

5th ISTANBUL INTERNATIONAL WATER FORUM

“Strengthening Water Resilience: Innovation to Action”

4-6 May 2026 | Istanbul, Türkiye

Useful Information for Foreign Participants



How to get to the Istanbul Lütfi Kirdar International Convention and Exhibition Centre (ICEC)?

ICEC is located in the heart of the European side of the city, Taksim.



Distance to Istanbul Airport (IST): 45 km/28 miles and 45 minutes by car.

Distance to Sabiha Gökçen International Airport (SAW): 50 km/30 miles and 50 minutes by car.

Distance to Taksim Metro Station: 250 m/0.15 miles and 5-minute walk (Main station linked to city's underground system).

- Transportation from airport to several locations:
 - IST: <https://www.hava.ist>
 - SAW: <https://www.havabus.com>
- Taxi services available at any time.

Transportation in Istanbul

Istanbul has a well-connected transportation network. You may use public transport by using İstanbulkart. You can purchase “Standart Card”, Limited Use Tickets (THREEpass, TENpass) or İstanbul City Card (can be used for 1-3-5-7-15 day unlimited travel). You can purchase these cards from ticket vending machines and load credit at İETT counters. You may also use minibus and taxi inside Istanbul by cash.

- **Metro and tram:**

Operator: Metro İstanbul (part of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality)

Description: Covers major districts with metro, tram, and funicular

Website: <https://www.metro.istanbul>

- **Buses and Metrobus:**

Operator: İETT (Istanbul Electric Tram and Tunnel)

Description: Extensive bus network including express and night lines. Metrobus is a rapid bus transit system running on a dedicated lane.

Website: <https://iett.istanbul>

- **Ferries**

Operator: Şehir Hatları (City Lines) & others like Dentur Avrasya, Turyol

Description: Public ferries are scenic and efficient for cross-Bosphorus travel

Website: <https://www.sehirhatlari.istanbul>

- **Taxi**

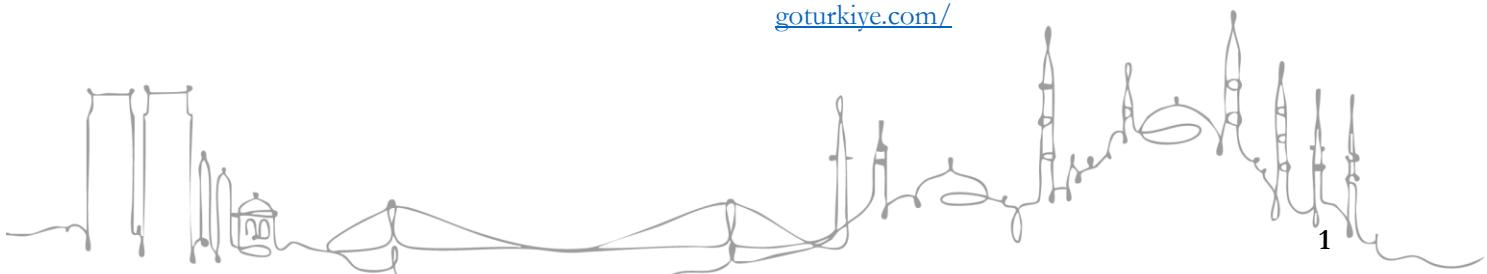
There are three classes of taxis based on color. Most taxis accept credit cards.

- Yellow Taxis: The cheapest and most common option.
- Blue Taxis: More comfortable, with slightly higher fares.
- Black Taxis: Premium, luxury option with the highest fares. Credit cards are accepted in all taxis.

Official taxis and ride-hailing apps (e.g., BiTaksi, Uber, iTaksi) are available.

For general visitor information, including recommended activities if you have extra time, see the GoTürkiye Travel Guide:

goturkiye.com/



Local time

Local time in Istanbul is GMT +3 hours.

Working Hours

Public institutions and private businesses are generally open on weekdays between 8.30 and 18.00. A lunch break occurs between 12.00 and 13.30.

Stores, restaurants and markets often have different hours of business. Shops and bazaars are normally open from Monday to Saturday from 9.30 to 20.00 and closed on Sundays. But stores on crowded streets are open seven days a week.

The Grand Bazaar in Eminönü is open six days a week from 8.30 until 19.00 and closed on Sundays. Large shopping centers remain open until 22.00. You can find restaurants or cafes open virtually at any time of the day and night.

Banks and credit cards

Banks are open on weekdays from 8.30 or 9.00 in the morning until 17.00 or 17.30. Most banks are closed for lunch between noon and 13.30. However, there are some banks which continue to serve during lunch breaks. We recommend that you call the bank ahead of time in order to find out their exact hours of operation.

Internationally-recognized credit cards (Visa, Mastercard, American Express, etc.) are generally accepted at most types of restaurants, stores, travel agencies and hotels. Most ATMs accept international credit/bank cards.

Currency and exchange

The monetary unit in Türkiye is Turkish Lira (TL, ₺). It comes in bank notes of 5 TL, 10 TL, 20 TL, 50 TL, 100 TL and 200 TL. Smaller denominations will come in coins of 1 TL, 50 Kr, 25 Kr and 10 Kr. "Kr" stands for "kurus". 100 Kurus is worth 1 Turkish Lira.

Exchange rate is around 1 USD = 43 TL and 1 EURO = 50.43 TL. Most recent exchange values can be accessed at the website of the Central Bank of the Republic of Türkiye: <http://www.tcmb.gov.tr>

Convertible foreign currency can be exchanged at the airport, hotels and exchange offices as well as at all banks in accordance with the daily announced exchange rates.

Travelers' cheques are rarely accepted in Türkiye. It is recommended that you cash your travelers' cheques at the banks. ATMs can be found in even the smallest towns. Most accept international credit cards or bank cards (a strip of logos is usually displayed above the ATM). Almost all ATMs have a language option to enable you to read the instructions in English.

VAT and service charges

Value-added tax (VAT), known locally as KDV, is generally 20% and is usually included in the displayed prices. Some goods and services may be subject to reduced VAT rates.

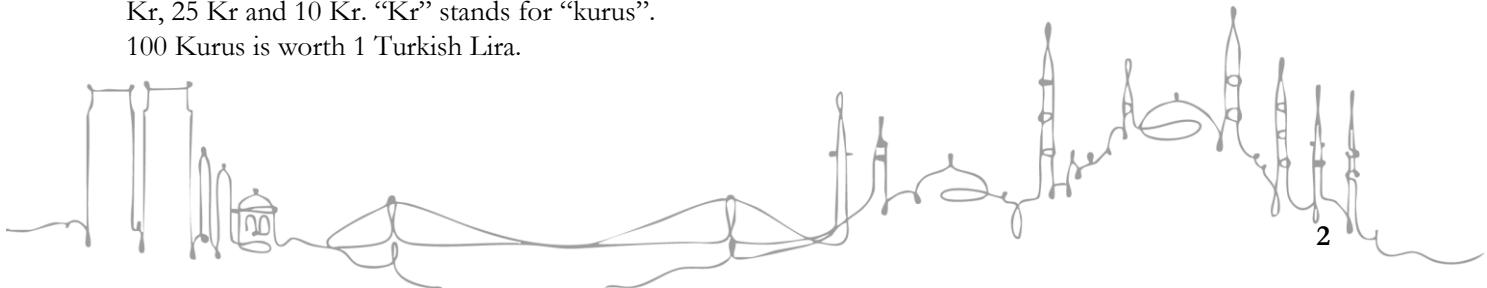
For hotel accommodation services, a reduced VAT rate of 8% applies. In addition, hotels charge a 2% accommodation tax, which is calculated separately from VAT.

In restaurants, service charges are not compulsory. Some establishments may add a discretionary service charge (typically around 10–15%).

Value-added tax is nearly always included in quoted prices. Certain shops are authorised to refund the tax (please ask).

Tax-Free

Visitors who do not reside in Türkiye are able to reclaim VAT on goods purchased in tax-free shops. Look for the tax-free sign and remember to ask for the VAT or reclaim form at the time of purchase. The shop assistant will ask to see your passport.



Communication Services

Postal service

Post office is called "Postane" in Turkish and the sign of it is "PIT". Postal services are efficient and very cheap. Post offices are open between 8.30-17.00 through Monday to Friday.

Telephone

Istanbul is divided into two parts. The area code for the European side is 212 and the Asian side area code is 216. If you are on the Asian side and wish to call a number on the European side, you must dial 0 followed by 212, and if you are in European Istanbul and wish to call a number in Asian Istanbul, use 0 216. You should not use the 0 or the area code if you are calling a number on the same shore. If you are in another city in Türkiye wishing to call Istanbul, dial 0 and the area code before the number. To make an international call dial "00" followed by the international country code: "00" + "country code" + "telephone number" (minus the area code's first "0").

If you wish to use your home mobile phone in Istanbul, most mobiles can connect with Turkcell, Vodafone or Türk Telekom networks. If you wish to buy a prepaid SIM card when you are in Istanbul, you should choose one of these three major networks. You should show your passport to the dealer and fill out an application form to buy a SIM card and to activate it. The international country code for Türkiye is +90.

Eating out

Turkish cuisine is one of the richest cuisines in the world. Along the Bosphorus shore of the European side of Istanbul there are many restaurants that you can enjoy the fabulous Bosphorus view. The best Turkish food experience can be found in lokantas, meyhane, and Ottoman-style restaurants popular with locals, most of which are open until midnight.

Tipping

Tips are generally not included in bills. In any case tipping is your prerogative, a reward for good service. 5-10% is the generally applied rate.

Shopping

Istanbul is a shoppers' paradise with beautiful handwoven carpets, leather goods, gold bargains and fashion products. The fascinating Grand Bazaar and Spice Market make shopping an irresistible pleasure. Many people come to Istanbul just for shopping. The Grand Bazaar (or Covered Bazaar) is the most logical place to start as the variety is immense with a vast selection of carpets, souvenir clothes, shoes, jewelry and handicrafts made from ceramic, copper and brass. The Spice Market is good for picking up spices, Turkish delight, flavored teas and small souvenirs. The sophisticated shops in the Taksim and Nişantaşı districts contrast with the chaos of the bazaars. İstiklal Street and Galata have shops selling fashion items, as well as finely designed handbags and shoes. Nişantaşı is the main area for clothes by top Turkish designers. For an even more modern, European shopping experience, you can visit the huge new malls with Istanbul's most elegant fashion shops, as well as restaurants and cinemas. Upscale malls are Kanyon, Zorlu Center, İstinye Park, Vadi İstanbul, City's Nişantaşı, Galataport on the European side and Akasya, Buyaka and Emaar on the Asian side.

Museums

Most museums in Istanbul are open six days a week, generally from 09:00 to 18:00 or 18:30, with last admission about 30–60 minutes before closing. Many state-run museums are closed on Mondays, although some sites have different closing days.

The Istanbul Museum Pass is a convenient and cost-effective way to explore the rich cultural heritage of Istanbul. With MuseumPass Istanbul, you can visit 13 museums that belong to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Türkiye. MuseumPass Istanbul is valid for 5 days starting from your first museum visit and costs €105.

[For more information](#)



For emergencies

In case of emergency, contact the registration or information desk or dial 112 for police, ambulance, and fire.

There are a number of pharmacies throughout the city. Look for the sign "E" that stands for "Eczane". They are usually open from Monday to Saturday from 9.00 to 19.00 and pharmacists in each district take turns to provide 24-hour service. The names of the pharmacists on duty at night and weekends are listed on the window of the other pharmacists' shops.

Emergency numbers

- Ambulance/Fire/Police: 112
- Tourism Information: 176
- Tourist police: 0212 527 45 03

