

Traveling Tips- Turkey

Telephones

The country code for Turkey is **90**. The area code for Istanbul is either **212** (on the European side) or **216** (on the Asian side).

The most affordable means of making international calls when in Turkey is through the use of Skype (www.skype.com), which is either free when calling computer to computer, or available for a few U.S. cents-per-minute charge when dialing from computer to land line, or the reverse (SkypeIn or SkypeOut).

Calling Cards

Local and international calls can be made at one of the numerous *Türk Telekom* public phones, and operate using either credit cards or phone cards (*telekart*). Phone cards are available at post offices, street kiosks and other places advertising *Telekart Satilir* (Telekarts for Sale). PTTs (post, telegraph and telephone offices) are well marked by yellow signs. The nearest PTT to Sultanahmet would be the yellow booth found opposite the entrance to the Hagia Sofia.

Mobile Phones

(*cep telefonu*, JEHP teh-leh-foh-noo)

Because of complicated regulations requiring all mobile phones to be registered with the Turkish government, do not expect to use your cell phone while in Turkey. Unregistered phones are blocked from either making or receiving calls. Alternatives include purchasing a new phone and SIM card from a Turkish mobile phone operator, which is a rather expensive solution, or renting a pre-registered mobile phone within Turkey. This option often can be arranged at hotels and over the internet before your arrival in the country, but is really best reserved for emergency situations as the rates for international calls are quite expensive.

Turkish mobile phone operators include *Turkcell*, *Telsim*, and *Avea*.

Internet

Many cafés and restaurants, hotel and inn lobbies, and major airports, have Wifi (wireless internet access). Inexpensive cybercafés are easily found throughout Turkey, especially in large cities.

Electricity

Turkey operates on 220 volts, 50 Hz, with round-prong European-style plugs.

Laptops and digital cameras (appliances with their own **power adaptors**) can be plugged into either 110-120-volt or 220-240-volt sockets/points and will adapt to the voltage automatically. These, however, will require a **plug adapter** that can fit into Turkish outlets.

Information on your power adapter will indicate its voltage. If it reads "**INPUT: A.C. 100-240V**", then it can operate on either 110-120 or 220-240 voltage. If instead you find something like "INPUT: 100-125V", then it can't run on Turkey's 220-240 volts and you'll need to bring a **transformer** (also called a **power** or **voltage converter**), as well as that plug adapter.

If you find yourself already in Turkey and in need of a plug adapter, many hotels have some on hand to lend to guests until you can get to the *elektrikçi*, or electrician's shop (it's best to bring your own power adaptor along to the electrician). In Istanbul, there are several *elektrikçi* shops in Eminönü on the streets between Sirkeci Station and the Main Post Office (*Büyük Postahane*).

Identification & Visas

A valid passport (with **at least 6 months** remaining before its expiration) is required to enter Turkey. Additionally, citizens of many countries (including the U.S., Canada, and the U.K.) **need visas to enter Turkey**. These "sticker visas" are often easily obtained upon arrival at airports.

For those of us traveling together from Alexandroupolis to Istanbul, it will be necessary to apply for a tourist visa *in advance* of our arrival in Turkey. Please contact your nearest Turkish Consulate to determine your visa requirements, fees, and application process (www.turkishembassy.org). It is most expedient to apply directly at the Turkish Consulate (consulates in the U.S. are located in Washington, D.C., New York City, Chicago, Houston, and Los Angeles). However, if you do not live within travel distance of a consulate, you may be able to apply online or by mail. If you are required to apply by mail, please allow for up to a month for processing.

There is a range of visa fees and lengths-of-stay depending upon one's home country. As of April 1, 2008, applying in-person for a 90-day tourist visa for a U.S. costs \$26; for a British citizen the fee is 10£. Canadian citizens are eligible for 90-day visas at approximately \$60 US (or 45€).

Immunizations & Health

No vaccinations are required to visit Turkey. Travel in the country is quite safe as regards health, although visitors should know to drink only bottled spring water (never tap water, not even in hotels and restaurants), and much of it, to remain hydrated. To further minimize the risk of gastrointestinal ailments, it is wise to remember to eat and drink (coffee, tea, alcohol) in moderation only (as the body adapts to a new environment), to wash hands often with soap and water, and to exercise caution with food from street vendors. Fruits and vegetables should always be washed thoroughly (with purified water!), and, if in doubt, it is most safe to eat fruits with thick peels that can be removed.

Safety

Statistically, travel in Turkey is comparatively as safe as travel in the U.S. and Europe. While most people you'll encounter are friendly and honest and hospitable, it is still wise to be careful about pickpockets and petty thievery, especially in large cities.

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is **strongly** recommended in the event of unexpectedly having to cancel or change your travel plans either before or during our conference, losing your luggage, needing medical assistance, or if the program is affected by circumstances beyond our control. You can purchase this online or from your own travel agent. Travel insurance options are available at www.myinsurance.com, www.insuremytrip.com, and www.travelguard.com.

Money

The local Turkish currency is the New Turkish Lira (YTL: *Yeni Türk Lirası*; international symbol: TRY). One Turkish lira is divided into 100 *yeni kurus* (yeh-NEE koo-ROOSH, or New Kurush).

ATMs provide the easiest access to cash, and tend to offer the best exchange rates. You will need a bank card with a four-digit PIN number (check with your bank to confirm that your ATM card is equipped for international transactions). Please remember to advise your bank that you will be making purchases abroad, since many banks will err on the side of caution and assume your ATM card has been stolen and might suspend your card temporarily.

It is important to note that Turkish ATM keypads usually do **not** have **alphabetical keys** (ABC for 2, DEF for 3, etc). If you know your PIN in its alphabetical form only, be sure to translate this password into its numerical equivalent (in emergencies, the keypad of a pay phone or cell phone will function as a guide). Sometimes Turkish ATMs may not dispense money on days your home bank is closed – it's always wise to plan ahead in these cases.

However, as we will be crossing the border into Turkey by coach, as opposed to having ATM access in an airport, it is strongly suggested that you have at least **some Turkish lira in cash on hand** before your arrival in the country.

Please note that many people in Turkey do not accept large bills/notes for small purchases (a bill/note that is more than twice the size of your purchase is frowned upon). It is therefore useful to get in the habit of paying with slightly larger notes at all times and to keep the change on hand.

Also know that old Turkish lira notes and coins are officially out of circulation, and you should not accept any change that comes with lots of zeros on it: *yeni lira istiyorum!* (YEH-nee LEE-rah eess-tee-YOH-room, "I want New Liras only!")

Finally, it **is** also possible to exchange foreign currency at Currency Exchange Offices (*Döviz Bürosu*), banks (*Banka*), and post offices (*PTT*). Exchange Offices usually offer the best rates and lowest commissions, while post offices usually accept only U.S. dollars and euros.

Banking hours are Monday – Friday, 8:30am-noon and 1:30-5pm. Post offices are open Monday – Saturday, 8am-midnight (although many opening hours tend to be shorter during the month of *Ramazan*).

Bargaining and the Markets

Pazarlık (bargaining) is a social, as well as business, tradition in Turkey. For suggestions on creating the most pleasurable bargaining experience, visit www.turkeytravelplanner.com.

Food & Drink

Meyhane are traditional taverns that serve *meze* (appetizers) and *raki* (an ice-cold anise flavored liquor). *Lokanta* are inexpensive restaurants, and *kebabçı* are booths selling *kebab* and *şiş* (grilled or roasted meats on a skewer or spit: lamb is *kuzu*, mutton is *dana eti*, chicken becomes *pilic* when roasted). *Pideci* specialize in *pide*, or Turkish pizza, *büfe* are booths selling sandwiches and takeaway snacks, and a *hazir yemek* is a "ready food" restaurant with a variety of prepared dishes kept warm in steam tables - point to what you want and the chef serves you immediately.

A *kahvei* is a traditional café, and a *çai bahçesi* is a tea garden. Tea (*çay*, or CHAH-ye) is absolutely the national drink of Turkey, drunk hot with sugar: *açık* (ah-CHUK) is "open," or weak, *koyu* (koh-YOO) is dark tea, and ordering just *çay* and will bring a glass of normal strength tea. Turkish coffee (*kahve*, or KAH-veh) is served either *sade* (unsweetened), *orta* (medium-sweet) or *sekerli* (sweet).

Turkish breakfasts tend to be hearty (cheese, olives, flatbread, jam and tea). Lunch is a light meal of sandwiches, snacks and salads around noon, such as *gözleme* (fresh-baked flat bread folded over savory ingredients—a sort of Turkish *crêpe*) and *börek* (pastry filled with cheese and vegetables or meat), or the Istanbul fish sandwich, a traditional favorite. Dinner is comprised of *meze*, and meat (*et*) and fish (*balık*) dishes and is served around 8pm.

Specialties include *çorban salatsı* (shepherd's salad), *mercimek çorbası* (lentil soup), and yogurt (available at all *lokanta* even when not visibly on the menu). *Köfte* are spiced meatballs, and *dolma* are peppers, grape leaves, or eggplant stuffed with either rice or meat. When *yaprak dolmasi*, or stuffed grape leaves, are served cold (or *zeytinyagli*, "with olive oil"), they are vegetarian; when served hot (or *etli*, "with meat"), they are not. A useful phrase for vegetarians (*vejeteryen*, or veh-zeh-tehr-YEHN) is:

Hic et yemem (HEECH eht yeh-MEHM, "I eat no meat at all")

Desserts include *baklava*, a flaky filo pastry with nuts, soaked in honey, and *lokum*, Turkish Delight.

Tipping

Tips in Turkey are generally modest. In a taxi, round the fare upwards to a convenient amount (say, 5YTL on a 4.8YTL fare); in inexpensive restaurants, tips are not necessary, although appreciated (5-10%). More luxury restaurants will expect 10-15% tips on service. You will want to give hotel and airport/bus/train station luggage porters about

75 cents to \$1 US per bag, and to share out among all attendants about 15% of all services used at a *hammam* (Turkish baths).

Customs & Etiquette

We have invented so many variations on non-verbal communication! In Turkey, if a person raises their head and clicks their tongue, this is taken to mean *hayir* (no), and is sometimes accompanied by a shutting of the eyes or a raising of the eyebrows. *Evet* (yes) may be signaled by a sharp downward nod. Pointing your finger, or the sole of the foot, toward someone, is a rude gesture. While public displays of affection are considered inappropriate, Turkish people often greet one another with a kiss on both cheeks. Initial interactions between men and women tend to be more formal, and for a longer period of time, in Turkish society than in, say, American society. As with travel in general, observing the local customs tends to create the smoothest circumstances.

As for respectful mosque etiquette, all visitors (both Muslim and non-Muslim are welcome in Turkey's mosques) need to remove their shoes before stepping onto the mosque's carpets. Visitors will want to speak quietly and move slowly, and to avoid walking in front of worshippers. It is most polite to either ask permission before taking any photographs, or, at least, to turn off the camera's flash.

As with many houses of worship, modest clothing is appreciated – long pants and skirts as opposed to shorts and miniskirts, long-sleeved shirts as opposed to sleeveless. Women will want to bring a scarf (or hood) to cover the head.

Ramazan/Ramadan

Turkey is a secular, yet primarily Islamic, country, and we will be visiting during the holy month of *Ramazan*. During this month, many observant Muslims abstain from food, drink and cigarettes between sunrise and sunset before the large communal celebration that is *iftar*, the breaking of the day's fast. Public eating during daylight hours is considered inappropriate at this time.

Dress

In Turkey's modern, predominantly secular society, Western dress is most common; observant Muslim women will often wear a *tesettür*, a headscarf and light topcoat, when out in public.

Climate

Septembers in Istanbul tend towards to be dry and quite warm, with average temperatures of 65-70 degrees Fahrenheit. Izmir, to the southwest of Istanbul along the Aegean coast, will be a bit warmer still.

Time

All of Turkey is on Eastern European time, which is two hours ahead of GMT, 7 hours ahead of New York, and 10 hours ahead of Los Angeles.

Suggested Items to Pack

(participants are strongly encouraged to pack lightly)

Passport

Visa to enter Turkey, if required (see **Identification & Visas** above)

Photocopies of passport, credit cards

ATM card with 4-digit PIN number for international use (or Traveler's Cheques)

Turkish lira (for personal expenses, open lunch on the 12th, optional bar tabs)

International phone card (can also be purchased in Turkey)

Turkish phrasebook

Reading materials

Journal and pens

Camera and batteries

Electric converters and adapters, if needed

Travel alarm clock

Comfortable, sturdy, walking shoes

Cool cotton clothing

Headscarf (for women)

Light jacket/sweater

Umbrella, rain gear

Bathing suit and beach towel

Sunscreen

Any prescription or over-the-counter medication

Travel insurance

Suggested Reading

Keith Critchlow

Islamic Patterns: An Analytical and Cosmological Approach - comprehensive insight into the foundations and rationale of Islamic Art

Order in Space: A Design Source Book - a groundbreaking book showing the interrelationships between Platonic and Archimedean solids

Coleman Barks

Rumi: The Book of Love – Poems of Ecstasy and Longing – the wisdom and beauty of the 13th century Persian mystic and poet is translated here with deep reverence and understanding

Stephen Hirtenstein

The Unlimited Mercifier: The Spiritual Life and Thoughts of Ibn 'Arabi – an important introduction into the life and significance of one of the greatest mystical thinkers in Islam

Brian Cotnoir

Alchemy: The Weiser Concise Guide Series – a comprehensive, yet accessible, explanation of the philosophy and techniques of alchemy

John Freely

Istanbul, The Imperial City – a readable introduction to the city's fabled history
Inside the Seraglio: Private Lives of the Sultans in Istanbul – a glimpse into the lives of the Osmanli Sultans during the decline of the Ottoman Empire

Tom Brosnahan

Bright Sun, Strong Tea - a colorful and well-informed Turkey travelogue

Language

While English is taught in many Turkish schools, and spoken in varying degrees, even the most humble attempts at speaking some basic Turkish will enrich your travels and deepen your experience of the country and its people. There are wonderful

Useful Phrases

ENGLISH	TURKISH	PRONUNCIATION
Hello	Merhaba	MEHR-hah-bah
Goodbye	Hoşça kalin	hohsh-CHAH-kah-LIHN
Good day!	İyi günler!	ee-ee gewn-LER
Good evening!	İyi akşamlar!	ee-ee AHK-shahm-LAR
Please	Lütfen	LEWT-fen
Thank you	Teşekkür ederim	teh-SHEH-kewr eh-DEH-reem
Yes / no	Evet / Hayir	EH-vet / HI-yur
Sorry / Excuse me	Affedersiniz	ahf-fed-DER-see-neeZ
My name is...	Adim...	ah-DUHM
I want...	İstiyorum...	eess-tee-YOH-room
...this	Bu (nu)	boo (NOO)
Give me...	...bana verin	bah-NAH veh-reen
Do you speak English?	İngilizce biliyor musunuz?	EEN-gee-leeZ-jeh bee-lee-YOR-moo-su-nooz
I don't speak Turkish.	Türkçe bilmiyorum.	TEWRK-cheh BEEL-mee-yoh-ruhm
Help!	İmdat!	EEEn-Daht
Where is....?	...nerede?	NEHR-eh-deh
Left / Right / Straight ahead	Sol / Sağ / Doğru	sohl / sa-a / doh-roo
I would like a [one way / return] ticket.	[Sırf gidiş / gidiş-dönüş] bir bilet istiyorum.	[serf-giDEESH / giDEESH der-NYOOSH] beer be-LET i-STEE-yo-rum
What time does the [train/bus/boat] depart/arrive?	[Tren/Otobüs/Vapur] ne zaman kalkar/gelir?	[tren/oh-toe-boose/va-POOR] ne zah-mahn kal-kar/geh-leer
How much does it cost?	...ne kadar?	neh kah-dar

Glossary

Caddesi (Cad.): avenue

Cami / Camii: mosque

Çarşı: market

Han: travelers' inn

İskele: landing pier

Konak: Ottoman townhouse

Kösk: kiosk, pavilion

Pazar: bazaar, market

Saray: palace
Sokak (Sk.): street

Pronunciation:

â: faint 'yee' sound following preceding consonant (*kâhta* = kee-YAHH-tah)

c: 'j'

ç: 'ch' as in chair

e: 'e' as in bed

g: hard 'g' as in go

ğ: silent, prolongs the preceding vowel

h: **always** pronounced (*Ahmet* = a-hh-MEHT; *rehber* = reh-hh-BEHR)

j: 'zh' as in azure

ı: (undotted i) 'uh' as in fuss

i: (dotted i) 'ee' as in see

ö: 'œ' as in fur

ş: 'sh'

ü: the French 'u'

u: 'ou' as in you

Digraphs – a pair of letters combining to make one distinct sound – do not exist in Turkish. For example, *mithat* is pronounced meet-HOT (not 'mee-THAWT'), and *meshut* is pronounced mess-HOOT (and not 'meh-SHOOT').