

About Istanbul / Turkey

Istanbul is one of the most beautiful and profound cities in the world. It is the only great city to span two continents – Europe and Asia – and perhaps no other city has such a rich texture of history, culture and spirituality. In its incarnation as Constantinople, it was a brilliant center of Byzantine Greek culture and, as the Ottoman capital, it had a great tradition of Sufism. As Samothrace lies only a few miles from the nautical boundary of Turkey, we have an invaluable opportunity to experience Istanbul in all its mystery and magnificence. We will travel by bus from the port of Alexandroupolis to Istanbul, where we will meet with some of Turkey’s leading scholars of Sufism, continuing a theme from last year’s Esoteric Quest in Andalusia. For centuries, each of the 300 mosques of the city contained a lodge for wandering dervishes, and we will have the opportunity to experience the mystical practices of contemporary Sufis, heirs to the tradition of Rumi. Our guide for this post-conference *Quest* will be Stephen Hirtenstein, scholar of Ibn ‘Arabi, as we visit the city’s most striking features, such as The Blue Mosque, Hagia Sophia and Topkapi Palace, standing high above the Bosphorus strait on the Golden Horne. We will explore the rich culture of Byzantium, with its architecture and esoteric spirituality, and hear Brian Cotnoir lecturing on Byzantine alchemy. We also will sail along the shores of the legendary Bosphorus viewing the castles and monuments that mark this place as one of the most significant in world history. Time will also be found to visit the vast Bazaar, eat in restaurants that exude Ottoman splendor, and glimpse the remains of the Roman Empire at its peak.

Daily Sample Itinerary

7:30am-8:30am: breakfast

9am-12noon: guided tour

12noon-1:30pm: lunch

2pm-5pm: guided tour

6pm-7:30pm: dinner

8pm-10pm: presentation (Istanbul)

Accommodations in Istanbul

Our accommodations in Istanbul will be at two hotels in the Sultanahmet district, the heart of the historic old city. Both hotels are in lovely, restored 19th century Ottoman houses, with views of the Marmara Sea.

The Hotel Hippodrome

Mimar Mehmet Aga Caddesi, No. 38

Sultanahmet, Istanbul

+90-212-517-6889



And in the event we need extra rooms:

The Hotel Obelisk
Mimar Mehmet Aga Caddesi, No. 17/19
Sultanahmet, Istanbul
+90-212-517-7173



All rooms offer:

- Cable T.V
- Air-conditioning
- Telephone
- Wireless-internet access
- Hair dryers
- En-suite bathrooms
- Elevator (Hotel Obelisk only)

Travel Agents & Online Bookings

The New York Open Center will travel as a group by coach after our main conference in Samothraki (Samothrace) in Greece, to Istanbul in Turkey. For participants choosing to meet us in Istanbul, we can recommend a number of professional travel agents.

Picasso Travel (NYC): +1-212-244-5454 or www.picassotravel.com

Credo Travel (Istanbul): +90-212-254-8175 or www.credotours.com

For online bookings of discounted air tickets, useful websites include www.kayak.com, www.orbitz.com, and www.cheaptickets.com.

Turkish Air offers direct flights between New York and Istanbul (www.thy.com).

Pegasus Airlines is an affordable carrier providing service between Istanbul and a number of major European cities (www.flypgs.com). Atlas Jet (www.atlasjet.com) is another budget airline mostly covering routes within Turkey, but also connecting Istanbul with several European, North African and Asian cities. Easy Jet (www.easyjet.com) also flies to Istanbul from the U.K.

Arrival in Istanbul

Most international flights arrive at Ataturk Airport, located about 14 miles (28 km) from the city center (www.ataturkairport.com). We recommend taking a taxi from the airport to your hotel. A 25 minute ride (depending upon traffic) into Sultanahmet costs approximately 20 YTL, or \$16 US.

Taxis from Turkey's Sabiha Gokcen Airport, some 50 km outside of central Istanbul, can be quite expensive. Visit www.sgairport.com for helpful information on ground transport options.