

## Title:

Turkey for Christmas

## Word Count:

432

## Summary:

The ancient streets and breath-taking architecture of Istanbul offer an unusual destination for the discerning traveler

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## Article Body:

The ancient streets and breath-taking architecture of Istanbul offer an unusual destination for the discerning traveler wishing to avoid the usual christmas commercialism. It is also a great place to buy Christmas gifts.

Turkeys largest covered market, the Grand Bazaar (Kapali Carsi) in Istanbul, offers excellent shopping and great bargains. The range of beautiful objects available is quite breath-taking, including silky Turkish carpets and kelim's, colorful and pungent herbs and spices, sparkling crystal, glazed tiles and pottery, copper and brassware, Turkish lamps, everything you can think of made from leather, brightly colored cotton and wool products, an array of Turkish costumes including authentic belly dancing outfits, and many types of handmade musical instruments. If you show any inclination to playing any of the instruments, you will doubtless be dragged into the store and offered an impromptu rendition of some obscure Turkish folk tune. Bear in mind this is not purely a tourist area and plenty of local people shop here too, giving the atmosphere a big dose of warm and friendly authenticity.

The architecture and layout of the Grand Bazaar alone merits attention. Forget your boot sale in a field, or rickety tables in a church hall, this building is quite stunning in itself. This is like no Bazaar you have ever been to before. The interior is literally like Aladdin's cave. In fact, this is probably where Aladdin got all his stuff! The building is packed with literally hundreds of individual stalls, laid out in a labyrinth of narrow aisles. Wares are gaudy and bright, and strewn or hanging on every available area. Wafts of fresh spices and herbs drift on the air, and eager vendors entreat you to enter their lairs. But beware - brush up on your bargaining skills as they are absolutely essential here. If you are in negotiation with a shop owner, often you will be brought a

glass of hot sweet tea. This is a pleasing aspect of bargaining in Turkey, but also an indicator of how long bargaining can take.

It is quite exhausting but well worth the effort to see as much as you can of the Grand Bazaar. There are hundreds of shops, so plan on spending several hours. There are plenty of bars and cafes within it's walls, so you may sit and rest awhile. Instead of the usual American coffee, why not try a chilled Irun? (pronounced eye-run). It is a thin, slightly salty yogurt-y drink, which is very refreshing.

So instead of having turkey for Christmas lunch, why not make Turkey your destination for Christmas vacation this year.