styles , from Baroque inside the Harem , to its Neoclassical style Enderûn Library . 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 . In the following centuries , and especially after the Tanzimat reforms , Ottoman architecture was supplanted by European styles . An example of which is the imperial Nuruosmaniye Mosque . Areas around ?stiklal 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 Beyo?lu ? including churches , stores , and theaters ? and official buildings such as Dolmabahçe Palace .

== Administration ==

Since 2004 , the municipal boundaries of Istanbul have been coincident with the boundaries of its province . The city , considered capital of Istanbul Province , is administered by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (MMI) , which oversees the 39 districts of the city @-@ province .

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 . 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 Istanbul . Beyo?lu was the first area of the city to have its own director and council , with members instead being longtime residents of the neighborhood . 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 Istanbul was declared a province with nine constituent districts . This system continued beyond the founding of the Turkish Republic , with the province renamed a belediye (municipality) , but the municipality was disbanded in 1957 .

Small settlements adjacent to major population centers in Turkey , including Istanbul , were merged into their respective primary cities during the early 1980s , resulting in metropolitan municipalities .

The main decision making body of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality is the Municipal Council , with members drawn from district councils .

The Municipal Council is responsible for citywide issues , including managing the budget , maintaining civic infrastructure , and overseeing museums and major cultural centers . Since the government operates under a " powerful mayor , weak council " approach , the council 's leader ? the metropolitan mayor ? has the authority to make swift decisions , often at the expense of transparency . The Municipal Council is advised by the Metropolitan Executive Committee , although the Committee also has limited power to make decisions of its own . All representatives on the Committee are appointed by the metropolitan mayor and the Council , with the mayor ? or someone of his or her choosing ? serving as head .

District councils are chiefly responsible for waste management and construction projects within their respective districts . They each maintain their own budgets , although the metropolitan mayor reserves the right to review district decisions . One @-@ fifth of all district council members , including the district mayors , also represent their districts in the Municipal Council . All members of the district councils and the Municipal Council , including the metropolitan mayor , are elected to five @-@ year terms . Representing the Justice and Development Party , Kadir Topba? has been Mayor of Istanbul since March 2004 .

With the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and Istanbul Province having equivalent jurisdictions , few responsibilities remain for the provincial government . Similar to the MMI , the Istanbul Special Provincial Administration has a governor , a democratically elected decision @-@ making body ? the Provincial Parliament ? and an appointed Executive Committee . Mirroring the executive committee at the municipal level , the Provincial Executive Committee includes a secretary @-@ general and leaders of departments that advise the Provincial Parliament . The Provincial Administration 's duties are largely limited to the building and maintenance of schools , residences , government buildings , and roads , and the promotion of arts , culture , and nature conservation . Hüseyin Avni Mutlu has been Governor of Istanbul Province since May 2010 .

== Demographics ==

Throughout most of its history , Istanbul has ranked among the largest cities in the world . By 500 CE , Constantinople had somewhere between 400 @,@ 000 and 500 @,@ 000 people , edging out its predecessor , Rome , for world 's largest city . Constantinople jostled with other major historical cities , such as Baghdad , Chang 'an , Kaifeng and Merv for the position of world 's most populous city until the 12th century . It never returned to being the world 's largest , but remained Europe 's largest city from 1500 to 1750 , when it was surpassed by London .

The Turkish Statistical Institute estimates that the population of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality was 14 @,@ 377 @,@ 019 at the end of 2014 , hosting 19 percent of the country 's population . Other estimate that at the same time the population within city limits was 14 @,@ 657 @,@ 434 . Then about 97 ? 98 % of the inhabitants of the metropolitan municipality were within city limits , up from 89 % in 2007 and 61 % in 1980 . 64 @.@ 7 % of the residents live on the European side and 35 @.@ 3 % on the Asian side . While the city ranks as world 's 7th @-@ largest city proper , it drops the rank to the 24th place as an urban area and to the 18th place as a metro area because the city limits are roughly equivalent to the agglomeration . Today , it forms one of the largest urban agglomerations in Europe , alongside Moscow . The city 's annual population growth of 3 @.@ 45 percent ranks as the highest among the seventy @-@ eight largest metropolises in the Organisation for Economic Co @-@ operation and Development . 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 .

Istanbul experienced especially rapid growth during the second half of the 20th century , with its population increasing tenfold between 1950 and 2000 . This growth in population comes , in part , from an expansion of city limits ? particularly between 1980 and 1985 , when the number of Istanbulites nearly doubled . The remarkable growth was , and still is , largely fueled by migrants from eastern Turkey seeking employment and improved living conditions . The number of residents

of Istanbul originating from seven northern and eastern provinces is greater than the populations of their entire respective provinces ; Sivas and Kastamonu each account for more than half a million residents of Istanbul . Istanbul 's foreign population , by comparison , is very small , 42 @, @ 228 residents in 2007 . Only 28 percent of the city 's residents are originally from Istanbul . The most densely populated areas tend to lie to the northwest , west , and southwest of the city center , on the European side ; the most densely populated district on the Asian side is Üsküdar .

= = Religious and ethnic groups = =

Istanbul has been a cosmopolitan city throughout much of its history , but it has become more homogenized since the end of the Ottoman Empire . Most of Turkey 's religious and ethnic minorities remain concentrated in Istanbul . The vast majority of people across Turkey , and in Istanbul , are Muslim , and more specifically members of the Sunni branch of Islam . Most Sunnis follow the Hanafi school of Islamic thought , although approximately 10 percent of Sunnis follow the Shafi 'i school . The largest non @-@ Sunni Muslim sect , accounting for 4 @. @ 5 million Turks , is the Alevis ; a third of all Alevis in the country live in Istanbul . Mystic movements , like Sufism , were officially banned after the establishment of the Turkish Republic , but they still boast numerous followers .

The Patriarch of Constantinople has been designated Ecumenical Patriarch since the sixth century , and has subsequently come to be widely regarded as the leader of the world 's 300 million Orthodox Christians . Since 1601 , the Patriarchate has been based in Istanbul 's Church of St. George . Into the 19th century , the Christians of Istanbul tended to be either Greek Orthodox or members of the Armenian Apostolic Church . The headquarters of the Turkish Orthodox Church are located in the city . Because of events during the 20th century ? including the 1923 population exchange between Greece and Turkey , a 1942 wealth tax , and the 1955 Istanbul riots ? the Greek population , originally centered in Fener and Samatya , has decreased substantially . At the start of the 21st century , Istanbul 's Greek population numbered 3 @, @ 000 (down from 130 @, @ 000 in 1923 and 260 @, @ 000 according to the Ottoman Census of 1910 of 850 @, @ 000 total) . There are today between 50 @, @ 000 and 70 @, @ 000 Armenians in Istanbul , down from 164 @, @ 000 in 1913 partly due to the Armenian Genocide . Christians made up half the population of the city in 1910 .

The largest ethnic minority in Istanbul is the Kurdish community , originating from eastern and southeastern Turkey . Although the Kurdish presence in the city dates back to the early Ottoman period , the influx of Kurds into the city has accelerated since the beginning of the Kurdish ? Turkish conflict with the Kurdistan Workers ' Party (i.e. since the late 1970s) . About two to three million residents of Istanbul are Kurdish , meaning there are more Kurds in Istanbul than in any other city in the world . There are other significant ethnic minorities as well , the Bosniaks are the main people of an entire district ? Bayrampa?a . The neighborhood of Balat used to be home to a sizable Sephardi Jewish community , first formed during the period of the Spanish Inquisition . Romaniotes and Ashkenazi Jews resided in Istanbul even before the Sephardim , but their proportion has since dwindled ; today , 1 percent of Istanbul 's Jews are Ashkenazi . In large part due to emigration to Israel , the Jewish population nationwide dropped from 100 @, @ 000 in 1950 to 18 @, @ 000 in 2005 , with the majority of them living in either Istanbul or ?zmir . Levantines , Latin Christians who settled in Galata during the Ottoman period , played a seminal role in shaping the culture and architecture of Istanbul during the 19th and early 20th centuries ; their population has dwindled , but they remain in the city in small numbers . From the increase in mutual cooperation between Turkey and several African States like Somalia and Djibouti , several young students and workers have been migrating to Istanbul in search of better education and employment opportunities . There is also a small Nigerian , Congolese and Cameroonian and North African community present .

= = Politics = =

Istanbul has voted for the winning party in general elections since 1995 . Since 2002 , the right @-@ wing Justice and Development Party (AKP) has won pluralities in every general and local

election . The city 's electorate has also voted for the AKP government 's constitutional reforms proposed during the 2007 and 2010 constitutional referenda . Turkish President and former AKP Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was elected Mayor of İstanbul in the 1994 local elections as the Islamist Welfare Party candidate with 25 @. @ 1 % of the vote , winning due to a vote split between the mainstream centrist parties . Conservative parties traditionally find support in older districts with high population densities such as Bağcılar , Fatih , Sultanbeyli and Esenler . The opposition Kemalist center @- @ left Republican People 's Party (CHP) , currently the second major political force in both İstanbul and the country , gets most of its support from more rural districts such as Silivri , Çatalca and Sarıyer . Urban districts such as Beşiktaş , Bakırköy , Şişli and Kadıköy have returned strong support for the CHP in past elections . The CHP are generally strongest in the west , where newer residential developments are taking place . İstanbul has 39 districts , more than any other province in Turkey . Since İstanbul is Turkey 's largest city and has usually voted in the same way as the country as a whole , it is largely perceived in Turkish politics that the winning party of an election is essentially decided by İstanbul 's electorate . Political parties thus allocate substantial amounts of electoral campaign funds and to winning control of the İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality . Due to its electoral importance , İstanbul has reported the largest and most serious cases of electoral fraud in recent elections , including the 2014 local elections .

The incumbent mayor of the city is Kadir Topbaş of the AKP , who was first elected in the 2004 local elections and succeeded Ali Müfit Gürtuna of the closed down Welfare Party . He was re @- @ elected in 2009 and 2014 . The leader of the CHP and parliamentary opposition , Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu , ran against Topbaş in the 2009 local elections . He is currently a Member of Parliament for İstanbul . Between 2007 and 2014 , Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was also an MP for İstanbul . For general elections , the city is divided into 3 electoral districts and returns 85 MPs to the Turkish parliament . In the 2014 presidential election , 49 @. @ 83 % of the city 's electorate voted for AKP candidate Recep Tayyip Erdoğan . Although Erdoğan won the most votes in İstanbul , his failure to win above 50 % was seen as significant . Opposition candidate Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu came second with 41 @. @ 08 % and the HDP pro @- @ Kurdish and left @- @ wing candidate Selahattin Demirtaş won a substantial 9 @. @ 09 % . In 2013 and 2014 , large @- @ scale anti @- @ AKP government protests began in İstanbul and spread throughout the nation .

= = Economy = =

With a PPP @- @ adjusted gross domestic product of US \$ 301 @. @ 1 billion , İstanbul ranked 29th among the world 's urban areas in 2011 . Since the mid @- @ 1990s , İstanbul 's economy has been one of the fastest @- @ growing among OECD metro @- @ regions . İstanbul is responsible for 27 percent of Turkey 's GDP , with 20 percent of the country 's industrial labor force residing in the city . Its GDP per capita and productivity are greater than their national averages by 70 percent and 50 percent , respectively , owing in part to the focus on high @- @ value @- @ added activities . With its high population and significant contribution to the Turkish economy , İstanbul is responsible for two @- @ fifths of the nation 's tax revenue . That includes the taxes of 37 US @- @ dollar billionaires based in İstanbul , the fifth @- @ highest number among cities around the world .

As expected for a city of its size , İstanbul has a diverse industrial economy , producing commodities as varied as olive oil , tobacco , vehicles , and electronics . Despite having a focus on high @- @ value @- @ added work , its low @- @ value @- @ added manufacturing sector is substantial , representing just 26 percent of İstanbul 's GDP , but four @- @ fifths of the city 's total exports . In 2005 , companies based in İstanbul produced exports worth \$ 41 @. @ 4 billion and received imports totaling \$ 69 @. @ 9 billion ; these figures were equivalent to 57 percent and 60 percent , respectively , of the national totals .

İstanbul is home to Borsa İstanbul , the sole exchange entity of Turkey , which combined the former İstanbul Stock Exchange , the İstanbul Gold Exchange , and the Derivatives Exchange of Turkey . The former İstanbul Stock Exchange was originally established as the Ottoman Stock Exchange in 1866 . During the 19th and early 20th centuries , Bankalar Caddesi (Banks Street) in Galata was

the financial center of the Ottoman Empire , where the Ottoman Stock Exchange was located . Bankalar Caddesi continued to be Istanbul 's main financial district until the 1990s , when most Turkish banks began moving their headquarters to the modern central business districts of Levent and Maslak . In 1995 , the Istanbul Stock Exchange (now Borsa Istanbul) moved to its current building in the Şişli quarter of the Sarıyer district . A new central business district is also under construction in Ataşehir and will host the headquarters of various Turkish banks and financial institutions upon completion .

As the only sea route between the oil -rich Black Sea and the Mediterranean , the Bosphorus is one of the busiest waterways in the world ; more than 200 million tonnes of oil pass through the strait each year , and the traffic on the Bosphorus is three times that on the Suez Canal . As a result , there have been proposals to build a canal , known as Canal Istanbul , parallel to the strait , on the European side of the city . 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 . Haydarpaşa , situated at the southeastern end of the Bosphorus , was Istanbul 's largest port until the early 2000s . Shifts in operations to Ambarlı since then have left Haydarpaşa running under capacity and with plans to decommission the port . In 2007 , Ambarlı , on the western edge of the urban center , had an annual capacity of 1 .5 million TEUs (compared to 354 ,000 TEUs at Haydarpaşa) , making it the fourth -largest cargo terminal in the Mediterranean basin . The Port of Zeytinburnu is advantaged by its proximity to motorways and Atatürk International Airport , and long -term plans for the city call for greater connectivity between all terminals and the road and rail networks .

Istanbul is an increasingly popular tourist destination ; whereas just 2 .4 million foreigners visited the city in 2000 , it welcomed 12 .56 million foreign tourists in 2015 , making it the world 's fifth most -visited city . Istanbul is Turkey 's second -largest international gateway , after Antalya , receiving a quarter of the nation 's foreign tourists . Istanbul 's tourist industry is concentrated in the European side , with 90 percent of the city 's hotels located there . Low- and mid -range hotels tend to be located on the Sarayburnu ; higher -end hotels are primarily located in the entertainment and financial centers north of the Golden Horn . Istanbul 's seventy museums , the most visited of which are the Topkapı Palace Museum and the Hagia Sophia , bring in \$ 30 million in revenue each year . The city 's environmental master plan also notes that there are 17 palaces , 64 mosques , and 49 churches of historical significance in Istanbul .

= = Culture = =

Istanbul was historically known as a cultural hub , but its cultural scene stagnated after the Turkish Republic shifted its focus toward Ankara . 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 . 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 .

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 . Despite efforts to make Ankara Turkey 's cultural heart , Istanbul had the country 's primary institution of art until the 1970s . When additional universities and art journals were founded in Istanbul during the 1980s , artists formerly based in Ankara moved in . Beyoğlu has been transformed into the artistic center of the city , with young artists and older Turkish artists formerly residing abroad finding footing there . 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 . These museums have yet to attain the popularity of older museums on the historic peninsula , including the Istanbul Archaeology Museums , which ushered in the era of modern museums in Turkey , and the Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum .

The first film screening in Turkey was at Yıldız Palace in 1896 , a year after the technology publicly

debuted in Paris . Movie theaters rapidly cropped up in Beyo?lu , with the greatest concentration of theaters being along the street now known as ?stiklal Avenue . Istanbul also became the heart of Turkey 's nascent film industry , although Turkish films were not consistently developed until the 1950s . Since then , Istanbul has been the most popular location to film Turkish dramas and comedies . 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 . Istanbul and its picturesque skyline have also served as a backdrop for several foreign films , including *Topkapi* (1964) , *The World Is Not Enough* (1999) , and *Mission Istanbul* (2008) .

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 . From this flagship festival came the International Istanbul Film Festival and the Istanbul International Jazz Festival in the early 1980s . With its focus now solely on music and dance , the Istanbul Festival has been known as the Istanbul International Music Festival since 1994 . The most prominent of the festivals that evolved from the original Istanbul Festival is the Istanbul Biennial , held every two years since 1987 . 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 .

= = = Leisure and entertainment = = =

Istanbul has numerous shopping centers , from the historic to the modern . The Grand Bazaar , in operation since 1461 , is among the world 's oldest and largest covered markets . 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 . Galleria Ataköy ushered in the age of modern shopping malls in Turkey when it opened in 1987 . Since then , malls have become major shopping centers outside the historic peninsula . 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 . ?stinye Park in ?stinye and Zorlu Center near Levent are among the newest malls which include the stores of the world 's top fashion brands . Abdi ?pekçi Street in Ni?anta?? and Ba?dat Avenue on the Anatolian side of the city have evolved into high @-@ end shopping districts .

Istanbul is famous for its historic seafood restaurants . 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) . Kumkap? along the Sea of Marmara has a pedestrian zone that hosts around fifty fish restaurants . The Prince Islands , 15 kilometers (9 mi) from the city center , are also popular for their seafood restaurants . 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 . Istanbul is also famous for its sophisticated and elaborately @-@ cooked dishes of the Ottoman cuisine . However , 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 . Restaurants featuring foreign cuisines are mainly concentrated in the Beyo?lu , Be?ikta? , ?i?li and Kad?köy districts .

Istanbul is famous for its nightlife , as well as its historic taverns , a signature characteristic of the city for centuries if not millennia . Along the ?stiklal Avenue is the Çiçek Pasaj? , now home to winehouses (known as meyhanes) , pubs , and restaurants . ?stiklal Avenue , originally famous for its taverns , has shifted toward shopping , but the nearby Nevizade Street is still lined with winehouses and pubs . Some other neighborhoods around ?stiklal Avenue have recently been revamped to cater to Beyo?lu 's nightlife , with formerly commercial streets now lined with pubs , cafes , and restaurants playing live music . Other focal points for Istanbul 's nightlife include Ni?anta?? , Ortaköy , Bebek , and Kad?köy .

= = Sports = =

Istanbul has some of Turkey 's oldest sports clubs . Beşiktaş J.K. , established in 1903 , is considered the oldest of these sports clubs . 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 . Its football team has seen several periods of dominance in national competition . Galatasaray S.K. and Fenerbahçe S.K. have fared better in international competition and share the honor of winning the most Süper Lig championships : 20 and 19 times , respectively . 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 . Istanbul has seven basketball teams ? Anadolu Efes , Beşiktaş , Darülfenâ , Fenerbahçe , Galatasaray , İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi and Büyükçekmece ? that play in the premier @-@ level Turkish Basketball Super League .

Many of Istanbul 's sports facilities have been built or upgraded since 2000 to bolster the city 's bids for the Summer Olympic Games . Atatürk Olympic Stadium , the largest multi @-@ purpose stadium in Turkey , was completed in 2002 as an IAAF first @-@ class venue for track and field . The stadium hosted the 2005 UEFA Champions League Final . Üsküdar Sarıyer Stadium , Fenerbahçe 's home field , hosted the 2009 UEFA Cup Final three years after its completion . Türk Telekom Arena opened in 2011 to replace Ali Sami Yen Stadium as Galatasaray 's home turf , while Vodafone Arena opened in 2016 to replace BJK İnönü Stadium as the home turf of Beşiktaş , which won the Süper Lig in the same season . All four stadiums are elite Category 4 (formerly five @-@ star) UEFA stadiums .

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 , and the 2011 ? 12 Euroleague Final Four . 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 . 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 . 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 . 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 .

Istanbul Park was a stop on the World Touring Car Championship circuit and the European Le Mans Series in 2005 and 2006 , but the track has not seen either of these competitions since then . Between its opening in 2005 and 2011 , Istanbul Park also hosted the annual Turkish Grand Prix ; its future remains uncertain due to financial troubles . The Istanbul Sailing Club , established in 1952 , hosts races , showcases , and events on the waterways in and around Istanbul each year . The Turkish Offshore Racing Club also hosts major races , with its most prestigious being its race for the Marine Forces Trophy . Istanbul was also an occasional stop on the F1 Powerboat World Championship circuit , although its last appearance on the Bosphorus was in 2000 .

= = Media = =

Most state @-@ run radio and television stations are based in Ankara , but Istanbul is the primary hub of Turkish media . 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 . The Cağaloğlu street on which the newspaper was printed , Bâb @-@ ? Âli Street , rapidly became the center of Turkish print media , alongside Beyoğlu across the Golden Horn .

Today , Istanbul hosts a wide variety of periodicals . Most nationwide newspapers are based in Istanbul , with simultaneous Ankara and İzmir editions . Istanbul @-@ based Zaman , although only founded in 1986 , is Turkey 's most widely circulated paper , with a weekly distribution of more than one million , twice that of its nearest competitor . Posta , Hürriyet , and Sözcü , which round out the

country 's top four papers , are all headquartered in Istanbul , boasting more than 300 @, @ 000 weekly sales each . Hürriyet 's English @- @ language edition , The Hürriyet Daily News , has been printed since 1961 , but the English @- @ language Today 's Zaman , first published by Zaman in 2007 , has overtaken it in circulation . Several smaller newspapers , including popular publications like Habertürk and Milliyet , are also based in Istanbul .

Radio broadcasts in Istanbul date back to 1927 , when Turkey 's first radio transmission came from atop the Central Post Office in Eminönü . 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 . 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 . Offering a range of content from educational programming to coverage of sporting events , Radio 2 is the most popular radio station in Turkey . Istanbul 's airwaves are the busiest in Turkey , primarily featuring either Turkish @- @ language or English @- @ language content . One of the exceptions , offering both , is Aç?k Radyo (94 @. @ 9 FM) . Among Turkey 's first private stations , and the first featuring foreign popular music , was Istanbul 's Metro FM (97 @. @ 2 FM) . 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) .

TRT @- @ Children is the only TRT television station based in Istanbul . Istanbul is home to the headquarters of several Turkish stations and regional headquarters of international media outlets . 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 . Samanyolu TV , Kanal D , and ATV are other stations in Istanbul that offer a mix of news and series ; NTV (partnered with U.S. media outlet MSNBC) and Sky Turk ? both based in the city ? are mainly just known for their news coverage in Turkish . 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 . The Istanbul @- @ based business and entertainment channel CNBC @- @ e began broadcasting in 2000 .

= = Education = =

Istanbul University , founded in 1453 , is the oldest Turkish educational institution in the city . Although originally an Islamic school , the university established law , medicine , and science departments in the 19th century and was secularized after the founding of the Turkish Republic . Istanbul Technical University , founded in 1773 , is the world 's third @- @ oldest university dedicated entirely to engineering sciences . These public universities are two of just eight across the city ; other prominent state universities in Istanbul include the Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University , which served as Turkey 's primary institution of art until the 1970s , and Marmara University , the country 's third @- @ largest institution of higher learning .

Most established universities in Istanbul are backed by the government ; the city also has several prominent private institutions . The first modern private university in Istanbul , also the oldest American school in existence in its original location outside the United States , was Robert College , founded by Christopher Robert , an American philanthropist , and Cyrus Hamlin , a missionary devoted to education , in 1863 . The tertiary element of its education program became the public Bo?aziçi University in 1971 ; the remaining portion in Arnavutköy continues as a boarding high @- @ school under the name Robert College . Private universities were officially outlawed in Turkey before the Constitution of 1982 , but there were already fifteen private " higher schools " , which were effectively universities , in Istanbul by 1970 . The first private university established in Istanbul since 1982 was Koç University (founded in 1992) , and another dozen had opened within the following decade . Today , there are at least 30 private universities in the city , including Istanbul Commerce University and Kadir Has University . A new biomedical research and development hub , called Bio

Istanbul , is under construction in Ba?ak?ehir , and will host 15 @,@ 000 residents , 20 @,@ 000 working commuters , and a university upon completion .

In 2007 , there were about 4 @,@ 350 schools , about half of which were primary schools ; on average , each school had 688 students . In recent years , Istanbul 's educational system has expanded substantially ; from 2000 to 2007 , the number of classrooms and teachers nearly doubled and the number of students increased by more than 60 percent . Galatasaray High School , established in 1481 as the Galata Palace Imperial School , is the oldest high school in Istanbul and the second @-@ oldest educational institution in the city . It was built at the behest of Sultan Bayezid II , who sought to bring students with diverse backgrounds together as a means of strengthening his growing empire . It is one of Turkey 's Anatolian High Schools , elite public high schools that place a stronger emphasis on instruction in foreign languages . Galatasaray , for example , offers instruction in French ; other Anatolian High Schools primarily teach in English or German alongside Turkish . The city also has foreign high schools , such as Liceo Italiano , that were established in the 19th century to educate foreigners .

Kuleli Military High School , along the shores of the Bosphorus in Çengelköy , and Turkish Naval High School , located on one of the Princes ' Islands , are military high schools , complemented by three military academies ? the Turkish Air Force , Turkish Military , and Turkish Naval Academies . Darü??afaka High School provides free education to children across the country missing at least one parent . Darü??afaka begins instruction with the fourth grade , providing instruction in English and , starting in sixth grade , a second foreign language ? German or French . Other prominent high schools in the city include Kabata? Erkek Lisesi (founded in 1908) and Kad?köy Anadolu Lisesi (founded in 1955) .

= = Public services = =

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 . At the behest of Suleiman the Magnificent , the K?rkçe?me 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 . 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 . Today , Istanbul has a chlorinated and filtered water supply and a sewage treatment system managed by the Istanbul Water and Sewerage Administration (?SK?) .

The Silahtara?a 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 . 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 . Capacity declined until the power station reached the end of its economic life and shut down in 1983 . 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 (TEA?) and the Turkish Electricity Distribution Company (TEDA?) ? competes with private electric utilities .

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 . By 1876 , the first international mailing network between Istanbul and the lands beyond the Ottoman Empire had been established . Sultan Abd?lmecid 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 . 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 . GSM cellular networks arrived in Turkey in 1994 , with Istanbul among the first cities to receive the service . 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 . Postal services remain under the purview of what is now the Post and Telegraph Organization (retaining the acronym PTT) .

In 2000 , Istanbul had 137 hospitals , of which 100 were private . Turkish citizens are entitled to subsidized healthcare in the nation 's state @-@ run hospitals . As public hospitals tend to be overcrowded or otherwise slow , private hospitals are preferable for those who can afford them . 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 . 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 . Turkey has more hospitals accredited by the U.S.-based Joint Commission than any other country in the world , with most concentrated in its big cities . 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) . Laser eye surgery is particularly common among medical tourists , as Turkey is known for specializing in the procedure .

= = Transportation = =

Istanbul 's primary motorways are the O @-@ 1 , O @-@ 2 , O @-@ 3 and O @-@ 4 . The O @-@ 1 forms the city 's inner ring road , traversing the Bosphorus Bridge , and the O @-@ 2 is the city 's outer ring road , crossing the Fatih Sultan Mehmet (Second Bosphorus) Bridge . The O @-@ 2 continues west to Edirne and the O @-@ 4 continues east to Ankara ; the O @-@ 2 , O @-@ 3 , and O @-@ 4 are part of European route E80 (the Trans @-@ European Motorway) between Portugal and the Turkish ? Iranian border . The two Bosphorus Bridges are currently the only road crossings between the Asian and European sides of Turkey , together carrying 400 @,@ 000 vehicles each day . The dual @-@ deck , 14 @.@ 6 @-@ kilometer (9 @.@ 1 mi) Eurasia Tunnel is currently under construction beneath the Bosphorus , between Fatih and Üsküdar . A third Bosphorus bridge , first considered in the 1990s , may also finally be coming to fruition , as construction of the Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge was officially launched in 2013 . Both projects may be completed as early as 2015 , although environmentalist groups worry that the third bridge will endanger the remaining green areas to the north of Istanbul .

Istanbul 's local public transportation system is a complex network of trams , funiculars , metro lines , buses , bus rapid transit , and ferries . Fares across modes are integrated , using the contactless Istanbulkart , introduced in 2009 , or the older Akbil electronic ticket device . Trams in Istanbul date back to 1872 , when they were horse @-@ drawn , but even the first electrified trams were decommissioned in the 1960s . Operated by Istanbul Electricity , Tramway , and Tunnel General Management (?ETT) , 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 . The Tünel opened in 1875 as the world 's second @-@ oldest subterranean rail line (after London 's Metropolitan Railway) . It still carries passengers between Karaköy and ?stiklal Avenue along a steep 573 @-@ meter (1 @,@ 880 ft) track ; a more modern funicular between Taksim Square and Kabata? began running in 2006 .

The Istanbul Metro comprises three lines (the M1 and M2 on the European side , and the M4 on the Asian side) with several other lines (such as the M3 , M5 , M7 , and M6 Mini @-@ Metro) and extensions under construction . 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 . With the Marmaray 's completion , rail use in the city is expected to increase to 28 percent (from 4 percent) , behind only Tokyo and New York City . Until then , buses provide transportation within and between the two halves of the city , accommodating 2 @.@ 2 million passenger trips each day . The Metrobus , a form of bus rapid transit , crosses the Bosphorus Bridge , with dedicated lanes leading to its termini . ?DO (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 . With additional destinations around the Sea of Marmara

, ?DO runs the largest municipal ferry operation in the world . The city 's main cruise ship terminal is the Port of Istanbul in Karaköy , with a capacity of 10 @, @ 000 passengers per hour . Most visitors enter Istanbul by air , but about half a million foreign tourists enter the city by sea each year .

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 . 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 . After Istanbul 's Haydarpa?a 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 . 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 . New stations to replace both the Haydarpa?a 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 . Private bus companies operate instead . 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 .

Istanbul has two international airports . The larger is Istanbul Atatürk , 24 kilometers (15 mi) west of the city center . It handled 61 @. @ 3 million passengers in 2015 , making it the third @-@ busiest airport in Europe and the eighteenth @-@ busiest in the world . Sabiha Gökçen International , 45 kilometers (28 mi) southeast of the city center , opened in 2001 to relieve Atatürk . 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 . Atatürk has 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 . Because of the traffic at Istanbul 's current airports , a third international airport is planned for the Black Sea coast . Building a new runway at Atatürk Airport was rejected due to the cost involved ; environmental concerns have also been raised with respect to the new airport . Currently under construction , the new international airport will become the largest airport in the world upon the completion of all four stages of the project , with a capacity to serve 150 million passengers per year .

= = Sister and twin cities = =

List of twin and sister cities of Istanbul