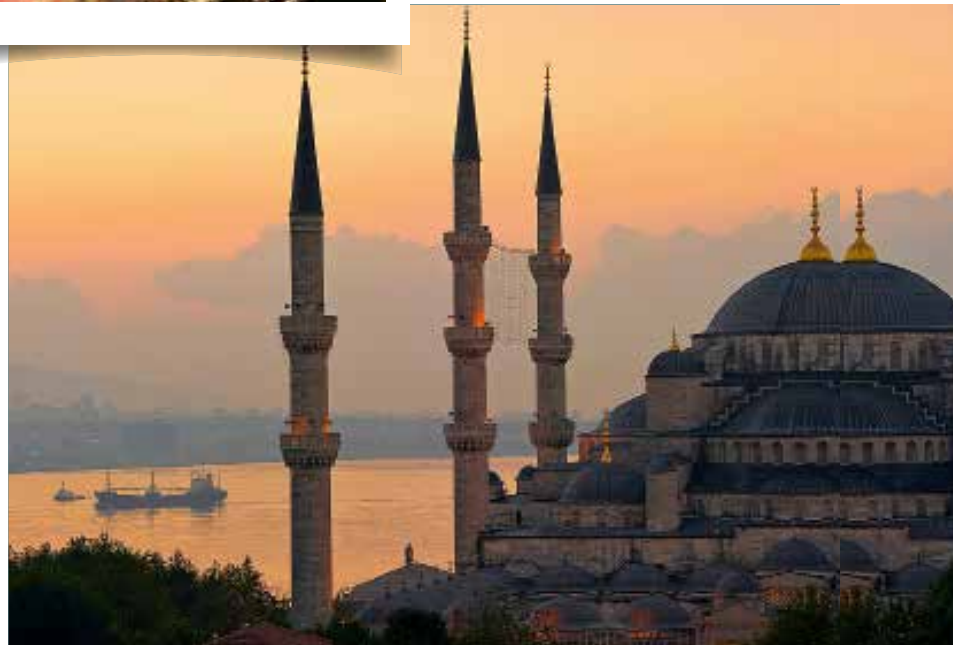


Camera crew: waterfront snaps from Galata Tower. Opposite, display in the Istanbul Modern museum; dome at Topkapı Palace; handmade slippers; the Blue Mosque; fresh octopus salad



Waterfront Istanbul

HASSLE-FREE FRIDAY

Each weekend Istanbullls flock to the **Princes Islands**, the carefree, (and car-free) islands in the Bosphorus. Think of the ferry there as a sightseeing cruise (60 to 95 mins; see ido.com.tr and en.sehirhatlari.com.tr/en for times) — at just over a quid, it's far cheaper than a tourist-packed Bosphorus Boat Tour. Sit on the top deck, starboard side, to see the **Topkapı Palace**, bling-tastic home of the sultans. In-the-know locals alight at **Heybeliada**. The pine-covered island has been a place of elegant escape for centuries. Take a table at **Mavi** (Yalı Cad 29; 00 90 216 3510128, mavirestaurant.net; mains about £7) for a squid 'n' rosé lunch. Then jump in a *fayton* (horse-drawn carriage) to **Club Green Beach** (clubgreenbeach.com; entry £8) for a sunbed sojourn.

NO-STRESS SATURDAY

Time for a Turkish breakfast. Eat a lazy hotel spread of quince jam, *kaymak* clotted cream and stuffed figs, then waddle down to **Karaköy**, the once-gritty docklands are now a Brooklyn-Shoreditch hybrid. Shop for handmade slippers in the new monthly **Pop-up Souk** (Murakip Sk 12; souqkarakoy.com), then admire your buys over Lebanese patisserie at **Pim** (Kılıç Ali Paşa Sok 12). Lunch at **Ferahfeza** (Kemankes Cad 31; 00 90 212 243 5154, ferahfeza-ist.com; mains about £12), a hotspot on the roof of the Istanbul Architectural Institute. Expect octopus salads, Turkish Chardonnay and sunshine. Kill the afternoon at Tate-esque **Istanbul Modern** (Meclis-i Mebusan Cad; istanbulmodern.org; £6), or soak at the **Kılıç Ali Paşa Hamam** (Hamam Sok 1; kilicalipasahamami.com; treatments about £33).

EASY-PEASY SUNDAY

Locals eschew the commercial Sultanahmet area on Sundays, leaving its must-see historic sights for the rest of us. Ride the 60p tram across the Golden Horn to **Gülhane Park**. The area beyond this once-private rose garden contains the crowd-pulling **Hagia Sophia** and **Blue Mosque** — so few visit the wondrous **Istanbul Archaeology Museum** (Osman Hamdi Bey Yokuşu Sok; istanbularkeoloji.gov.tr; £4, or free with the three-day Museum Pass, available from main museums; £22). To save time, go straight to Hall 8's priceless Alexander Sarcophagus (once thought to belong to Alexander the Great), which depicts Persians battling Greeks. Armed with your Museum Pass, beat the queues to the **Topkapı Palace** (topkapisarayi.gov.tr; £7.50) around the corner. Savour late lunch at palatial **Konyalı** (00 90 212 513 9696, konyalilokantasi.com; mains about £9) in the palace's sea-view

Mecidiye Kiosk. Ready to hit the hot bar? Download up-to-date **Istanbul Seasonal Cities** app (seasonalcities.com; 79p).

FAKE IT! Buy a stylish £5 hammam towel from **Atölye 11** (Mumhane Cad 97) and save a packet on the trendy copies at home — and tell friends you got scrubbed like a local.

Get me there Boho bargain **Ottoman Hammamhane** (Çukurcuma Cad 45; 00 90 212 293 4963, hammamhane.com) has doubles from £72, B&B. Or **Soho House** (Meşrutiyet Cad 56; 00 90 212 377 7100, sohohouseistanbul.com; doubles from £180, B&B) pairs a rooftop pool with frescoed ceilings inside the old American Embassy. Both are an easy stroll from Karaköy. **Pegasus** (flypgs.com) flies to Istanbul from Gatwick and Stansted from £57 one way. *Tristan Rutherford* ▶