

**Barcelona, Spain****Overview****Introduction**

Barcelona, Spain's second-largest city, is inextricably linked to the architecture of Antoni Gaudi. His most famous and unfinished masterpiece, La Sagrada Familia, is the emblem of the city.

Like the basilica, Barcelona takes traditional ideas and presents them in new, even outrageous, forms.

And the city's bursts of building and innovation give the impression that it's still being conceived. Both the church and the city can be tough places to get a handle on, yet their complexity is invigorating rather than forbidding.

Since it hosted the Summer Olympics in 1992, Barcelona has been on the hot list of European destinations. The staging of the Universal Forum of Cultures in 2004 also raised the city's profile. Such popularity may make it harder to land a hotel room, but it has only added to the sense that Barcelona is a place to visit as much for its energetic, cosmopolitan character as for its unusual attractions.

**Highlights**

**Sights**—La Sagrada Familia; La Pedrera; La Catedral (La Seu); Santa Maria del Mar.

**Museums**—Museu Picasso; Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya; Museu d'Historia de Catalunya; Fundacio Joan Miro; Museu d'Historia de la Ciutat; Museu Maritim.

**Memorable Meals**—Lunch at Escriba Xiringuito on the seafront; high-end Mediterranean fare at Neichel; fashionable, inventive dishes at Semproniana; Albert Adria's Nikkei cuisine at Pakta; upscale modern Catalan tasting menu at Hisop; creative, seasonal Catalan fare at Gresca.

**Late Night**—Flamenco at Los Tarantos in summer; drinks and a view at Mirablau; wine at La Vinya del Senyor; dancing at Otto Zutz.

**Walks**—La Rambla, the Barri Gotic and the Born; along the waterfront; Montjuic; Park Guell; Collserola woodlands.

**Especially for Kids**—Zoo de Barcelona; a ride on the roller coaster at Parc d'Atraccions del Tibidabo; the ComsoCaixa science museum.

**Geography**

Barcelona is a large city with many districts, but the most popular attractions are found in a handful of areas that, for the most part, flow into one another. Beginning on the waterfront, Port Vell (Old Port) encompasses the harbor area and Barceloneta, a neighborhood that was once home to fishermen and has been renovated. The Vila Olimpica (Olympic Village) lies just east of Port Vell. It, too, has undergone extensive renovation in the past decade or so and is now the city's seaside recreation area.

La Rambla, Barcelona's famous boulevard and almost a district unto itself, begins at Port Vell and extends inland to Placa Catalunya. La Rambla is the heart of the central city, and it forms the boundary between El Raval, the neighborhood to the west of the boulevard, and the Barri Gotic (the Gothic Quarter), which lies to the east.

The Barri Gotic, the oldest part of Barcelona, has many bars, restaurants, museums and historic sites. Adjoining it on the east side of Via Laietana are the old quarters of Sant Pere and La Ribera, with its fine medieval mansions and trendy shopping and nightlife around the old Born market (now closed to shoppers but preserved as a historic site).

Continuing inland from the Barri Gotic, you'll enter the Eixample, an upscale shopping and residential area, crisscrossed by wide avenues, where many of the *modernisme* buildings are located. Adjoining it to the northwest is the chic villagelike district of Gracia, which has many pleasant restaurants. Beyond Gracia, the city climbs the lower slope of Mount Tibidabo.

Montjuic, a prominent castle-topped hill covered with parks, gardens and pathways west of Port Vell, is easily visible from the central city. Museums and other attractions are found on this high ground.

The renovated district of Sant Marti is more detached from the other areas and is found on the beachfront farther to the east at the end of the T5 tram line.

## History

As with many places in Europe, Barcelona's history has much to do with invasions and conquest. The Romans founded the original settlement, named Barcino, in 133 BC, and the town was later held by the Visigoths, the Moors and the Christian Carolingian Empire under Charlemagne's son, Louis the Pious. In AD 988, Barcelona won independence from the Carolingian kings and became the dominant political and military force in the region of northeastern Spain later known as Catalonia—or Catalunya, in the native Catalan tongue. (Much of the city's character stems from the fact that it identifies itself more as part of Catalonia than of Spain.)

By the late 1400s, Catalonia was politically linked with other regions of Spain, but the region continued to enjoy autonomous rights and privileges until the early 1700s. That changed after the War of Succession, when Catalonia backed the losing side led by Archduke Charles of Austria. Spain's King Philip V abolished Catalonia's government and laws and made Castilian (Spanish) the language of official business, rather than Catalan. This was but one of many conflicts between Catalonia and the central authority of Spain.

By the late 1800s, Barcelona had become one of Spain's most industrialized areas, and the factories spawned significant wealth and a dynamic middle class. Industrial profits underwrote the *modernisme* movement in architecture—Barcelona's version of art nouveau that was spearheaded by architect Antoni Gaudi. The industrial riches did not trickle down to the working class, however, and radical movements—especially anarchism—found willing converts in the city's poorer districts. A violent uprising in 1909 was a precursor to the upheaval unleashed by the Spanish Civil War in the late 1930s, when Barcelona was ruled by leftist trade unions for several years. The city remained a stronghold of the losing Republican cause until the end of the war and paid the price afterward. During the long reign of Francisco Franco (1939-75) the Catalan identity and language were viciously suppressed.

Catalonian home rule was restored after Franco's death in 1975, and the Catalan language was declared co-official with Castilian. Beginning in the late 1970s, a forward-looking urban policy was adopted in

Barcelona, and the regeneration reached its peak in preparation for the 1992 Summer Olympics. Since then, its popularity as a tourist and recreation center has continued to grow.

Politically, the city and region have become increasingly detached from Madrid's centralist rule; in 2010, more than a million Catalans demonstrated in favor of independence from the rest of Spain. That same year their official abolition of bullfighting—effective from 2012—was in effect a further rejection of deep-rooted Spanish traditions.

## Port Information

### Location

Barcelona is an important stopping-off point for major cruise lines in the Mediterranean, and even the largest ocean liners can dock in its port.

The cruise-ship terminal is located in Port Vell, the Old Port district at the foot of La Rambla, minutes away from the city's most important tourist attractions. The terminal, one of the largest and most modern of its kind in the Mediterranean, offers many services, including currency exchange, duty-free shops, restaurants, Internet access points, bus stops and taxi ranks.

Large ferries connect the city to the Balearic Islands and all of the major Mediterranean ports. Phone 902-222-858. <http://www.apb.es>.

### Potpourri

Under Franco's regime, Catalan was forbidden in all forms—printed, written or taught. Now the city offers free courses to anyone who would like to learn it.

Although Antoni Gaudi created some of the most extravagant buildings ever made, he was a humble and religious man who rejected vanity in all its forms. When he was struck down by a tram in 1926, his clothes were so shabby that police assumed he was a vagrant. He died three days later in a hospital in the dilapidated Barri Xino district.

It has been estimated that to build the central spire of the Sagrada Familia, which will rise 560 ft/171 m high, the subterranean pylons would have to weigh 8,000 tons each for it to withstand an earthquake or gale-force winds of 100 mph/161 kph.

Barcelona's colorful Fiesta de Sant Medir, held in the Gracia district in early March and dating from Roman times, honors Saint Emeterio, or Sant Medir, the patron saint of broad beans. During the festivities, thousands of sweets are handed out to delighted children.

The name of Mount Tibidabo comes from the story of Christ's wanderings in the wilderness, when the Devil took him to a mountaintop and offered to give him all that he could see if Jesus would fall down and worship him. *Tibi dabo* means "I give" in Latin.

During Franco's reign, a supervisor known as "la Moral" watched over the dance floor at La Paloma concert hall and parted couples with his stick if they danced too close or tried to sneak a kiss.

The stadium on Montjuic, called Estadi Olympic, was intended to host the People's Olympics in 1936, but Franco's coup the day before the scheduled opening kicked off the Spanish Civil War and put an end to the games. Catalans had to wait till 1992 when, in the newly refurbished stadium, Montjuic launched the world Olympics that made Barcelona internationally famous.

## See & Do

### Sightseeing

Sooner or later, you must take a walk down La Rambla, Barcelona's famous thoroughfare, so you may as well make it sooner. It's a great introduction to the city, and it will put you in good position to see other nearby attractions.

If you head northeast from La Rambla, you'll enter the twisting, ancient streets of the Barri Gotic (Gothic Quarter). Find your way to the grandiose La Seu cathedral as you explore the district. Nearby is the Museu d'Historia de Barcelona (City History Museum). The Barri Gotic also holds several other treasures, so you may want to plan more than one day in the area. The highlights are the Museu Picasso (get there early to avoid the lines) and another magnificent Gothic church, Santa Maria del Mar. It's fun just to amble through the streets, however, especially in the evening, when you can sample many restaurants and bars in the contrasting Raval (earthy-international) and Born (avant-garde chic) districts.

You'll need at least a day to take in the famous sights from the *modernisme* movement in architecture. Before you start, stop in at the Ruta del Modernisme center at the tourist office in Placa Catalunya (and other locations), where you can get maps, a guidebook and discount vouchers to the city's 115 *modernisme* monuments. The guidebook with vouchers costs about 12 euros. Add 5 euros for additional vouchers for each accompanying adult. A route pack, which includes an additional guide to *modernisme* bars and restaurants, costs about 18 euros. For more information, visit <http://www.rutadelmodernisme.com>.

Begin at Manzana de la Discordia, on Passeig de Gracia in the Eixample district, where you can see three adjacent buildings designed by the best-known architects of the movement. Next, head a few blocks north to Antoni Gaudi's amazing building La Pedrera (or Casa Mila), which houses residential apartments, offices and an exhibition center. Plan at least two hours to see them and to walk around among the rooftop sculptures. From the roof, you'll be able to see the spires of Sagrada Familia in the distance, and that's your next stop. (You can walk there in a leisurely half-hour jaunt or catch the metro's Blue Line at the Diagonal Station near La Pedrera.) Close out the day at Gaudi's intricately surrealistic church. Be sure to go up in the spires for a vertigo-inducing look at the church and the city. A visit to Gaudi's Parc Guell, on the northern side of the city, is also recommended, though you will probably have to fit it into another day. An hour-long audio tour of Gaudi's Barcelona can be purchased from the official tourist authority website for 3 euros and downloaded to your mobile phone or MP3 player. It also contains a PDF file with more detailed information about the buildings, complete with photographs and maps. <http://bcnshop.barcelonaturisme.com>.

Montjuic, the hill rising southwest of the city center, merits a day of its own. Both the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya and Fundacio Joan Miro are found on Montjuic, as are several less cultural and more hedonistic attractions, including Poble Espanyol (a theme "village" incorporating architectural styles from all over Spain and a host of shops and restaurants), the Olympic stadium and Pavello Barcelona. Just strolling around this multifaceted green area is pleasant, and it offers some splendid panoramic views of the city and the Mediterranean coastline. Figure your route ahead of time, however, as Montjuic covers a lot of territory and the attractions are widely spaced.

## Historic Sites

### Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau

Sant Antoni Maria Claret 165  
Barcelona, Spain 8041

**Phone:** 93-317-7652 for information regarding guided tours

<http://www.santpau.cat>

Designed by Domenech i Montaner, one of the most renowned architects of the *modernisme* movement, this unusual hospital complex was built between 1902 and 1930. Located on the site of the old Santa Creu Hospital, which dates from 1401, the Hospital de Sant Pau is the largest single example of Catalan *modernista* architecture. Packed with sculptures and mosaics, it was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1997. However, it still functions as a hospital, and only the courtyards and gardens are open to visitors.

There are 75-minute guided tours in English daily at 10 and 11 am, noon and 1 pm. 10 euros.

### La Catedral (La Seu)

Placa de la Seu 3  
Barcelona, Spain 8002

**Phone:** 93-315-1554

<http://www.catedralbcn.org>

The heart of the Old City, this Gothic monster (with the imposing and mostly unused formal name of Esglesia Catedral Basilica de Barcelona) was mostly built between 1298 and 1448 on the site that once held a Roman temple and later a mosque. The facade was not completed until the 1890s, and some feel that its neo-Gothic style is jarring, although it looks nice illuminated at night. Very spacious and soothing, the interior is notable for its volume, with three naves of almost equal width. The crypt of Barcelona's first patron saint, martyr Santa Eulalia, lies behind the altar. You can see some of the older furnishings in the church's Sala Capitular (Chapter House Museum). Above all, don't miss the open-air cloister with its gently splashing fountain and restful garden patrolled by white geese. You can also visit the rooftop terrace for a close-up look at the towers and views over the Gothic quarter.

Cathedral open Monday-Friday 8 am-12:45 pm and 5:15-7:30 pm, Saturday and Sunday 8 am-noon and 5:15-8 pm. Cloister open daily 8:30 am-12:30 pm and 1-5 pm (Sunday 2-5 pm). Chapter House Museum open daily 10 am-noon and 5:15-6:30 pm. The rooftop terrace is open Monday-Friday 10 am-noon and 5:15-6 pm, Saturday and Sunday 10 am-noon. Cathedral admission is free; elevator to the roof is 3 euros. An all-inclusive ticket is 6 euros.

### La Monumental

At Gran Via and Marina  
Barcelona, Spain

The last active bullfighting ring in Barcelona is now a museum. Built in 1914, the landmark has seen not only bullfights but also performances by the likes of the Beatles and Rolling Stones. Walk around the corridors and stand in the center where the fighting used to take place. There is an eclectic display of bullheads, matadors' costumes and other historical tidbits from this location in the Bullfighting Museum of Barcelona, located inside. The Emir of Qatar bought the site in 2014, and there are now plans to turn it into Europe's largest mosque by 2020 (if the city approves).

## La Pedrera

Provenca 261-265  
Barcelona, Spain 8025

**Phone:** 902-400-973 or 93-484-5164 (for group reservations)

<http://lapedrera.com>

Built between 1906 and 1910, this large apartment building is one of Antoni Gaudi's masterworks. Its official name is Casa Mila, but it's better known as La Pedrera (the Quarry), a reference to its stony exterior appearance, with balconies that look like caves. Though Sagrada Familia is the Gaudi building that draws the biggest crowds, we think La Pedrera gives a better sense of the architect's astounding designs. It is also a UNESCO World Heritage site. The complex includes residential apartments, offices and an exhibition center.

Daily tours of the Espai Gaudi (loft and roof) and the Pedrera Apartment of Caixa Catalunya are available November-February 9 am-6:30 pm and March-October 9 am-8 pm (last tours of the day 30 minutes before closing). Individuals can rent audio guides and can purchase tickets online; groups of 10 or more must book a guided tour in advance. 16.50 euros adults, 4 euros audio guides.

## La Rambla

This tree-dappled avenue is the heart, soul and central hub of Barcelona, not to mention a world-famous thoroughfare lined with remarkably diverse architectural styles. Although it is technically five streets (Rambla de Santa Monica, Rambla des Caputxins, Rambla de St. Josep, Rambla d'Estudis and Rambla Canaletes), the separation has not been clear for at least two centuries, and all are generally referred to as La Rambla. At least once during your visit, you should plan to stroll its full length, from Placa Catalunya to the statue of Christopher Columbus presiding over the port. Throughout the day and night it surges with people and offers a variety of amusements. Street performers line the boulevard, the most common being the human statues of one sort or another. You'll see mimes, jugglers and puppet theaters, too. There are also flower and bird vendors, and lots of outdoor cafes where you can take a seat and watch the informal parade flow past you. The end near the port has an open-air artisan market where you can find attractive gifts and souvenirs from 10:30 am till dusk on Saturday and Sunday.

## La Sagrada Familia

Carrer de Mallorca 401  
Barcelona, Spain 8025

**Phone:** 93-207-3031

<http://www.sagradafamilia.cat>

The amazing Templo Expiatorio de la Sagrada Familia, to give it its full name, has to be seen to be believed. Even then it's hard to comprehend. The foundation stone was laid in 1882, and Antoni Gaudi worked on the building for more than 40 years, leaving it unfinished when he died in 1926. It remains unfinished, though work continues amid controversy: What few plans and models Gaudi left behind were destroyed or badly damaged at the outset of the Spanish Civil War, and those directing the current work are more or less guessing at the architect's intentions. You'll have no trouble distinguishing the portions that are pure Gaudi and those that are more recent additions, based on the color and condition of the stonework. Nonetheless, it's a must-see for all visitors to Barcelona (expect big crowds). Additions include color mosaics as well as materials such as carbon fiber, which did not exist during Gaudi's lifetime but are needed today to make the structure earthquake-proof. Upon completion, the building will nearly double in height.



Start your visit in the church, then take an elevator that ascends one of the massive church spires for a great view of the city and the ongoing church construction that is expected to be finished in 2026. Also, don't miss the Gaudi House Museum located in the basement of the Passion facade. The museum focuses on Gaudi's works, especially emphasizing his work on the church.

April-September daily 9 am-8 pm; October-March till 6 pm. Guided tours in English are held daily at 11 am and 1 pm; Saturday, Sunday and June-October also at noon. La Sagrada Familia admission 14.80 euros adults. Admission plus a guided tour or audio guide 19.30 euros adults. La Sagrada Familia plus Gaudi House Museum admission 18.30 euros adults. Tickets can be purchased in advance online.

## Manzana de la Discordia

Passeig de Gracia 43 (between Consell de Cent and Arago)  
Barcelona, Spain

**Phone:** 93-216-0306

<http://www.casabatllo.es>

The name translates to "Block of Discord," a reference to the three contrasting *modernista* buildings that stand close together along Passeig de Gracia. On the southern corner is Domenech i Montaner's ornate Casa Lleo Morera. A few doors up, at No. 41, is the intriguing geometric Casa Amatller by Puig i Cadafalch. Temporary art exhibitions are sometimes held on the ground floor by the Fundacio Amatller. Next door, at No. 43, is Antoni Gaudi's wonderful fairy-tale Casa Batllo with its carnival-mask balconies—a building that would look more at home in Disneyland than it does on a busy city street. See it at night, when it sparkles under lights. You can visit Casa Batllo using self-guided audio tours.

Casa Batllo is open daily 9 am-9 pm (last entry at 8:20 pm). Admission and audio guide 21.50 euros adults.

## Palau de la Musica Catalana

Carrer Palau de la Musica 4-6  
Barcelona, Spain 8003

**Phone:** 902-475-485

<http://www.palaumusica.org>

Another of the *modernista* landmarks, this one was designed by Domenech i Montaner and built around the beginning of the 20th century. It's now a UNESCO World Heritage site, as well as a focal point for the city's classical music scene. Although it's impressive from the outside, try to take a tour or see a performance at the hall so you can get a look at the magnificent stained-glass ceiling and other interior design elements.

Guided 50-minute tours in English are offered daily on the half-hour 9:30 am-3:30 pm (till 8 pm in August). Times are subject to change because of concerts and other events. Tour admission is 18 euros adults. Buy tickets online or at the box office daily 9:30 am-3:30 pm.

## Pavello Barcelona

Avinguda Francesc Ferrer i Guardia 7  
Barcelona, Spain 8038

**Phone:** 93-423-4016

<http://www.miesbcn.com>

The current Barcelona Pavilion (also known as the Mies van der Rohe Pavilion) is an exact replica of the German architect's influential work of modern architecture, originally built in 1929 for the International Exposition. (Don't confuse modern with Barcelona's *modernisme* style, which is known as art nouveau in most of the world.) The pavilion's stark, simple lines are a forerunner of many architectural designs in subsequent decades: It looks a lot like libraries and other public buildings from the 1960s. The pavilion is small, and there's not a lot to see inside except Mies van der Rohe's famous Barcelona chairs (which the caretaker won't let you sit on).

Daily 10 am-8 pm. 5 euros adults. A 30-minute guided tour in English is offered on Saturday at 10 am.

## Santa Maria del Mar

Placa de Santa Maria 1  
Barcelona, Spain 8003

This soaring Catalan Gothic church sits in the heart of the medieval city's maritime district. Designed by the architect Berenguer de Montagut, this structure is considered by many to be Barcelona's most beautiful church. The foundation stone was laid to celebrate the conquest of Cerdana, which completed the Catalan domination of the region. Its relatively swift construction, between 1329 and 1384, made for an unusual unity of style. The interior, too, is uplifting in its exquisite simplicity and elegance, partly because its baroque trappings were burned during the Spanish Civil War. It also has perfect acoustics and serves as a wonderful setting for concerts and choir recitals, especially during the evenings when it's all lit up.

Monday-Saturday 9 am-1:30 pm and 4:30-8 pm, Sunday 10:30 am-1:30 pm and 4:30-8 pm.

## Museums

### CaixaForum

Ave. Francesc Ferrer i Guardia 6-8 (Metro: Espanya lines 1 and 3)  
Barcelona, Spain

**Phone:** 93-476-8600

<http://www.fundacio.lacaixa.es>

This is a cultural center that has one of the most important contemporary art collections in Spain, containing more than 700 permanent works that represent the evolution of contemporary art. One of the most famous works is *Schmerzraum*, an installation made of sheets of lead, iron and silver, by Joseph Beuys. Many international artists such as Donald Judd, Jannis Kounellis, Bruce Naumann, Gerhard Richter and Sigmar Polke are also represented. Concerts, artistic and literary conferences, and various other activities take place regularly in the museum building, which dates from 1909 and is considered a work of art itself. A media library, bookstore and restaurant are also available to visitors.

Open daily 10 am-8 pm, till 11 pm Wednesday in July and August. Free.

### Camp Nou Football Museum

Carrer d'Aristides Maillol 12  
Barcelona, Spain 8028

**Phone:** 93-496-3600

<http://www.fcbarcelona.com>

Essential for soccer fans: The museum presents the history of the FC Barcelona team (also known as Barca) with audiovisuals, glittering trophies, and an amazing assortment of shirts, photos and stadium



models. A visit to the museum lets you gaze upon the hugely impressive Camp Nou stadium and also visit Barca's ice-skating rink.

Monday-Saturday 10 am-6:30 pm (till 8 pm April-October), Sunday and holidays 10 am-2:30 pm. 23 euros adults.

## CosmoCaixa

Carrer d'Issac Neuton 28 (Metro: Avinguda Tibidabo or Vallcarca)  
Barcelona, Spain

A large, hands-on science museum that is great for the whole family. You can explore the Amazon, space in 3-D, evolution and more. You could spend hours discovering science through the many displays and interactive labs.

Daily 10 am-8 pm. 4 euros adults, free for children younger than 16.

## Fundacio Antoni Tapies

Arago 255  
Barcelona, Spain

**Phone:** 93-487-0315

<http://www.fundaciotapies.org>

In addition to a broad collection of the Catalan artist's work, the foundation also mounts temporary exhibitions focusing on contemporary artists. It's housed in a restored landmark of modernista architecture, formerly the offices of a publishing company.

Daily except Monday 10 am-7 pm. 7 euros adults.

## Fundacio Joan Miro

Parc de Montjuic  
Barcelona, Spain 8038

**Phone:** 93-443-9470

<http://fundaciomiro-bcn.org>

One of the world's largest collections of Joan Miro's work, including paintings, graphic work, drawings, sculptures and tapestries. They're housed high above the city on Montjuic hill in a Mediterranean-style building with galleries that are bathed in natural light. Climb to the roof terrace for some great views. The Fundacio also stages temporary exhibitions, screenings, seminars and concerts in its vocation as a platform for contemporary culture. There's an on-site restaurant that serves delicious Mediterranean dishes in a garden courtyard.

Tuesday-Saturday 10 am-7 pm (till 8 pm July-September and till 9 pm on Thursday), Sunday and holidays 10 am-2:30 pm. Main museum admission is 10 euros adults. Audio guide is 5 euros. Free guided tour of the permanent collection Thursday at 1 pm.

## G Experiencia

Larrard 41 (near Park Guell)  
Barcelona, Spain

**Phone:** 93-285-4440

<http://www.gaudiexperiencia.com>

That's G as in Gaudi. It would be easy to dismiss this as a Gaudi theme park, but the interactive exhibits and 4-D audiovisual experience (the fourth dimension is provided by moving chairs in the screening room) are actually an informative and entertaining presentation of Gaudi's life and creative output.

Daily 10 am-7 pm (till 6 pm November-March); last 4-D show 30 minutes before closing. 9 euros adults, 7.50 euros children younger than 14.

## Museo de Cera de Barcelona

Passatge de la Banca 7  
Barcelona, Spain

**Phone:** 93-317-2649

<http://www.museocerabcn.com>

Housed in a 19th-century neo-Renaissance building at the bottom of La Rambla, Barcelona's wax museum boasts 350 life-size figures. A blend of famous historical and fictional characters can be found in various settings designed to depict typical scenes of contemporary and historical life.

Monday-Friday 10 am-1:30 pm and 4-7:30 pm, Saturday and Sunday 11 am-2 pm and 4:30-8:30 pm. Open 10 am-10 pm nonstop during the summer. 15 euros adults, 9 euros children. Audio guide is 3.50 euros.

## Museo Egipci de Barcelona

Valencia 284  
Barcelona, Spain

**Phone:** 93-488-0188

<http://www.museuegipci.com>

This museum specializes in ancient Egyptian culture and is home to the Fundacion Clos collection, which has 700 original artifacts in its possession. The main focus is on the pharaohs and their concept of life after death. In addition, visitors can enjoy theatrical re-enactments of ancient Egyptian cultural life and various temporary exhibitions featured throughout the year.

Monday-Saturday 10 am-8 pm in summer, 10 am-2 pm and 4-8 pm in winter; Sunday 10 am-2 pm. There are free guided tours in Spanish Saturday at 5 pm. 11 euros. Special prices apply to theatrical presentations.

## Museo Textil de la Indumentaria

Avinguda Diagonal 686 (Palau Reial de Pedralbes)  
Barcelona, Spain

**Phone:** 93-256-3465

<http://www.dhub-bcn.cat/en/history/museu-textil-i-d-indumentaria>

Tracing the evolution of the textile industry, this museum contains various collections of garments, tapestries, embroideries and the apparatuses involved in the production of textiles, both from Spain and abroad.

Daily except Monday 10 am-6 pm. Admission 5 euros adults. Free Sunday 3-6 pm.

## Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona

Placa del Angels 1 (Metro: Universita)  
Barcelona, Spain 8001

**Phone:** 93-412-0810

<http://www.macba.cat>

Often referred to as MACBA, this museum showcases works by contemporary artists the world over, but it's the museum building that often gets attention. Designed by U.S. architect Richard Meier and opened in 1995, the dazzling white structure is the flagship of the ambitious renovation of the Raval district. Inside, the museum has lots of natural light and ramps for walking ease. Various temporary exhibits augment the main collection.

Late June-late September: Monday, Wednesday and Thursday 11 am-8 pm; Friday 11 am-10 pm; Saturday 10 am-10 pm; Sunday and holidays 10 am-3 pm. Late September-late June: Monday and Wednesday-Friday 11 am-7:30 pm, Saturday 10 am-9 pm, Sunday and holidays 10 am-3 pm. Admission 8 euros adults. Free guided tours in English on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday at 4 pm.

## Museu de la Xocolata

Carrer del Comerc 36  
Barcelona, Spain 8003

**Phone:** 93-268-7878

<http://www.museuxocolata.cat>

This museum presents Barcelona as you've never seen it before: made out of chocolate. The Olympic stadium, Gaudi's buildings and other Barcelona landmarks are all formed from the intoxicating sweet stuff. An initiative of the Provincial Guild of Pastry Chefs and City Hall, the museum is housed in the old Sant Agusti convent (suitably equipped with arctic-level air-conditioning to prevent Barcelona from melting). The museum also whisks you through the history of the "bitter drink" of the Aztecs and enlightens you about chocolate as medicine, food and aphrodisiac. And, of course, there's a scrumptious cafe and shop with consumable chocolate.

Monday-Saturday 10 am-7 pm, until 8 pm in the summer, Sunday 10 am-3 pm. 4.30 euros adults.

## Museu del Modernisme Catala

Balmes 48  
Barcelona, Spain

**Phone:** 93-272-2896

<http://www.mmcat.cat>

All things *modernisme*: painting, sculpture, stained glass, furniture, and other applied and decorative arts. Temporary exhibitions and lectures as well.

Monday-Saturday 10 am-8 pm, Sunday and public holidays 10 am-2 pm. 10 euros adults.

## Museu d'Historia de Catalunya

Placa de Pau Vila 3  
Barcelona, Spain

**Phone:** 93-225-4700

<http://www.mhcat.net>

A lively, interactive overview of the history of Catalonia is housed in a restored port building. Artifacts, hands-on exhibits, audiovisuals and animated models reconstruct the social and human complexity of each period. Guidebooks in English are available. A restaurant, 1881, is located on the fourth floor which has a rooftop bar offering impressive views of the city. A gift and book shop are also on-site.

Tuesday and Thursday-Saturday 10 am-7 pm, Wednesday 10 am-8 pm, Sunday and holidays 10 am-2:30 pm. 4 euros adults, free on the first Sunday of each month.

### **Museu d'Historia de la Ciutat**

Placa de Pau Vila 3 (Palau de Mar)  
Barcelona, Spain 8002

**Phone:** 93-256-2100

<http://www.museuhistoria.bcn.es>

This institution is actually a collection of museums. The main branch incorporates the ensemble of monumental buildings on Placa del Rei. The underground levels there reveal fascinating subterranean layers of the city's ancient history, including some remains from the Roman colony Barcino. An entire ancient street and a fourth-century Christian basilica are also preserved just where they were discovered during city excavations in the 1930s. Exhibits on the upper floors chart later developments in Barcelona.

The different spaces have different opening times but they are generally Tuesday-Saturday 10 am-7 pm (until 8 pm April-September), Sunday and holidays 10 am-8 pm. 7 euros adults, free after 3 pm on Sunday.

### **Museu Europeu d'Art Modern**

Barra de Ferro 5  
Barcelona, Spain

**Phone:** 93-319-5693

<http://meam.es>

The collection in this lovely restored 18th-century neoclassical palace focuses on figurative art in paintings and sculpture from the 19th century to the present day.

Daily except Monday 10 am-7 pm. 7 euros adults.

### **Museu Frederic Mares**

5 Placa de Sant Iu  
Barcelona, Spain

**Phone:** 93-310-5800

<http://www.museumares.bcn.es>

This museum was created around the collections donated to the city by sculptor Frederic Mares in 1946. He continued adding to the collection throughout his lifetime. In addition to an extensive Hispanic sculpture collection and many of Mares' own works, the museum also contains photographs, fans, pipes, jewelry, clocks, toys, pharmacy bottles, gargoyles, opera glasses and other ephemera that give an insight into 19th-century customs and lifestyles.

Tuesday-Saturday 10 am-7 pm, Sunday 11 am-8 pm. Admission is 4.20 euros. Free on Wednesday 3-7 pm and on the first Sunday of each month.

## Museu Maritim de Barcelona

Avinguda de les Drassanes s/n  
Barcelona, Spain

**Phone:** 93-342-9920

<http://www.mmb.cat>

This is one of Barcelona's most popular museums, housed in the breathtaking Drassanes (Royal Shipyards), which date from the 1200s. Original and replica boats showing the changes in sea travel over the centuries and photographs depicting the shoreline of Barceloneta as a turn-of-century fishing village are just a few of the interesting items on display.

Daily 10 am-8 pm. General admission 5 euros adults, free after 3 pm on Sunday.

## Museu Monestir de Pedralbes

Baixada del Monestir 9 (Metro: Reina Elisenda or Palau Reial)  
Barcelona, Spain

**Phone:** 93-256-3434

<http://www.bcn.cat/monestirpedralbes>

The Royal Monastery of Santa Maria de Pedralbes was founded in 1326 and is a splendid example of Gothic forms and structures. In addition to the church, visit the three-story cloister and the Chapel of Sant Miquel with its 14th-century murals. The infirmary, vaulted refectory, kitchen, and everyday objects and furniture give you the feel of what life used to be like in a convent. In fact, part of the building is still home to a community of nuns.

The church can be visited for free daily 11 am-1 pm. Hours for the other buildings are Tuesday-Friday 10 am-5 pm, Saturday 10 am-7 pm, Sunday 10 am-8 pm April-September; Tuesday-Friday 10 am-2 pm, Saturday and Sunday 10 am-5 pm October-March. Last entry 30 minutes before closing. 7 euros adults (free for a few hours on Sunday afternoon).

## Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya

Palau Nacional  
Barcelona, Spain

**Phone:** 93-622-0376

<http://www.mnac.cat>

Located in the Palau Nacional (Montjuic), this museum (often referred to as MNAC) includes one of the world's most important collections of Romanesque art, including delicate murals rescued from the walls of tiny mountain churches in Catalonia. It also exhibits Gothic, Renaissance and baroque works. The interior of the palace, built for the International Exhibition of 1929, was partially remodeled by Italian architect Gae Aulenti in the early 1990s. The museum's front steps (or the rooftop for 3 euros) offer a spectacular view of the city.

Tuesday-Saturday 10 am-6 pm in winter and 10 am-8 pm in summer; Sunday and holidays 10 am-3 pm. 12 euros adults, free for children younger than 16 (valid for two days within a month); audio guide 3.50 euros each. Temporary exhibitions require a separate fee; combined tickets for permanent and temporary exhibits available. Free on the first Sunday of each month.

## Museu Picasso

Montcada 15-23  
Barcelona, Spain 8003

**Phone:** 93-256-3000

<http://www.museupicasso.bcn.cat>

The museum's focus is on the early formative years of Pablo Picasso (1895-1904), many of which were spent in Barcelona. The collection includes drawings, representational and cubist paintings, and works from the artist's Blue and Pink Periods, housed in five adjacent medieval palaces. One of the highlights is the collection of interpretations that Picasso did of Velazquez's *Las Meninas*.

Daily except Monday 10 am-8 pm. 11 euros adults, 6 euros for temporary exhibits. Free on the first Sunday of every month and every Sunday after 3 pm. Tickets can be purchased in advance online, which saves time waiting in lines during the summer.

## Poble Espanyol

Avinguda Francesc Ferrer i Guardia 13  
Barcelona, Spain 8004

**Phone:** 93-508-6300

<http://www.poble-espanyol.com>

The name translates to Spanish Village. Built for the International Exhibition of 1929, it is an open-air museum that includes replicas (often on a smaller scale) of buildings, squares and bridges found throughout the country. It was revamped for the 1992 Olympics and turned into a local nightlife hot spot with numerous bars and restaurants. It's still open in the daytime, however, and has an arts-and-crafts center with more than 40 workshops where you can view and purchase traditional goods. Numerous children's activities and concerts are also held frequently on-site.

Monday 9 am-8 pm, Tuesday-Thursday and Sunday 9 am-midnight, Friday 9 am-3 pm, Saturday 9 am-4 pm. 12 euros adults, 7 euros children.

## Neighborhoods & Districts

### Barri Gotic

The Gothic Quarter is the oldest portion of Barcelona, a warren of narrow streets on the northeast side of La Rambla. It was originally the site of the Roman settlement and the area later encompassed by the medieval walls. Now it's one of the city's most interesting districts, packed with shops, bars and restaurants, many of them occupying centuries-old buildings. Sights of note include the cathedral, a number of museums and surviving bits of Roman walls. The nerve center of the old city, Placa Sant Jaume, goes back to Roman times, when it formed the intersection of the north-south and east-west roads. It's an excellent starting point from which to explore the rest of the Gothic Quarter.

Farther to the east you'll find the La Ribera and El Born areas. Several of the handsome old mansions there now house museums, including the Museu Picasso. Nestled between Parc de la Ciutadella and Via Laietana, El Born offers an eclectic mix of designer fashion outlets and small artisan shops for you to explore during the day, and plenty of bars, restaurants, nightclubs and terraces to sample at night.



## Eixample

This area of the city was first built in the mid-1800s after the medieval walls were demolished and Barcelona was allowed to expand. The Eixample (pronounced *eye-SHAAM-pla*) was laid out according to a plan drawn up by top local planner Ildefons Cerda and is made up of a uniform grid of avenues with the corners of each block "flattened" or pushed in to make a hexagon out of a square—it's easy to identify on maps. The Eixample quickly became a fashionable residential and shopping area (which it remains). It's the prime area in which to view the buildings of the *modernisme* movement. At the western edge of the Eixample is the Parc Joan Miro with the colorful totemic landmark of Miro's *Woman and Bird* rising from a small lake. It's especially pretty when lit up at night.

## El Raval

On the opposite side of La Rambla from the Barri Gotic, El Raval once had a reputation as a famous red-light district (also known as the Barrio Chino, or Barri Xino), and although today street walkers still parade, there are far fewer of them than before. The area has undergone extensive revamping, making it a fascinating mixture of the old and the ultramodern. One of Gaudi's buildings, the Palau Guell, lies just a half block off La Rambla, although only part of it is open. Many fashionable bars and restaurants are also in the area, attracting a young, bohemian crowd, and its range of down-to-earth eating spots is the most ethnically varied in the whole city. The neighborhood can still be a bit dicey at times, however, so be cautious if visiting after dark.

## Gracia

Stroll up the Passeig de Gracia, cross the Diagonal, and you're in Gracia on the northern edge of Eixample, formerly a town in its own right before it was swallowed by Barcelona's growth. Turn into the warren of narrow streets and enjoy a more private Barcelona with an atmosphere of its own. The district is characterized by independent design, and art and cinema movements, and is home to myriad specialist shops, trendy bars and restaurants. You can find old-fashioned herbalists and junk shops as well as stylishly renovated stores, superb delicatessens and two municipal food markets. Placa del Sol and Placa Rius i Taulet are the main squares where you can enjoy a drink on a cafe terrace. The nightlife, which attracts people from all over town, centers on Carrer Verdi. The area is also famous for its spectacular street parties and celebrations in August.

## Montjuic

You'll need at least a full day to enjoy all that this landmark hill, the largest green area in the city, has to offer. It has a prominent castle, museums, various parks and botanical gardens, an amusement park, and the stadium and other facilities used in the 1992 Olympic Games as well as Poble Espanyol, a village that includes facsimiles of buildings from throughout Spain. Numerous ways of getting up the hill include escalators, buses, cable cars and a funicular train.

## Port Vell

The old port area, which surrounds the point where La Rambla meets the sea, doesn't appear old: It has been the site of renovation in recent decades. The statue of Columbus at the foot of La Rambla makes a convenient starting point for exploring this area. (Take the small elevator to the top to get your surroundings in perspective.) Nearby, in the old royal shipyard building, is the Museu Maritim de Barcelona. To the northeast is La Barceloneta, the traditional fishermen's district and home to the best seafood restaurants in town. For practical purposes, La Barceloneta can be thought of as part of Port Vell, although it's really a totally different district with a character all its own.

## Vila Olimpica

The area of the Olympic Village was once a wasteland of derelict factories, railroad tracks and warehouses, vestiges of its former glory days as a thriving industrial zone. Today, it's a stylish residential district. With its fountains and gardens, shopping malls and cinema complexes, it is also a popular leisure space for locals and visitors alike. It includes 2.5 mi/4 km of beach and the Port Olympic, packed with restaurants, bars and discos. On Sunday, it seems as if the whole of Barcelona is down in the Vila Olimpica area; the restaurants are crammed then, so if you can see it on another day, you'll enjoy a quieter and more relaxing visit.

## Parks & Gardens

### Parc de Cervantes

Avinguda Diagonal 706  
Barcelona, Spain 8034

On the edge of the city and stretching to the foothills, this luxuriant park is a favorite haunt of bikers and joggers. It has children's play areas, a pine-shaded picnic area and some vintage olive trees. The rose garden has more than 10,000 plants, which flower at different times April-November.

Open daily 10 am-6 pm December-February, 10 am-7 pm March and November, 10 am-8 pm April and October, 10 am-9 pm May-September.

### Parc de la Ciutadella

Passeig Pujades and Passeig Picasso  
Barcelona, Spain

Charmingly old-fashioned in its geometrical layout, the Parc Ciutadella is leafy and restful, yet filled with surprises such as the flamboyant waterfall and fountain (whose designer was assisted by the student Antoni Gaudi), the sculpture of the dainty *Lady With the Umbrella* by Roig i Sole, rare trees and a boating lake (boat rental is 6 euros). Originally a citadel built in 1715 to keep Barcelona in line after the War of the Spanish Succession, this area was handed over to the city in 1869 and turned into a park. Barcelona started on its cosmopolitan journey when the park was chosen as the site for the Universal Exhibition of 1888, the gateway to which was the Arc de Triomf (Triumphal Arch). A cafe-restaurant built for the Exhibition is now the Zoology Museum. Still standing are the Hivernacle (conservatory) with a cafeteria, the shady Umbracle (tropical hothouse) and the geology museum. The southeast end of the park is taken up by the zoo.

Daily 8 am-6 pm.

### Park Guell

Olot 7  
Barcelona, Spain 8024

**Phone:** 93-219-3811

[http://www.casamuseugaudi.org/cm-eng/docs\\_instit/parkguell.php](http://www.casamuseugaudi.org/cm-eng/docs_instit/parkguell.php)

Gaudi's dreamland creation and now a UNESCO World Heritage site, Park Guell has been painstakingly restored and is a must-see. It was originally planned as a housing development, but only a few buildings were completed, including the gingerbread gatehouse. Some of Barcelona's most famous visual symbols are in the park: Gaudi's mosaic dragon (or lizard), the monumental plaza with its colorful serpentine bench made in *trencadis* (interwoven fragments of multicolored ceramic) and fabulous views of the city. The park stretches up the hill, with twisting paths through the woods.

Monumental Plaza open daily 8 am-9:30 pm May-October, 8 am-8 pm end of March to end of April, 8:30 am-6 pm end of October to early March. Last entry 30 minutes before closing. Free admission to the park, monument section is 8 euros adults, 5.50 euros adults for the Gaudi House-Museum, where the architect spent the last 20 years of his life (museum closes earlier than the park).

## Recreation

The most popular recreation area in Barcelona is the seafront, especially near Vila Olimpica. Walkers, joggers, bicyclists and in-line skaters all make use of the area, where they can be mobile without the worries of automobile traffic. The city's beaches are there, too, extending from Barceloneta eastward. What's more, Port Olympic at Vila Olimpica offers opportunities for sailing and other watersports.

## Nightlife

Barcelona has always had a reputation as a party town. It's still true, though the emphasis now has more to do with trendy designer bars than seedy sailor dives. The rougher places are still there, though, especially in earthy districts such as Raval, should you wish to find them. Like other parts of Spain, Barcelona's club scene hits its peak in the wee hours and doesn't end till morning—many dance venues remain open until 5 am, though quieter bars close around 1 or 2 am.

Try to set aside one evening for a stroll through the Barri Gotic, in particular the El Born area, and see what bars and bodegas the twisting streets lead you to. In warm weather, you'll find that lots of outdoor plazas become extensions of the surrounding bars, and performers such as jugglers and musicians often stop by to put on a quick show. Those looking for a little more excitement will find the clubs of Port Vell and Vila Olimpica not too far away. The gay crowd might enjoy the bars in Eixample.

There are more options outside the city center. In general terms, the higher up and farther away from the sea you go, the more upmarket the scene. A young, affluent crowd hangs out in bars and clubs around Santalo and Placa Francesc Macia. Tibidabo, with its wonderful views of the city, offers an incomparably elegant setting.

Regardless of where you end up going, be sure to dress up if you're going to the clubs. Men should wear a button-up shirt with collar and nice shoes or they will be turned away.

## Shopping

The industrious Catalans have often been dubbed a nation of shopkeepers, and Barcelona does have a staggering number of shops of every kind and in every neighborhood. Barri Gotic and El Raval, in particular, have many quirky little shops with long family traditions, struggling for survival in the face of malls and big-name merchants. A little shopping time spent around Placa Catalunya will introduce you to El Corte Ingles department store and El Triangle shopping mall.

Large or small, many of the city's merchants play to the city's love of design. In clothes, look for Catalan designers such as Antonio Miro and Adolfo Dominguez, and large stores such as Mango, Zara and Desigual (which is less expensive than in other European cities). Leather shoes, bags, wallets and belts can be particularly stunning and a good value. Some of the best choices are the Spanish brands: Loewe, Yanko, Farrutx and Camper. Even if you never set foot in a store, you'll get to appreciate the city's sense of style by strolling past elaborate window displays.

Food and drink are also highly prized in Barcelona and make good souvenirs. Stock up on olives and cheese (ask to have it vacuum packed or *sous vide* for overseas travel) at La Boqueria market on La

Rambla, cold-pressed virgin olive oil in OroLiquido, and Spanish wine at a large grocer such as Colmado Quilez. If you don't mind carting (or shipping) heavy parcels home, treat yourself to an earthenware cooking pot, a cast iron *plantxa* or the more portable ceramic tapas dishes and metal paella pans.

To guide you through this cornucopia, the city has mapped out the 3-mi-/5-km-long Shopping Line (<http://www.shoppinglinebarcelonasl.com>), which links different shopping areas that also happen to be dotted with many of the most interesting tourist sights. The comfortable TombBus links the areas, running from Placa Catalunya to El Corte Ingles store at the top end of the Diagonal and back. The Barcelona Card transportation pass will give you a discount at a number of shops on the route: They're identified by the Shopping Line logo—four colored diamonds in a white circle within a blue circle.

**Shopping Hours:** Generally, Monday-Saturday 9 or 10 am to 1:30 or 2 pm and 4:30 or 5 pm to 7:30-9 pm. Neighborhood food stores and bakeries generally open at the crack of dawn, have a long break at lunch and are open again 5-9 pm. The department stores, shopping malls and many of the larger stores on the main shopping streets stay open at lunchtime and until 10 pm. In summer, many shops close on Saturday afternoon. Sunday opening is strictly regulated: The big stores and malls are allowed to open on eight Sundays each year, including the four Sundays before Christmas. Otherwise, you'll mostly find only convenience stores and gift shops open on Sunday.

## Department Stores

### El Corte Ingles

Placa Catalunya 14  
Barcelona, Spain 8002

**Phone:** 901-122-122

<http://www.elcorteingles.es>

Spain's most emblematic department store, where you can find anything and everything. The huge branch in Placa Catalunya is the most convenient for Barcelona visitors. It can get uncomfortably crowded, but tired shoppers can take a breather and enjoy the view from the rooftop cafeteria. Around the corner of Portal de l'Angel is a branch specializing in sports and leisure.

Monday-Saturday 9:30 am-9:30 pm.

## Markets

### Els Encants Vells

Av. Meridiana 69 (Metro: Glories)  
Barcelona, Spain

A wondrous assortment of junk and jumble awaits at Barcelona's well-loved flea market. Selection and prices are best early in the morning.

Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday 9 am-8 pm (although the main activity occurs until 3 pm).

### La Boqueria

La Rambla 91  
Barcelona, Spain 8002

**Phone:** 93-318-2017

<http://www.boqueria.info>

Also known as Mercat de Sant Josep, this is the oldest and most marvelous of Barcelona's 40 bustling municipal food markets. It absolutely should not be missed, and with its location just off La Rambla, it's not likely you'd accidentally pass by. Loaded with stall after stall of fresh fruit, fish, meat and vegetables, it's full of bright colors and exotic smells. Of particular interest are the egg stall, with not only chicken but other unique types of eggs, and the stalls with chorizo, jamon iberico and *butifarra* sausages. Seek out the Pinotxo bar for a breakfast of tasty coffee and churros. Great tapas are served all day in the many bars inside.

Monday-Saturday 8:30 am-8:30 pm (Monday is not the best day to visit because a large number of stalls are closed).

## **Mercat de Sant Antoni**

Carrer Comte d'Urgell 1  
Barcelona, Spain

**Phone:** 93-426-3521

<http://www.mercatdesantantoni.com>

If the more famous Boqueria market is too bustling for your taste, this local indoor food market would be a good alternative. However, it is closed for renovations until the end of 2015.

## **Shopping Areas**

### **Diagonal Mar Centre Comercial**

Avinguda Diagonal 3 (Metro: El Maresme/Forum)  
Barcelona, Spain

**Phone:** 90-253-0300

<http://www.diagonalmarcentre.es>

If you happen to be in the Forum area of Sant Marti, visit this new indoor shopping center containing many familiar brands such as United Colors of Benetton, Desigual and Intimissimi. There are also places to grab a snack, as well as a post office and cinema.

Open Monday-Saturday 10 am-10 pm.

### **El Triangle**

Placa Catalunya 1-4  
Barcelona, Spain 8002

**Phone:** 93-318-0108

<http://www.eltriangle.es>

A smart mall in Placa Catalunya, with a combination of small shops and big-name stores such as Sephora, Habitat and FNAC.

Monday-Saturday 10 am-10 pm.

### **Las Arenas**

Gran Via de les Corts Catalans 373-385 (Metro: Tarragona)  
Barcelona, Spain

**Phone:** 93-289-024

<http://www.arenasdebarcelona.com>

Modern shopping mall built into a historic bullfighting ring still visible from the outside; it's worth the visit just for the unique experience. Inside the shops vary, from cosmetics to clothing to food stores and include restaurants, a movie theater and spa.

Open daily 10 am-10 pm.

## L'illa

Ave. Diagonal 557  
Barcelona, Spain 8014

**Phone:** 93-444-0000

<http://www.lilla.com>

Housed in the unmistakable white building known as the Recumbent Skyscraper, this elegant and airy commercial center has numerous fashion shops and boutiques, a food market, an FNAC department store, lots of superb little stalls, coffee bars, eateries and a huge branch of the Caprabo supermarket.

Monday-Saturday 10 am-9:30 pm.

## Dining

### Dining Overview

Catalan cuisine resembles that of other Mediterranean countries and makes use of nuts, garlic, olive oil, tomatoes and herbs. Truly traditional Catalan restaurants often feature many rich sauces and protein-centric dishes. One of the simplest and yet most delicious dishes (the one Catalans particularly yearn for when abroad) is *pa amb tomaquet*: a large slice of fresh country bread (toasted or not) rubbed with tomato and drizzled with virgin olive oil. It may be topped with Iberian ham, cheese and anchovies or served along with meat, chicken or fish *a la brasa* (cooked over a charcoal fire).

Other local specialties include *esqueixada* (a salad of raw salt cod with onions and peppers), *espinacs a la catalana* (spinach sauteed with raisins and pine nuts) and *bacalla a la llauna* (salt cod with tomato, garlic and parsley). If you have a sweet tooth, *crema catalana* (a cinnamon- and citrus-flavored custard) is a must for dessert.

Many restaurants advertise as serving *cuina de mercat* or *cocina de mercado*, meaning they use whatever is in season at the local market: Freshness is of the essence. There are restaurants serving dishes from other regions of Spain, as well, and places specializing in the cuisine of other countries are also common.

Tapas, one of the first items people visiting Spain want to try, are traditionally from Andalusia, in the most southern part of Spain and are not local to Barcelona. However, you will find some amazing places to try tapas in Barcelona.

Paella is a traditional Valencian dish that you can find all over Barcelona. For a more authentic dish, go for the *fideua*, which is a local dish much like paella but made with pasta.

You can eat well anywhere in the city, although many of the most emblematic restaurants are clustered in the Barri Gotic and the Raval, with Barceloneta and the Olympic port being a must for seafood and the sheer pleasure of eating outdoors. Eixample and Sant Gervasi are often the places for the more modern and new-style Catalan cuisine, and Gracia is full of eating places, many of them very inexpensive and



popular with students and younger visitors. Poble Sec is turning into a gastronomic theme park, thanks to the multiple restaurants owned by Ferran and Albert Adria of the famed three-Michelin-starred El Bulli. In fact, many restaurants that have opened in Barcelona over the past few years are headed by chefs that had cooked at El Bulli and created their own spaces after its closure in 2011.

Like most Europeans, the Catalans begin their day with a light breakfast that may include *bollos* (rolls), *melindros* (lady fingers) and pastries. Lunch is served about 1:30 pm at the very earliest, with peak time being 2-4 pm. *Berenar* or *merienda* is an afternoon snack taken at around 4 or 5 pm to get you through to a late dinner, which isn't served until 9 pm or later. The best bargains are available at lunch, when most restaurants offer the *menu del dia* or set lunch. Even the most basic (for little more than 10 euros) offer a choice of starter course, main course of meat or fish and dessert, plus a drink.

Expect to pay within these general guidelines for a dinner for one, not including drinks, tax or tip: \$ = less than 20 euros; \$\$ = 21 euros-40 euros; \$\$\$ = 41 euros-70 euros; \$\$\$\$ = more than 70 euros.

## Local & Regional

### ABaC

Ave. Tibidabo 1  
Barcelona, Spain 8003

**Phone:** 93-319-6600

<http://www.abacbarcelona.com>

A contemporary classic that is part of the Hotel ABaC, this restaurant occupies a spacious and stylish dining room. Its talented young chef Jordi Cruz has gained it two Michelin stars.

Tuesday-Saturday for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$\$ . Most major credit cards.

### Aqua

Passeig Maritim de la Barceloneta 30  
Barcelona, Spain

**Phone:** 93-225-1272

<http://www.grupotragaluz.com/restaurantes/agua>

Refined Spanish-Mediterranean cuisine served in a great location right on the beach. Beautiful people congregate on the terrace, but you can also enjoy the view through a large window from the cozy, tastefully designed interior.

Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$ . Most major credit cards.

### Butipa

Ramelleres 16  
Barcelona, Spain

<http://www.butipa.cat>

Local street-food vendor, specializing in the delicious local sausage called *butifarra* made in nearby Vic. Not only are these sausages delicious, they are also inexpensive and quick for those on the go. Some casual indoor seating is available, and there are vegetarian options. Enjoy a Moritz beer or local soda with your meal. Small space but worth a visit.

\$. No credit cards.

## Cafe de L'Academia

Carrer Lledo 1  
Barcelona, Spain

Charming restaurant located on the Placa Sant Just, one of the most beautiful squares in Barcelona, in a Gothic building dating from the 15th century (not to mention the lovely terrace in summer). The Catalan food, using only the freshest ingredients, is excellent and surprisingly affordable: It's one of the best bets in Barcelona for lunch, which can cost as little as 15 euros. Try the eggplant terrine with goat cheese followed by codfish au gratin.

Monday-Friday for lunch and dinner. Reservations highly recommended. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Cal Pep

Carrer Placa De las Ollas 8  
Barcelona, Spain

**Phone:** 93-310-7961

<http://www.calpep.com>

One of the best culinary shows in town. Seafood tapas and fresh seasonal fish dishes are prepared in an open kitchen in full view of diners. The cavelike interior enhances the theatrical atmosphere.

Monday for dinner only, Tuesday-Friday for lunch and dinner, Saturday for lunch only. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Casa Calvet

Carrer de Casp 48  
Barcelona, Spain

**Phone:** 93-412-4012

<http://www.casacalvet.es>

Dine on excellent Mediterranean food with Asian touches, served in a former office building designed by Antoni Gaudi. Try the duck liver with oranges, and rosemary ice cream for dessert. Wonderful game dishes in the fall.

Open Monday-Saturday for lunch and dinner, closed Monday in June, July and August. Reservations required. \$\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## El Gran Cafe

Carrer d' Avinyo 9  
Barcelona, Spain

**Phone:** 93-318-7986

<http://cacheirorestaurants.com/gran-cafe>

One of the oldest restaurants in Barcelona. It features old-fashioned decor and traditional Catalan dishes, but also boasts a selection of more innovative dishes. With its warm, welcoming atmosphere and round tables, it's a great place for a night out with friends or family.

Daily for lunch and dinner. \$-\$\$\$.

## Els Quatre Gats

Montsio 3  
Barcelona, Spain

**Phone:** 93-302-4140

<http://www.4gats.com>

Founded in 1897, The Four Cats is one of Barcelona's most famous historic restaurants. It maintains the traditional look designed by Modernist architect Puig i Cadafalch that attracted such famous personalities as Pablo Picasso and Antoni Gaudi in their day. Indeed, Picasso hung many of his earliest paintings on the restaurant's walls and designed the first menu. We recommend the 16-euro menu for lunch (Monday-Friday), which includes a choice of two courses and dessert. Despite the tourist crowd, the atmosphere is still interesting, although the food is rather average.

Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Embat

Mallorca 304  
Barcelona, Spain

**Phone:** 93-458-0855

<http://www.restaurantembat.es>

This small, chef-owned Catalan restaurant is one of the "bistronomics" that came into fashion after the 2008 financial crisis. A desire to continue serving great food, but at affordable prices, became the fashion ... and thank goodness. Expect a simple interior, friendly service and fresh ingredients.

Tuesday-Thursday for lunch, Friday-Saturday for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$.

## Freixa Tradicio

Sant Elies 22  
Barcelona, Spain

**Phone:** 93-209-7559

<http://www.freixatradicio.com/en>

Classic Catalan cuisine is served in this upscale, family-owned restaurant. Since the 1980s, chef Freixa has been making some of the finest local dishes in the Sant Gervasi district of Barcelona. Great service and attention to detail will greet you when you arrive to taste dishes such as the Catalan cannelloni or Crema Catalana. The menu is divided by region in Catalonia, which gives you an even better idea of the cultural differences within the region.

Reservations recommended. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Gresca

Calle Provenca 230  
Barcelona, Spain

**Phone:** 93-451-6193

<http://www.gresca.net>

Not to be missed, as this small, family-owned place could be the best value for the money if you are interested in a Catalan tasting menu in Barcelona for less than 40 euros. Chef Raphael Pena creates unique takes using the freshest local products and some very modern cooking techniques.

Open Monday-Friday for lunch and dinner, Saturday for dinner only. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Hisop

Passatge Marimon 9  
Barcelona, Spain

**Phone:** 93-241-3233

<http://www.hisop.net>

One of the great chefs of Barcelona, Oriol Ivern creates unique and memorable plates with touches of molecular gastronomy and local, seasonal produce. It's perhaps more avant-garde than other restaurants of similar pricing—don't let the simple dining room deceive you. A wine-tasting menu is offered to pair with the tasting menu, but unless you are a strong drinker you might find it to be too much.

Open Monday-Friday for lunch and dinner, Saturday for dinner only. Reservations required. \$\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Jaume de Provenca

Provenca 88  
Barcelona, Spain

**Phone:** 93-430-0029

<http://www.jaumeprovenza.com>

Chef Jaume Bargues enjoys well-earned prestige for the wonderfully original variations on the traditional Catalan cuisine he has dreamed up.

Tuesday-Saturday for lunch and dinner, Sunday for dinner. Reservations required. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## La Camarga

Aribau 117  
Barcelona, Spain

**Phone:** 93-323-6655

<http://www.laprovenza.com/eng/la-camarga/la-camarga.shtml>

This restaurant features imaginative and delicious Mediterranean cooking based particularly on fresh vegetables and fish, in addition to some excellent rice dishes.

Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$. MasterCard or Visa preferred.

## L'Antic Forn

Villarroel 182  
Barcelona, Spain

**Phone:** 93-430-0826

<http://www.lanticfornvillarroel.com>

A traditional and cozy Catalan restaurant that focuses on market-fresh and seasonal ingredients and grilled meats. Set menus for lunch (11.50 euros) and dinner (19 euros). Definitely try the *calcots* (a type of scallion served with a sauce) when it's in season.

Monday-Wednesday for lunch, Thursday-Saturday for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

### **Mam i Teca**

Lluna 4, El Raval  
Barcelona, Spain

If you're looking for a light meal or just prefer to nibble the night away in a languorous setting, look no further than this cozy tapas bar, with a handful of tables and soft jazz music. Traditional tapas are treated with loving care by the resident foodies who source top-quality Spanish ingredients such as air-cured tuna, fresh anchovies and a variety of cheeses to create Catalan specialties. But the daily specials are inspired.

Monday and Wednesday-Friday for lunch and dinner, Saturday for dinner only. \$\$.

### **Restaurant Gaig**

Corsega 200 (at the corner of Aribau)  
Barcelona, Spain

**Phone:** 93-429-1017

<http://www.restaurantgaig.com>

Multiple generations of the Gaig family have nurtured this business for more than a century, and a distinct spirit of innovation and sound service on the part of the current husband-and-wife team keeps it going. Refined Catalan dishes are served in a sophisticated contemporary setting.

Sunday for lunch only, Tuesday-Saturday for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

### **Rincon de Aragon**

Carme 28 (near the La Boqueria market)  
Barcelona, Spain

With all the seafood places in town, you may get a craving for some good meat, and this is the place to go. Both the cooking and the decor suggest the simplicity of the mountain regions near the Aragonese town of Teruel, known throughout Spain for its delicious rustic cuisine. Simple dishes, such as the roast lamb, are cooked perfectly. Expect the best beef, pork and lamb in Barcelona.

Wednesday-Sunday for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

### **Sauc**

Via Laietana 49  
Barcelona, Spain

**Phone:** 93-341-5050

<http://www.saucrestaurant.com>

Located in the Ohla Hotel at Urquinona, Sauc is a modern, Michelin twist on classic Catalan cuisine by chef Xavier Franco. Plating and service are exquisite, the produce is seasonal and the sauces are rich. Portions are rather large, if you are ordering a la carte. Great service and wine list. During the summer, don't miss the rooftop bar and views before or after eating.

Daily for lunch and dinner, with special lunch menus Monday-Friday. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Semproniana

Rossello 148  
Barcelona, Spain

**Phone:** 93-453-1820

<http://www.semproniana.net>

Located in a former printing office, this restaurant affords a welcome break from style and design with its nonmatching furniture, ceramic plates and other flea-market finds. But the food is some of the most inventive and delicious you will find in the city for such reasonable prices; servings come in various sizes. Favorites include codfish moussaka, partridges with cinnamon sauce, and *civet* of hare with jam. The star of the dessert menu is the *delirium tremens*, an understandably small slice of pure chocolate bliss.

Tuesday-Saturday for lunch and dinner, Sunday and Monday for lunch only. Reservations required. \$\$\$. MasterCard and Visa only.

## Taktika Berri

Carrer de Valencia 169  
Barcelona, Spain

**Phone:** 93-453-4759

<http://taktika-berri.vipgourmet.com>

This is one of the best and most popular tapas bars in Barcelona, so reservations are highly recommended. Since the food is Basque, tapas there are called *pintxos* and are just delicious. Full meals are excellent, too, with an emphasis on fresh seafood. Do not expect a menu—the waiter will tell you what's available. The light, fruity Basque wines go very well with the food.

Open Monday-Friday for lunch and dinner, Saturday for lunch only. Reservations recommended. \$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Tragaluz

Passaje de la Concepcio 5  
Barcelona, Spain 8008

**Phone:** 93-487-0621

<http://www.grupotragaluz.com/restaurantes/tragaluz>

Two restaurants in one: Japanese food on the first floor and Mediterranean cuisine on the second floor, where fresh ingredients are served in endlessly imaginative combinations such as pork with figs or steamed hake with applesauce. This restaurant has won design awards as well, and is one of Barcelona's most fashionable eating places (don't miss the restrooms by Olympic-design darling Mariscal).

Daily for lunch and dinner (cocktail bar open daily 6 pm-2 am). Reservations recommended. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.



## Seafood

### Els Pescadors

Placa Prim 1, Poble Nou  
Barcelona, Spain

**Phone:** 93-225-2018

<http://www.elspescadors.com>

This is one of the best places in town to eat fresh fish. The old-style tavern decor, relaxed atmosphere and high-quality wine list enhance the experience. During summer months, we recommend sitting on the terrace, an oasis of calm in the bustling city.

Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

### Escriba Xiringuito

Ronda Litoral 42  
Barcelona, Spain 8038

**Phone:** 93-221-0729

<http://www.xiringuitoescriba.com>

This restaurant looks right out over the beach, and staff will drag tables into the sun for you. There's lots of room inside, but the outdoor tables are what's prized: Locals mill on the seafront, aperitif in hand, while waiting for one to open up. It has delicious fish dishes. For an appetizer, don't miss the *pica-pica*, a selection of tapas including crispy fried-vegetable tidbits, sardines and croquettes. Be sure to have dessert; the place belongs to a famous family of chocolatiers who also operate an excellent pastry shop on La Rambla (if you go there, have the hot chocolate).

Daily for lunch and dinner in summer; Monday-Wednesday and Sunday for lunch only, Thursday-Saturday for lunch and dinner in winter. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$\$. Visa and MasterCard only.

### Suquet de l'Almirall

Passeig Joan de Borbo 65  
Barcelona, Spain 8003

**Phone:** 93-221-6233

<http://suquetdelalmirall.com>

One of the most interesting seafood restaurants in town, it beautifully blends tradition and innovation. Enjoy perfectly prepared paella and a host of other rice and fish dishes, or try a selection of half portions of the chef's suggestions. The restaurant has a sunny terrace and enjoys the tangy sea air of Barceloneta. Extensive wine cellar.

Tuesday-Saturday for lunch and dinner, Sunday for lunch only. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$\$. MasterCard and Visa only.

## Security

### Etiquette

Business travelers will find a moderately affluent city (in spite of current economic challenges), in step with the age of high technology but still maintaining many of its traditions.

**Appointments**—You may find it valuable to have a local intermediary who can assist in establishing business appointments. Schedule meetings well in advance. As a visitor, you should be punctual but allow a 15-minute grace period for anyone you are meeting. Catalonians pride themselves on their efficiency and timeliness.

**Personal Introductions**—Handshakes are the typical greeting. Last names with the appropriate Spanish title are used. If your acquaintance has a professional title, you will learn it when introduced; if not, *senor* (male) and *senora* (married female) are appropriate. The title and the person's last name should be used until you are instructed otherwise. Note that it is typical for Spanish people to have two surnames, one from their father and one from their mother. The father's surname will be given first during the introduction, and that's the name that is used to address or speak of the person. Thus, Federico Garcia Lorca would be addressed as "Senor Garcia." Invest in business cards with the information printed in English on one side and Spanish on the other.

**Negotiating**—Business is typically preceded by small talk and pleasantries. Negotiations can be a more extended process than in northern European countries. Companies tend to be hierarchical, so focus on individuals of equal rank or higher. At the same time, the opinion of everyone in the company is important. You are an outsider and must ingratiate yourself. Thus, expect many questions about your business, background and family. Intuition, as much as objective fact, is important in their impression of you, so remain warm and friendly in your demeanor. Anticipate that many of the people important to a decision may not be present at any given meeting.

**Business Entertaining**—Lunch and dinner are the meals most commonly attended by business associates. Lunch is usually the more productive for deal-making, but business discussions should be saved for the very end of the meal, during coffee. Know that dinner is usually served quite late—9 or 10 pm. Spaniards often fill the gap between lunch and dinner by snacking on tapas at cafes and taverns.

**Body Language**—Conversations take place at close quarters, and polite conversational touching may be practiced.

**Gift Giving**—In business contexts, gifts are typically given at the conclusion of successful negotiations. Gifts should be opened and appreciated immediately. Appropriate personal gifts when visiting a home include flowers, wine or chocolate, but avoid chrysanthemums, dahlias or 13 of anything.

**Conversation**—If you don't speak Spanish or Catalan, try to learn at least a few phrases well. In Barcelona, Catalan is spoken on an equal footing with Spanish, and the locals are generally impressed when foreigners take the time to learn the language. Spanish culture is always a good topic, as is Spanish literature, if you are knowledgeable. Sports and travel are good topics, but if you bring up FC Barcelona and soccer in general be prepared for in-depth, detailed conversation.

Be aware that, in many regards, Spain is still a country of regions: Many people will identify more strongly with their local area than with the country as a whole. Catalonians consider themselves members of an autonomous nation, even though many people in the rest of Spain oppose this view—tread lightly with the topic.

## **Personal Safety**

In general, Barcelona is a reasonably safe city to walk around in, even late at night. The biggest danger is petty crime—pickpocketing, bag snatching and assorted scams. Thieves tend to ply their trade in the busy tourist spots such as La Rambla, the Barri Gotic, El Raval, in clubs or bars, down by the port, on the metro and on buses.

A few precautions will help keep you out of trouble: Don't carry money, credit cards or documents in back pockets, breast pockets or backpacks. Leave valuables in a safe-deposit box at your hotel, including your passport (a photocopy of your passport is sufficient to carry with you). Wear purses, bags and cameras slung around your neck or across your chest and keep them close to your body in crowds. Don't set them down at your feet or in adjacent seats in outdoor cafes or on trains and buses—keep your hand on them at all times. Do not leave cell phones or valuables on restaurant tables, especially on terraces.. Never leave any item of value unattended or inside a parked car.

In an emergency, dial 112.

## **Health**

Barcelona's tap water is safe to drink; however, many people prefer bottled water, which is easily available and inexpensive. Sanitation levels are high, but it's wise to exercise caution with tapas that look old and tired. It's also sensible to avoid mayonnaise when the weather's hot.

Spanish law prohibits smoking in all enclosed (and some open) public areas. With its regulations coming into line with most of the rest of Europe, smoking is banned totally in cafes and restaurants, and only allowed in certain specified areas of hotels. Smoking outdoors is banned in children's play areas, around schools and near hospitals. However, smoking at outdoor cafes is quite common, so avoid those areas if you are sensitive to cigarette smoke.

If you travel into the countryside, protect yourself from ticks, which are quite prevalent and can carry disease. There are also poisonous caterpillars that are found between January and April, typically near pine trees. Do not handle them; the hairs have a toxin that is rather painful.

The beaches of Barcelona are safe and typically do not have any waves or currents, but recently there have been an increasing number of shark sightings, so pay attention to the flags and lifeguards. Jellyfish can also be numerous in the warmer months of July and August. Be sure to wear plenty of sunscreen at the beach, or when walking around.

Most doctors have some knowledge of English, and many speak it reasonably well. Hotels will likely arrange to find an English-speaking doctor for you. In an emergency, your best bet is to go to the emergency department of any of the big public hospitals, all of which are open 24 hours a day. Be sure to have your health insurance information available and contact your home health insurance agency as soon as possible to advise them of the situation. While Barcelona is known for a high-quality, inexpensive public health system, you will pay much higher prices unless you are a resident.

Two hospitals in or near the city center are Centre Perecamps, Drassanes 13-15, Raval (phone 93-441-0600), and Hospital Clinic i Provincial, Villarroel 170, Eixample. Phone 93-227-5400. Pediatric emergencies are best handled at Hospital Sant Joan de Deu, Passeig de Sant Joan de Deu 2, Les Corts. Phone 93-600-9783.

If you need a prescription filled on short notice, be aware that every neighborhood has at least one pharmacy open 24 hours a day. Their addresses will be posted in the windows of other pharmacies and will be published in the newspaper under *Farmacias de Guardia*.

For an ambulance, dial 061 or 93-300-2020.

For more information, contact your country's health-advisory agency.

## Disabled Advisory

Barcelona is quite attentive to making the city accessible to locals and visitors alike. Sidewalks are wide and well-maintained, and ramps or elevators have been installed wherever possible. Unfortunately, the Gothic Quarter, Born and Raval have historic buildings that cannot be fitted as easily as the more modern areas. The public transit agency offers a list of all buses and metro stops that are equipped for the disabled at <http://www.tmb.cat/en/transport-accessible>.

You can also request a taxi equipped for wheelchairs. Phone 93-420-8088. <http://www.taxi-amic-adaptat.com>.

Contact Oficina d'Informacio Turistica for additional information about hotels, transportation and services for the disabled. Phone 93-285-3834.

Other good sources of advice and information include <http://www.accessiblebarcelona.com>, a website created by an Englishman, Craig Grimes, who lives in Barcelona and uses a wheelchair (<http://www.craiggrimes.com>), and the Municipal Institute for People with Disabilities, Diagonal 233, Eixample. Phone 93-413-2775.  
[http://w110.bcn.cat/portal/site/InstitutMunicipalDePersonesAmbDiscapacitat?lang=en\\_GB](http://w110.bcn.cat/portal/site/InstitutMunicipalDePersonesAmbDiscapacitat?lang=en_GB).

## Facts

### Dos & Don'ts

Do be careful where you light up. Spain's antismoking law took effect in 2011. The law bans smoking in enclosed public spaces, which include bars, restaurants, hotel lobbies, casinos, clubs, office buildings, open-decked tourist buses and airports. There is also a ban on smoking in outdoor spaces around schools, hospitals and children's playgrounds.

Do keep your eyes open for pickpockets. The areas around La Rambla and La Sagrada Familia are particularly dicey. In addition to light-fingered pickpockets, there are also a number of tricks thieves use to distract and defraud you. To reach into your front pockets, someone may approach you with a magazine or clipboard and practically press it into your chest, talking excitedly all the time. This is just a cover for them entering your pockets and removing your valuables. Leave your valuables in the hotel safe and take only as much cash as you'll need.

Don't confuse Catalan with Spanish or refer to Catalan as a dialect. They are distinct languages representing different cultures.

Don't expect to eat lunch before 1 pm, or dinner before 8 pm at most restaurants. The Catalans eat later than most visitors, so use the time before to try out some tapas like the locals do.

Do dress modestly in the city. Spain is a conservative country, so skimpy tops and too-brief clothing are inappropriate for visits to churches. Catalonians normally dress well and stylishly, but the younger generations are embracing a more relaxed attire. Even then, shorts are tailored and often worn with button-up or polo shirts instead of T-shirts. Bathing suits are only for the beach and will mark you for a tourist if worn elsewhere in the city, as will flip-flops.

Don't litter. You may see some people throwing trash in the street, but most people are tidy and have great respect for public areas.

Don't preface a question or restaurant order with too many polite formalities. Catalans are a friendly people, but when it comes to these situations, they prefer you get straight to the point. A simple *gracias* or *merci* will suffice at the end.

## Geostats

**Passport/Visa Requirements:** Passports are needed by citizens of Australia, the U.S. and Canada and must be valid for at least six months after your trip. A tourist visa is not required for a visit of three months or less. Proof of onward passage and sufficient funds are needed by all. Reconfirm travel document requirements with your carrier before departure.

**Population:** 1,611,822.

**Languages:** Catalan, Spanish.

**Predominant Religions:** Christian (Roman Catholic).

**Time Zone:** 1 hour ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (+1 GMT). Daylight Saving Time is observed from the end of March to the end of October.

**Voltage Requirements:** 220 volts. 50 Hz.

**Telephone Codes:** 34, country code; 93, city code;

## Money

### Currency Exchange

The euro is the local currency. Although foreign currency exchange fees will apply, the best and most convenient way to obtain euros is by withdrawing them from an ATM. There are ATMs in all neighborhoods of the city. La Caixa ATMs, in particular (those with the bright-blue star logo), are very common and found in municipal markets and shopping malls. Most ATMs have instructions in English. Outside of normal banking hours, you gain access to ATMs by inserting your credit or cash card into a slot in the door. You can lock the door from inside.

Most banks will change traveler's checks (preferring denomination in euros), but the commissions vary. Exchanging money is more streamlined at the big banks in the city center than at small local branches. Private exchange bureaus are located in the city center and along La Rambla, and most stay open until midnight or later. Although private bureaus generally don't charge commissions, they invariably give poor rates of exchange, and it's best to avoid them if you can.

## Taxes

The value-added tax in Spain is called by its abbreviation IVA (pronounced *ee-bah*). The basic rate is a whopping 21%. There is a reduced rate of 10% which applies to such things as passenger transport, hotels and restaurants. The lowest rate of 4% applies to such items as basic food and drink (not purchased at a restaurant) and pharmaceuticals.

Visitors to Spain not residing in the European Union are eligible for a reimbursement of the tax that they pay on some merchandise. The procedure can be a bit complicated, but it's basically as follows: The tax refund is valid only for purchases of 90.15 euros (taxes included) or higher. Look for stores displaying a "tax-free" sticker and request an invoice and an IVA refund form detailing the value, tax rate and nature of the purchase. When departing Spain, you will need to have the completed form stamped by customs—do this before you check your luggage, because they may need to see the purchased items. This is important even if you will be returning home from another EU country. If you are departing the EU from another member country, final processing of your refund claim will be handled by that country's customs. You can mail in the stamped form up to three months from the date of purchase and wait to receive your refund in the form of a check in euros, or you can get an immediate cash refund (minus a service charge) at the Tax-Free Shopping refund window, which is usually located in the departure area of airports.

## Tipping

Tipping in Spain is not based on a set formula. A service charge is generally already included in restaurant bills, so wait staff do not expect tips of 15% or 20%. Nevertheless, they will be delighted if you leave something as a way of saying you were pleased with the service. In higher-end restaurants, it is common to leave at least 5%-10%. The norm in bars or cafes would be to leave small change or round up the bill. The same goes for taxi drivers.

If you are staying in a hotel that offers room service or other hotel staff services, be sure to leave a few euros for each request.

## Weather

There is really no best time to visit Barcelona, nor a worst. Thanks to its location on the Mediterranean, it enjoys a mild, pleasant climate year-round. December-February is the chilliest period, although the sun shines most of the time. Even in winter, locals sunbathe on the beaches (in "suntraps" by the seawall) and eat and drink on terraces. The hardier ones even occasionally take a dip; you may not want to follow their example, however, as the water is surprisingly cold.

In January, the average temperature rarely falls below 50 F/10 C and is often considerably higher. Really cold spells are typically few and far between, although recent years have seen an increasing number of cold spells and even some snow.

Summers aren't necessarily hot—the average high in July and August is 78 F/25 C—but the high humidity can make them somewhat uncomfortable. School vacation runs late June to mid-September, and those who are able to do so spend the entire summer away from the city. Most shops and businesses take their annual vacations in August, leaving the city relatively empty.

Rain is infrequent, but can be heavy when it occurs and thunderstorms can be violent.



## What to Wear

It won't take you long to learn that Barcelona is a style-conscious city, so it's a good idea to have some options other than jeans and T-shirts. For the heat of summer, take along the coolest clothes possible. Fashionable trousers and sleeveless tops are fine, but bathing gear is strictly for the beach. Sunscreen and a hat will be useful accessories.

In autumn and spring, it can be chilly in the morning and evening, so take along a jacket and sweater. The winter tends to be relatively mild, but it is wise to take along hats, gloves, scarves and so forth, and to be prepared for very cold spells, which can appear without much warning.

Business visitors should stick to plain, conservative business suits with ties for the men and the equivalent for women: dark colors in winter, lighter in summer. Above all, pack comfortable walking shoes. Loafers are typical footwear for men in the city.

### Marseille, France

## Overview

### Introduction

Marseille, France, is an ancient city that never ceases to arouse passions. This colorful Mediterranean port has seen the arrival of Greek settlers, Roman conquerors, swashbuckling sailors, religious crusaders, tourists looking for sunny skies and immigrants looking for a home in France's melting pot.



The French either love or detest Marseille, but it certainly leaves no one indifferent. Whereas Parisians once snubbed Marseille, they are now heading south on the high-speed TGV train to experience the charm and sun of this thriving cosmopolitan city.

Marseille has rhythm and spice, and its inhabitants are fiercely proud of their city. Though twice as big in area as Paris, it is still thought of as a series of small "villages," each with its own unique history and traditions. The more popular villages include Le Panier, La Belle de Mai, Mazargues, Le Roucas Blanc and Saint Giniez. Some are known for their beaches (La Vieille Chapelle), some for the famous artists who were inspired there (Cezanne and Braque in L'Estaque), still others for their charming ports (Le Vallon des Auffes, La Pointe Rouge, Le Vieux Port).

With its rich history, diverse culture, authentic character, immense pride and warm people, Marseille will have you lowering your anchor to stay awhile.

## Highlights

**Sights**—The Jardin du Pharo-Emile Duclaux for the best views of the Vieux Port; the morning fish market on the Quai des Belges at the Vieux Port; walk or take the tourist train up to the magnificent Basilique Notre Dame de la Garde for views over the whole city.

**Museums**—The MuCEM for exhibits on the culture and people of the Mediterranean region; the Musee Grobet-Labadie for a diverse and eclectic art collection; cutting-edge contemporary art at the Musee d'Art Contemporain; the museums and poetry center at Centre de la Vieille Charite.

**Memorable Meals**—Chez Etienne for the best pizza in town; Le Miramar for elegance and great bouillabaisse; Chez Madie Les Galinettes for delicious dishes such as breast of duck with figs; La Cuisine Au Beurre for *moules* and *frites*.

**Late Night**—The historic Bar de la Marine by the Vieux Port; rubbing shoulders with local artists and musicians at l'Unic; the Pelle-Mele for late-night jazz.

**Walks**—Stroll around the quiet old streets of Le Panier district, where the city first grew up; enjoy seaside walks along the Promenade and Corniche.

**Especially for Kids**—The Prado beaches with loads of kids' activities; a boat trip to the island and Chateau d'If; a visit to one of the city's *santons* (clay models) makers in the Panier district.

## Geography

Marseille, in the region of France called Bouches-du-Rhone (mouth of the Rhone River), owes much of its charm to its agreeable geography. The city itself stretches 43 mi/70 km along the coast, with the mountain ranges of St. Cyr, Etoile and Estaque at its back and dozens of breathtaking sea inlets along its rocky coastline.

To navigate the city, imagine Marseille with the Vieux Port as a starting point. To the immediate north, you'll find the shipyard where cruise ships dock. From the center of the port, the city's main street, La Canebiere, divides the city in two. Heading southeast from near the base of the Canebiere, you'll reach the other main artery, Rue de Rome. Parallel to Rue de Rome is the fashionable and boutique-lined Rue Paradis. Follow Rue Paradis to its end and you'll bump into the Avenue du Prado, which leads to the Promenade and Marseille's wonderful beaches.

## History

Marseille is one of the oldest cities in France. Around 600 BC, the Greeks settled in what they called Massalia, an inlet on the southeast coast of France that was protected from harsh storms and blessed with a direct route to the trade-facilitating Rhone River. Years later, the Greeks invited the Romans to help them fight the Franks, a move that had disastrous results: The power-hungry Romans eventually claimed the town's fleet, treasures and trade. In 1481, the thriving port of Marseille became part of the kingdom of France.

In the 19th century, Marseille prospered, with flour mills, sugar refineries and factories that produced olive oil, soap and cigarettes. Wide boulevards were built, and a system of public transportation was developed. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 further advanced commerce in the Mediterranean, bolstering Marseille's trade networks.

In the 20th century, however, the city's fortunes declined. It was heavily bombed during World War II and suffered losses under the German occupation in 1943. The eight-year closure of the Suez Canal (1967-75) and the loss of French colonies in northern Africa in the 1960s eroded Marseille's economic prosperity.

Things improved in the 1980s, when the city rebuilt itself with a vast, modernized port, a new science and technology business park and the arrival of the high-speed TGV train line from Paris. Marseille has also focused on preserving its historical heritage and on making the most of its sunshine and turquoise waters to promote tourism.

## Port Information

### Location

The busy cruise-ship port in Marseille's East Harbor, at the Place de la Joliette, is officially known as La Port Autonome de Marseille. The modern passenger facilities include public restrooms, a gift shop, a cafe and an information kiosk. Additionally, funding from three cruise lines and the French government has enabled the port to expand its capacity by enlarging and adding a new cruise terminal and parking lot. Phone 04-9139-4000. <http://www.marseille-port.fr>.

Although the port is only a 20-minute walk from the center of Marseille, it's not pedestrian-friendly. To get into town, take the metro (the Joliette station is right outside the terminal), taxis or the shuttle service to and from the Vieux Port.

### Potpourri

In the 1970s, ship remains from the third century were found in Vieux Port.

Many influences from Africa are prevalent in Marseille, as seen in the spice and craft shops that feature items from the continent.

Marseille is known for its bouillabaisse (fish soup), which is always fresh and tasty.

La Marseillaise, the French national anthem, was actually written in Strasbourg.

Marseille has hosted a number of Hollywood blockbusters, including *The French Connection* and *The Bourne Identity*.

Marseille was named European Capital of Culture for 2013 and made the most of this designation with dramatic new museums and enhanced public spaces, highlighting the appeal of this Mediterranean port town to a broader audience.

## See & Do

### Sightseeing

For a unique look at one of the industries that makes Marseille tick, visit the fish market on the Quai des Belges at the Vieux Port before dawn—you'll hear the singing southern accents of the fishermen and witness local commerce at its animated best.

After the market, and with a cafe au lait to embolden your spirits, hike up to Notre Dame de la Garde, one of the highest points in Marseille. Your trek will reward you with the best view of the city.

### Historic Sites

#### Basilique Notre Dame de la Garde

Colline de la Garde (sixth arrondissement)  
Marseille, France

**Phone:** 04-9113-4080

<http://www.notredamedelagarde.com>

The first chapel, built on the site in 1214, was replaced with the existing Romano-Byzantine basilica in 1864. The 36-ft-/11-m-high statue of the Virgin Mary on the bell tower watches over the Vieux Port to protect sailors and fishermen. The basilica, which has the best view of the city and port, is covered with spectacular mosaics inside. It also houses an amazing collection of ex-voto objects (gifts made to the church) with a seagoing theme. A gift shop and restaurant are on-site, and guided tours can be arranged in advance. A clearly marked pathway leading to the Basilica begins at Place Castellane, or a mini tourist train leaves regularly from the Vieux Port.

Basilica open daily 7 am-6:15 pm (till 7:15 pm in the summer). Free entrance.

## Cathedrale de la Major

Place de la Major  
Marseille, France

Built in the 19th century on the site of a 12th-century church, this intricate Romanesque-Byzantine-style cathedral is designed in the shape of a Latin cross. Inside, you'll find multicolor marble altars that were created by Jules Cantini as well as other ornate, religious art. The area surrounding the cathedral has just been renovated, including its broad esplanades and two museums. The location makes it a good starting point for walking tours in Le Panier.

## Chateau d'If

Marseille, France

**Phone:** 04-9159-9611 for the chateau

<http://if.monuments-nationaux.fr>

An island fortress built by Francois I in 1524 to protect Marseille from attack, Chateau d'If was used as a prison from the 17th century. It became famous as the castle setting of Alexandre Dumas' 1844 novel *The Count of Monte Cristo*.

Open daily mid-May to mid-September 9:30 am-6:10 pm, mid-September to mid-May 9 am-4:45 pm. Closed on Monday September-March. Ferries leave from the Quai de la Fraternite in the Vieux Port at 9 and 10:30 am, and 12:10, 1:35, 3 and 4:15 pm. Admission to the fortress is 5.50 euros. Ferry is 10 euros round-trip. .

## St. Victor Abbey

3 Rue de l'Abbaye (seventh arrondissement)  
Marseille, France

**Phone:** 04-9611-2260

<http://www.saintvictor.net>

On the site where St. Victor was martyred in the third century, St. John Cassian was believed to have founded an abbey in the fifth century. The present church, built in the 11th and 14th centuries, stands over an earlier crypt that houses early Christian sarcophagi.

Daily 9 am-7 pm. Entrance to the church is free; admission to the crypt is 2 euros.

## Museums

### Centre de la Vieille Charite

2 Rue de la Charite (second arrondissement)  
Marseille, France

This former hospice, built in the 17th and 18th centuries, was completely renovated and opened in 1986 as a cultural center. Now, it is home to a poetry center and two excellent museums: the Museum of African, Oceanic and Native American Art, and the Museum of Mediterranean Archaeology.

The museums are open daily except Monday 10 am-6 pm. Free access to the courtyard and some galleries. Admission to each museum is 5 euros; admission to special exhibitions is 6 euros-8 euros; permanent collection is free Sunday 10 am-noon.

### Maison des Cinematographie de la Mediterranee

56 Traverse de la Buzine  
Marseille, France

**Phone:** 04-9145-2760

<http://www.labuzine.com>

This "cinema city" is located in the Chateau de la Buzine, which was renovated by the city of Marseille to create a theater and a space for permanent exhibitions. There is a film library, multimedia room, boutique and restaurant on-site.

Open daily 11 am-7 pm April-September, 10 am-6 pm October-March. Admission 7.50 euros adults.

### MuCEM

1 Esplanade du J4  
Marseille, France

**Phone:** 04-8435-1313

<http://www.mucem.org>

Architect Rudy Ricciota designed the building for the Musee des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Mediterranee to resemble the bottom of the ocean, with ramps gradually descending into the exhibition space framed by outside walls of lacy concrete. The varied exhibitions range from Zecchin's moving photos of 1980s Palermo Mafia scenes, to the making of traditional bread wreaths in Greece, to war-torn Mediterranean cities such as Beirut and Sarajevo. A bridge connects the MuCEM's cubist space to more exhibition space in Fort Jean, and yet another connecting bridge leads to the main city promenade.

Open daily except Tuesday 11 am-7 pm June-November, 11 am-6 pm November-April. Admission 8 euros adults. Free the first Sunday of every month.

### Musee Cantini

19 Rue Grignan (sixth arrondissement)  
Marseille, France

**Phone:** 04-9154-7775

<http://www.marseille.fr/siteculture/les-lieux-culturels/musees/le-musee-cantini>

This 17th-century private mansion-museum is celebrated for its collection of art from the first half of the 20th century, including works by Picasso, Matisse, Dufy, Ernst, Leger, Miro and Bacon.

Open daily except Monday 10 am-6 pm. Admission 5 euros adults for permanent collection, 6 euros-8 euros for temporary collection; the permanent collection is free Sunday 10 am-noon.

### **Musee d'Art Contemporain**

69 Ave. de Haifa (eighth arrondissement)  
Marseille, France

**Phone:** 04-9125-0107

[http://www.marseille.fr/siteculture/jsp/site/Portal.jsp?page\\_id=53](http://www.marseille.fr/siteculture/jsp/site/Portal.jsp?page_id=53)

This museum picks up where Musee Cantini leaves off, from the 1960s onward. The works of Nan Goldin, Carsten Holler, Annette Messager and many others are displayed in suitably minimalist surroundings in a purpose-built 1970s building south of the city center.

Open daily except Monday 10 am-6 pm, till 8 pm on Thursday. Admission 5 euros for the permanent collection, 8 euros for temporary exhibitions.

### **Musee des Arts Decoratifs, de la Faience et de la Mode**

134 Ave. Clot Bey (eighth arrondissement)  
Marseille, France

**Phone:** 04-9155-3360

<http://www.marseille.fr/siteculture/les-lieux-culturels/musees/musee-borely>

Housed in Chateau Borely, a historical monument built in 1760, the Museum of Decorative Arts, Ceramics and Fashion opened in 2013. It houses the collections of the former Musee de la Faience, including exceptional collections of ceramics, glass, furniture, art, design and fashion interspersed by contemporary artwork.

Open daily except Monday 10 am-6 pm. 5 euros adults. Free entrance until 1 pm on Sunday.

### **Musee des Beaux-Arts**

Palais Longchamp (fourth arrondissement)  
Marseille, France

**Phone:** 04-9114-5930

[http://www.marseille.fr/siteculture/jsp/site/Portal.jsp?page\\_id=55](http://www.marseille.fr/siteculture/jsp/site/Portal.jsp?page_id=55)

Marseille's first museum and one of the oldest in France, the Musee des Beaux-Arts was established in 1802, in the aftermath of the French Revolution.

Monday-Wednesday and Friday-Sunday 9 am-7 pm, Thursday noon-11 pm. 11 euros.

### **Musee des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Mediterranee**

1 Esplanade du J4  
Marseille, France

<http://www.mucem.org>

The centerpiece of the new MuCEM is a tres moderne building overlooking the sea just outside the historical Vieux Port. The facility, which debuted in 2013, is linked by bridge, over water, to the 17th-century Fort Saint-Jean, now also part of the museum. As the name suggests, MuCEM is meant to focus on the Mediterranean-facing cultures, their connections, their histories and current challenges.

## Musee d'Histoire de Marseille

Centre Bourse, 1 Cours Belsunce (first arrondissement)  
Marseille, France

**Phone:** 04-9190-4222

<http://www.marseille.fr/siteculture/les-lieux-culturels/musees/le-musee-dhistoire-de-marseille>

This fascinating museum was built underneath the Dentre Bourse shopping center to preserve its star exhibit: the remains of a huge third-century Roman sailing ship. The shopping center is currently being renovated, but the museum remains open.

Open daily except Monday 10 am-6 pm. Admission 3 euros for permanent collection; 5 euros for temporary collections; the permanent collection is free Sunday 10 am-noon.

## Musee d'Histoire Naturelle

1 Palais Longchamp (fourth arrondissement)  
Marseille, France

**Phone:** 04-9114-5950

<http://www.museum-marseille.org>

Collections of botany, paleontology, zoology and minerals present 400 million years' worth of natural history. The emphasis is on the local flora and fauna.

Open daily except Monday 10 am-6 pm. 5 euros adults, includes permanent and temporary exhibitions. Free entry on Sunday morning.

## Musee Grobet-Labadie

Boulevard Longchamp (first arrondissement)  
Marseille, France

**Phone:** 04-9162-2182

<http://www.marseille.fr/siteculture/les-lieux-culturels/musees/le-musee-grobetlabadie>

This elegant 19th-century town house and its eclectic collection were donated to the city of Marseille by a wealthy merchant family in 1919. The collection includes 16th-century Flemish and French tapestries, 15th-century religious icons, 18th-century faience from Marseille and baroque musical instruments. It also has paintings by Flemish, French, German and Italian masters.

Open daily except Monday 10 am-6 pm. Admission is 5 euros for permanent collection; 6 euros-8 euros for temporary collection; the permanent collection is free Sunday 10 am-noon.

## Musee Regards de Provence

Palais des Arts 1, Place Carli  
Marseille, France

**Phone:** 04-9617-4040

<http://www.museeregardsdeprovence.com>

This collection of classical, modern and contemporary art is located in the renovated old *station sanitaire* (health station), a building that had been unused for 40 years and was facing destruction. The permanent exhibition includes information about the building's history.

Open daily 10 am-6 pm, Friday until 9 pm.



## Neighborhoods & Districts

### Le Panier

The last vestige of old Marseille, Le Panier is a hillside maze of narrow streets, steep staircases and colorful Mediterranean facades that stretch from the Vieux Port up to the Vieille Charite. The Montee des Accoules is the lively main artery of this multiethnic residential neighborhood, but if you really want to appreciate its character and its architecture, venture into the tiny side streets. The Hotel de Cabre, home of the Alderman Cabre, is the oldest house in Marseille, having been built in 1535. It sits on the corner of Rue de La Bonneteries and La Grande Rue.

## Parks & Gardens

### Jardin du Pharo-Emile Duclaux

Boulevard Charles Livon  
Marseille, France

Walk around the south side of the Vieux Port (or take the bus to the Fort Nicolas stop) and you come to this little park, where locals go for the best views back to the port. Any time is good, but evening is especially beautiful.

Daily 8 am-9 pm.

### Palais Longchamp Jardin Public

Boulevard de Jardin Zoologique (fourth arrondissement, at the Longchamps metro stop)  
Marseille, France

<http://www.funnyzoo.net>

This relaxing public garden with botanical garden paths is the former site of a 19th century zoo, which closed in 1987. In 2013, the zoo was given a new lease on life, with the cages restored to house a "funny zoo" filled with fiberglass creatures. There are also several children's playgrounds scattered throughout the gardens.

Open daily 6 am-8 pm (closes earlier in winter).

## Recreation

The famous mistral from the north, coupled with the sparkling water of the Mediterranean Sea, makes windsurfing and sailing favorite activities in Marseille. Windsurfing clubs abound along the coast, and you can navigate your sailboat into Port de la Madrague, Port de Plaisance de la Pointe Rouge or even the Vieux Port. The inlets of Sormiou and Morgiou, with their stunning scenery, are beautiful havens for sailors.

Kite flying is a passion for young and not-so-young alike. The Prado beaches, more than 2 mi/3 km long, with immense park and lawn areas, offer kite aficionados enough room to roam unencumbered.

Jogging along the 3-mi-/5-km-long Corniche is a favorite activity for locals. It's also a great way to see the coast and admire some of the beautiful homes overlooking the water. Begin west of Malmousque and finish at the Rond Point David. If you're not tired, continue jogging all the way to Escale Borely and stop at one of the watering holes there—or simply jump into the sea to cool off.

It would be a shame to visit Marseille without catching a glimpse of the favorite pastime (it might be pushing it to call it a sport) known as *petanque* (called *boules* in other regions of France).

*Petanque* is played by two individuals or teams of three. A hollow metal ball, called a *petanque*, is thrown as close as possible to a small wooden ball, called a *cochonnet*, or piglet. A round is complete when all the balls are thrown, and the game continues until the first team reaches 13 points (one point is awarded for each *petanque* closest to the *cochonnet*). Head over to the city's main playing field, the Bouldrome Pierre Peres at 87 Promenade de la Plage, to watch a few lively matches.

The annual international *petanque* championship, Mondial la Marseillaise a Petanque, takes place every July at the Parc Borely.

## Shopping

You won't have to search to purchase original souvenirs in Marseille. Stroll the pricey boutiques along the pedestrian-only Rue Paradis or the more reasonably priced shops of the Rue Saint Ferreol for chic French clothing, fine Provencal fabrics or the traditional *collier marseillais* necklace, a fine gold chain with small gold balls. Other typical Provencal souvenirs are *santons*, small terra-cotta figures representing the people of Provence, that have been handcrafted in this region since the 18th century. They're a favorite nativity decoration at Christmas.

Other local specialties you'll want to take home include the famous olive-oil soap, *savon de Marseille*, and the anisette pastis. Also look for tasty spreads and dips such as the garlic-flavored aioli, *anchoiade* (anchovy spread) and black-olive tapenade. You'll find all of these products in tourist shops, with pretty packaging and prices to match, but you can save by shopping for them where the locals do, at supermarkets such as Casino or Intermarche. When you're there (depending on the size of your suitcase), pick up some extra-virgin olive oil, *herbes de provence*, handmade bars of sweet nougat, and a few bottles of the excellent wines produced in the nearby vineyards of Bandol, Cassis and Chateauf-neuf-du-Pape.

## Department Stores

### Les Galeries Lafayette

40-48 Rue St. Ferreol (first arrondissement)  
Marseille, France

**Phone:** 04-9611-3500

<http://www.galerieslafayette.com/magasin-marseille>

Marseille's premier department store. Great selection of women's and men's accessories, cosmetics, women's, men's and children's clothing and household decorative items offering both upscale and mainstream brands. There's a second location in Le Centre Bourse (phone 04-9156-8282).

Open Monday-Saturday 10 am-8 pm and Sunday 11 am-8 pm.

## Markets

There are open-air food and clothing markets throughout the city. Try the one at Avenue du Prado (Monday-Saturday mornings) or Place Joliette (Monday-Friday mornings). Specialty markets include the daily morning Marche aux Poissons (fish market) on the Quai des Belges in the Vieux Port, and the Marche aux Puces (flea market) Saturday and Sunday mornings at 130 Chemin de la Madrague Ville. There's also an excellent craft market on the Quai des Belges every Sunday morning.  
<http://www.marseille-provence.info/marseille-marseilles>.

## Shopping Areas

### Le Centre Bourse

17 Cours Belsunce  
Marseille, France

**Phone:** 04-9114-0050

<http://www.centre-bourse.com>

This shopping-mall complex is located close to the Vieux Port and features 60 stores as well as restaurants and other services.

Open Monday-Saturday 9:30 am-7:30 pm

## Dining

### Dining Overview

Marseille's melting pot of cultures guarantees a mix of restaurants as diverse as the ingredients found in the famous local soup, bouillabaisse. This dish is made with a combination of fish and shellfish, tomatoes, onion, garlic, olive oil, fennel and saffron. It is served with shredded cheese melted on top and toast spread with aioli. Wash it down with a bottle of rose wine from Provence or the heartier reds from the nearby Bandol region. For an aperitif, order an anisette-flavored pastis or a *kir*, white wine with creme de cassis, a black-currant liqueur.

Restaurants are clustered in several districts. There is a wealth of dining possibilities in the Vieux Port area and along and behind the Quai de Rive Neuve. The dozen restaurants near the Espace Borely offer spectacular sunsets overlooking the water.

In the summer, call to confirm that the restaurant you want to go to is open, especially in August, when many establishments close for vacation.

Here is a sampling of restaurants in town. Expect to pay within these general guidelines, based on the cost of a dinner for one, not including drinks, tax and tip: \$ = less than 20 euros; \$\$ = 21 euros-40 euros; \$\$\$ = 41 euros-60 euros; \$\$\$\$ = more than 60 euros.

## Local & Regional

### Chez Loury-Restaurant "Le Mistral"

3 Rue Fortia  
Marseille, France

**Phone:** 04-9133-0973

<http://www.loury.com>

A cute little restaurant just off the Vieux Port with a cozy terrace as well as indoor seating. Chef Bernard Loury serves a good bouillabaisse, but there are other seafood dishes and an expertly done beef filet on the smallish menu, as well. The chocolate terrine and creme brulee are excellent.

Open daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Chez Madie Les Galinettes

138 Quai du Port (second arrondissement)  
Marseille, France

**Phone:** 04-9190-4087

<http://chezmadie.idhii.net>

Under the arches at the quieter northwest corner of the Vieux Port, Chez Madie serves inventive local cuisine such as red mullet tart with tapenade and duck breast with figs.

Monday-Saturday for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## La Grotte

1 Ave. des Pebrons (Calanque de Callelongue, eighth arrondissement)  
Marseille, France

**Phone:** 04-9173-1779

<http://www.lagrotte-13.com>

This elaborately decorated restaurant, nestled among the traditional fishermen's houses on the outskirts of Marseille, is a must-see. Enjoy Provencal specialties or sit on the terrace with a bottle of crisp wine and a pizza from the patio oven, admiring the view of the white hills beyond.

Daily for lunch, dinner and late night. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Le Grain de Sel

39 Rue de la Paix Marcel Paul  
Marseille, France

Local chef Pierre Giannetti worked in Barcelona for several years but came home to open a bistro with flavors inspired by local produce as well as influences from other Mediterranean countries.

Open Tuesday-Saturday for lunch and dinner. Reservations required. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$.

## Le Petit Nice

Anse Maldorme (in the Hotel Passadat, Corniche Kennedy, seventh arrondissement)  
Marseille, France

**Phone:** 04-9159-2592

<http://www.passadat.fr>

A gem of a place where the rich and famous go for a delightful view of the sea at sunset as well as for exquisite cuisine. The family-run restaurant and hotel have earned three Michelin stars. Try the *menu decouverte* with eight courses—but remember to eat lightly the rest of the day so you can enjoy every morsel.

Tuesday-Saturday for lunch and dinner, Sunday and Monday for dinner only (closed Sunday and Monday in the winter). Reservations required. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Les Arcenaulx

25 Cours Honore d'Estienne d'Orves (first arrondissement)  
Marseille, France

**Phone:** 04-9159-8030

<http://www.restaurant-librairie-marseille.fr>

A 15th-century prison transformed into a bookshop, publishing house and gourmet restaurant that serves fresh, creative Provencal cuisine. A specialty is the *plat et vin*, carefully selected wines matched to a particular meal. In the afternoon, peruse the stacks and sip a cup of tea by the famous tea company Mariage Freres. Stop in the gourmet boutique after your meal for gifts and books.

Tuesday-Saturday for lunch, afternoon tea and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Une Table, Au Sud

2 Quai du Port (second arrondissement)  
Marseille, France

**Phone:** 04-9190-6353

<http://www.unetableausud.com>

A discreet doorway in the midst of the Vieux Port bustle invites you into the modern, elegant dining room of Michelin-starred chef Lionel Levy. While you feast on sea views, Alain Ducasse-trained Levy serves inventive Mediterranean cuisine including his signature Bouille-Abaisse (a bouillabaisse milk shake).

\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Seafood

### Chez Toinou

3 Cours Saint Louis  
Marseille, France

**Phone:** 08-1145-4545

<http://www.toinou.com>

The specialty is shellfish, particularly the large ceremonial combination platter served on crushed ice. It also offers the traditional *moules marinières* and a small selection of fresh fish *en papillote* (baked in parchment paper with various herbs and spices).

Open daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

### La Boite a Sardine

2 Blvd. de la Liberation  
Marseille, France

**Phone:** 04-9150-9595

<http://www.laboitesardine.com>

A fish market that doubles as a restaurant, so you know the seafood is the freshest possible. There are only about a half-dozen tables, and they're booked solid every day. Choose between the classic *plateau de fruits de mer* (seafood platter) or one of Chef Fabien's tasty daily specials such as scallop *carpaccio*.

Open Tuesday-Saturday for lunch only. \$\$.

### La Cuisine au Beurre

72 Quai du Port  
Marseille, France

**Phone:** 04-9191-6774

<http://www.lacuisineaubeurre.fr>

Don't miss this popular locals' restaurant, particularly its seafood platters and *moules frites*. In fact, there are about 10 different kinds of marinated mussels on the menu, such as the traditional *moules marinières*, or the *moules piquant* with a spicy tomato-based sauce, or *moules roquefort* with a pungent cheese sauce. Good table service and friendly atmosphere right on the bustling Vieux Port, with a panoramic view from tables on the first floor or the outdoor terrace.

Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Le Miramar

12 Quai du Port (second arrondissement)  
Marseille, France

**Phone:** 04-9191-1040

<http://www.lemiramar.fr>

Locals say this place has the best bouillabaisse in town, and star chef Christian Buffa teaches a course in how to make it once a month. It is served in the traditional manner—first is a seafood broth with croutons and the local *rouille* spread. Then another plate of broth is served filled to the brim with seafood, highlighting local varieties of fish such as dory, anglerfish and weever, in particular. The atmosphere is very formal, but the service is superb and the port setting perfect.

Daily except Monday for lunch and dinner. Reservations required. \$\$\$\$.

## Le Peron

56 Promenade de la Corniche President John F. Kennedy (seventh arrondissement)  
Marseille, France

**Phone:** 04-9152-1522

<http://www.restaurant-peron.com>

This famous restaurant, redecorated in teak to resemble the interior of a vintage sailing yacht, is known for its traditional seafood platters. Have a glass of champagne at the bar before heading to your table.

Daily for lunch and dinner. The Marseillais line up to get in there, so be sure you have reservations. \$\$\$\$.

## Security

### Personal Safety

Marseille has had a bad reputation regarding crime for many years. Crime does exist, as it does in all major cities, but by following a few guidelines, you can reduce the chances of it happening to you. Don't leave valuables or items that could attract a break-in (bags from exclusive shops, keys, luggage) in plain view in your car. Always keep the car doors locked and windows closed when driving: thieves on scooters can grab bags right out of cars that are stopped in traffic.

Watch your belongings at the beach and hold onto your purse or bag when sitting at an outdoor cafe. Don't flaunt currency in stores or on the street and keep most of your cash and credit cards in a money belt. Keep your voice down on the metro to avoid drawing attention to the fact that you're a tourist. Avoid the metro, as well as remote areas, at night. Also avoid the north side of town, the Quartier Nord.

For police assistance, phone 17; for a fire, phone 18. The emergency hotline number is 112.

For the latest information, contact your country's travel-advisory agency.

## Health

Marseille gets very hot in the summer, and this is sometimes masked by sea breezes, so don't take any chances and do cover yourself in sunscreen. When swimming, watch out for sea urchins and jellyfish. They're not a major hazard but are very unpleasant when encountered.

The most central hospital is the Hopital de la Conception, about a mile/kilometer southeast of the Vieux Port at 147 Blvd. Baille. Phone 04-9138-0000. <http://www.ap-hm.fr>.

In an emergency, call 15 for an ambulance. For an emergency doctor, dial 3624. For an emergency dentist, call 08-9256-6766. The number for the poison treatment center is 04-9175-2525.

## Disabled Advisory

The Marseille City Council has a special office set up to handle disabled access for locals and visitors alike. The Service des Personnes Handicapes is at 128 Ave. du Prado (eighth arrondissement), Marseille. The office also offers a transportation service. Phone 04-9181-5880. <http://www.marseille.fr/sitevdm/social-et-sante/personnes-en-situation-de-handicap>.

The city is not ideal for visitors with mobility problems. There are lots of steep streets leading away from the Vieux Port, frequent roadwork and many aggressive drivers, which can make crossing the street hazardous. In contrast, much of the public transport system is accommodating to those with disabilities.

The Marseille Tourist Board has a good listing of accommodation, restaurants, services and adapted sites and activities that accommodate those with disabilities. <http://www.marseille-tourisme.com/en/marseille-tourism-and-disability>.

## Facts

### Dos & Don'ts

Do visit the Chateau d'If for its historical significance as well as for the scenic trip to the island itself.

Don't be shy about sampling some local foods, including Moroccan cuisine, bouillabaisse and other fish specialties.

Do purchase the Marseille City Pass if you plan to stay more than a few days—it offers discounts and free bus and metro travel for extended stays in the city.

Don't forget to learn a few phrases of French such as *bonjour* (hello), *s'il vous plait* (please) and *merci* (thank you). Speaking a little bit of the language goes a long way.

Do say *bonjour* (hello) to the staff when entering shops, cafes and restaurants (switch to *bonsoir* after 3 pm), and say *au revoir* when you leave.

Do plan a trip to one of the colorful daily markets for a dose of local life and activity. At least one takes place every day, and several are concentrated around the Vieux Port, such as the daily fish market and the weekend craft market.



## Geostats

**Passport/Visa Requirements:** Canadian and U.S. citizens need passports for stays of up to three months. The passport must be valid for at least three months after your proposed stay. Reconfirm travel document information with your carrier before departure.

**Population:** 795,600.

**Languages:** French.

**Predominant Religions:** Christian (Roman Catholic, Protestant), Jewish, Muslim.

**Time Zone:** 1 hour ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (+1 GMT). Daylight Saving Time is observed from the end of March to the end of October.

**Voltage Requirements:** 220 volts. 50Hz.

**Telephone Codes:** 33, country code; 491, Marseille city code;

## Money

### Currency Exchange

France's official currency is the euro, which is divided into 100 cents, which the French call *centimes*.

ATMs are located throughout the city center and at banks. Most accept major credit cards and are connected to at least one international banking network (for bank cards). Each machine clearly displays symbols to let you know which cards will work, and various language options are usually available. There are ATMs at the Marseille airport in Terminal 1 (international arrivals) and Terminal 3 (domestic arrivals).

If you need to exchange hard currency, you can do so at one of the main city-center currency exchange bureaus (smaller ones don't always offer competitive rates). You can also exchange at most banks, which should display their rates. There is also a Travelex exchange office at the Marseille Airport that is open daily 6 am-8:30 pm.

When paying for goods or services by credit card in France, as in other countries in Europe, credit cards have a chip that stores a PIN to be entered by the customer on making payment, rather than signing a payment slip. As a result, although businesses use machines that will accept both types of credit cards, be prepared for the occasional hitch that could occur in the system.

## Taxes

Goods and services in France are subject to a value-added tax, called TVA (*taxe sur la valeur ajoutée*). The full rate is 20%, and the reduced rate is 5%. There is also an intermediate rate of 10% on select goods and services. The price displayed almost always includes tax—the letters TTC (*toutes taxes comprises*) next to a price mean that it's included.

There is a room tax of 0.40 euros per night, but this is usually included in the prices quoted.

Department stores and many of the larger shops in central Marseille participate in France's Global Refund Cheque plan, which allows non-European Union citizens to reclaim the tax. The city is also a popular port of call for cruise ships, so the bigger stores are familiar with the formalities of tax-free shopping.

Nonresidents of the EU can file for a tax refund (around 12%) for purchases of more than 175 euros in one store on a given day. If a store participates (and not all are required to do so), it will display a blue-and-white Tax Free Shopping logo.

When you make your purchase—you may have to use a specially designated desk—request a refund check. When you get to the airport, present the form at the claims counter at customs for an immediate refund, or ask the customs officials to stamp your form and then send it to Global Refund France S.A., which will refund you through your credit card. The counter is open daily 6 am-8:30 pm. Some stores manage their own TVA refunds and have specific forms and procedures, so always check with customer service.

For more information on Global Blue, visit <http://www.globalblue.com/destinations/france/marseille>.

## **Tipping**

Service charges at restaurants are included in the total bill (check at the bottom of the bill for the words *service compris*, often abbreviated to SC). You may leave an extra euro or two if the service was especially good. At bars and cafes, you can round up to the nearest euro, although it's not necessary. Taxi drivers can receive an extra euro or two, especially if they've helped with luggage.

If you're staying more than one night, it's customary to leave a few euros for the housekeeping staff. For assisting with getting your luggage to your room or storing your bags, give the hotel bellhop 1 euro per bag.

Tour guides make the majority of their money from tips, so if you're happy with your guide, it's customary to tip about 10%-20% of the tour price.

## **Weather**

Marseille can be very pleasant in spring and fall, and even in winter you will still get some mild days. The average temperature December-February is 46 F/8 C, though, so pack for warmth. The highest rainfall occurs in October and November, though it does rain all year-round, and you may even get some rainy days at the height of the summer.

## **What to Wear**

Located in the far south of France, Marseille is generally hot July-September, and you will probably need only very light clothing then. A light jacket or sweater is a good idea in case of an unexpectedly cool evening or a cooling sea breeze. Sturdy shoes are useful as you'll inevitably encounter plenty of cobbled streets, as well as steep staircases.

Business occasions call for a relatively conservative style of dress. Smart, clean-cut but understated suits and dresses are the most appropriate choices. French businessmen are often seen wearing suits with waistcoats and even watch chains on ordinary workdays, although short-sleeved shirts with no ties are perfectly acceptable in many businesses during summer.

**Villefranche (Port for Nice)****Overview****Introduction**

Villefranche-Sur-Mer, France, is one of the more charming fishing villages on the Riviera. It has remained relatively unspoiled considering that it serves as a port for cruise ships.

A warren of tiny, medieval streets lined with shops, restaurants and art galleries as well as a 16th-century citadel, Villefranche-Sur-Mer also boasts a covered medieval street called the Rue Obscure, which once hid the town's inhabitants from pirates.

Visitors can hop aboard one of the tourist trains for an overview of the town or walk along the beach to the main rail station for a quick trip into Nice.

**Port Information****Location**

The deep-water harbor of Villefranche-Sur-Mer is home to Mediterranean cruise boats.

Tender boats pick up passengers from the cruise ships that drop anchor in the bay, and then dock at Port de la Sante right in the center of Villefranche. Passengers from the various cruise lines often go on day trips to Cannes, Nice and Monte Carlo, but it's also pleasant to stay and explore the quaint village. There's a tourist information booth in the cruise terminal to provide maps and directions.

Once you exit the tender port, turn right and follow the ocean into the bay to find the beach. The train station is right above the beach area accessed via a rock stairway leading up the hill. While there is not much shopping in the village, there are many great seafood restaurants and cafes lining the coastal road.

For more exciting shopping, the No. 80 bus stop is right across the street from the cruise terminal, with the bus running hourly to Nice.



**Nice, France****Overview****Introduction**

Graced with an average of 2,640 hours of sunshine per year, Nice, France, proudly wears the colors of Chagall and Matisse: Its Mediterranean bay is azure blue, its tiled roofs are red, its houses ochre and yellow, and its gardens emerald green. All those colors also show up at the wonderful flower market on Cours Saleya and on the tiny bikini bottoms worn on the pebbly but oh-so-fashionable beaches.



Greeks and Romans, Savoyard kings and wealthy visitors have shaped the destiny of Nice, and still this is the only town on the Cote d'Azur that doesn't seem to depend on its 4 million tourists per year. The dynamic capital of the *departement* of Alpes-Maritimes may be the most-visited French city after Paris, but it is still a very local affair.

If you avoid the summer months in Nice, you can still enjoy the local cuisine to its fullest and soak up the Mediterranean light that Picasso so loved. And the stunning highlights of the French Riviera are just a few minutes' drive away.

**Highlights**

**Sights**—Hotel Negresco; Chapelle de la Misericorde et de la Confrerie des Penitents Noirs; Cathedrale Orthodoxe Russe St. Nicolas; Eglise du Gesu.

**Museums**—Musee d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain; Musee Matisse; Musee National Message Biblique Marc Chagall; Musee des Arts Asiatiques.

**Memorable Meals**—L'Univers de Christian Plumail; La Merenda; Chez Pipo.

**Late Night**—Les Trois Diables; High Club and Studio 47; La Bodeguita del Havana.

**Walks**—Cours Saleya; Promenade des Anglais; Parc Floral Phoenix; Port Lympia.

**Especially for Kids**—An afternoon at one of the beaches; ice skating in the Complexe Jean Bouin; the playground in the Parc du Chateau.

**Geography**

Nice enjoys a privileged position between a gently curving bay of the Mediterranean Sea and the mountains of the Ligurian Alps, which shelter it from cold northern winds. Palms, eucalyptus and citrus trees give Nice a subtropical appearance. In the hinterland, the Arriere Pays, you'll find olive groves, pine woods, wild flowers and perched villages, which offer fabulous vistas along with cooling summer breezes.

The major areas of tourist interest are the Old Town (Vieux Nice), the New Town to the west with the Promenade des Anglais and the major boulevards, the leafy district of Cimiez with its first-class museums to the north, and the port to the east of the Old Town.

## History

At the site known as Terra Amata at the foot of Mont Boron, remnants of a prehistoric human camp some 400,000 years old have been unearthed. Around 1000 BC, the Ligurians built their *oppida* at the mouth of the Paillon River and on the hill overlooking the valley.

Classical civilization goes back to the fourth century BC, when Phocaeen Greeks from Marseille sailed into the harbor and founded a commercial colony near the seaside *oppidum* around a hill they called Nikaia (today Colline du Chateau).

In 100 BC, the Romans, called in to help against Ligurian pirates, chose to stay on and built a city on a third hill that they called Cemenelum (today's Cimiez). By the third century, Cemenelum had 20,000 inhabitants, who enjoyed such luxuries as Roman baths and an amphitheater.

In the early Middle Ages, Nice was invaded and destroyed by Saracens and Barbarians, but in the 14th century the city rose again. In 1382, Jeanne, Queen of Sicily and Countess of Provence, was smothered to death on the order of her cousin Charles of Durazzo, Prince of Naples. He and another cousin, Louis of Anjou, tried to rule Nice, but the city preferred to side with the Counts of Savoy and spend the prosperous Renaissance and Baroque times Italian-style.

With Louis XIV, the French made a comeback by blowing up the city's fortifications, but apart from a brief period of control by Revolutionary forces between 1792 and 1814, Nice belonged to Savoy until 1860, when the King of Sardinia ceded the city of Nice and Savoy to Napoleon III in the (secret) Treaty of Turin. The treaty was later ratified in a rigged plebiscite.

By 1755 the first wealthy British travelers seeking winter warmth had set up shop in Nice and on the Riviera. In 1830 they financed the building of the seafront esplanade along the Baie des Anges, known to this day as the Promenade des Anglais. Soon it was lined by elegant hotels, and Nice became the favorite meeting place for European glitterati in winter. In the 1890s, Queen Victoria sealed Nice's fate by making the suburb of Cimiez her winter residence.

Famous writers, film stars, composers and painters such as Picasso and Matisse flocked to Nice, followed by an armada of tourists. Longtime mayors Jean Medecin and his notorious son Jacques Medecin elevated corruption to an art form. Since then, things have calmed down a bit, although the mayor elected in 2008, Christian Estrosi, a flamboyant former motorbike champion, has shown a tendency to revive some of the Medecin traditions.

## Potpourri

Italy's national hero, Giuseppe Garibaldi, was born in Nice on 4 July 1807.

Masterpieces of world literature were written in Nice, including *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* by German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche and *Three Sisters* by Russian playwright Anton Chekhov.

In front of the Hotel Negresco, the famous dancer Isadora Duncan was accidentally strangled to death in 1927 when the large, red silk scarf draped around her neck became entangled around one of the open-spoked wheels and rear axle of her Bugatti.

Alphonse Karr was a great 19th-century French journalist who lived in Nice for the second half of his life. He is famous for his quote "Plus ca change, plus c'est la meme chose" which roughly translates to "The more things change, the more they remain the same." He also was an avid horticulturist who had more

than one flower variety named for him and practically founded the trade of cut flowers on the French Riviera.

Catherine Segurane is Nice's "Jeanne d'Arc." When joint French and Turkish armies besieged the town in 1543, Catherine supposedly inspired the defenders with a "patriotic" gesture by showing the enemy her bare bottom.

Nice has two classes of summer tourists: the *juilletistes*, who flock to the beaches in July (mainly foreigners), and the *aoutiens*, who replace them in August (mainly French).

## See & Do

### Sightseeing

By international standards, Nice is a rather small city, but it offers a surprisingly diverse number of attractions for the visitor. Its museums are world-class affairs: You can admire Roman antiquities, masterpieces of Asian art, paintings by Matisse, Chagall and Picasso, and the best contemporary art on the Riviera.

The revamped Old Town with its old churches and houses of Genoese times remind visitors of Nice's long Italian heritage. Countless charming bars and cafes invite *flaneurs* (strollers) through their doors.

Enjoy the stately belle époque and art-deco mansions in the suburb of Cimiez, where queens and tsarinas once spent balmy winters; walk or skate the fabulous Promenade des Anglais; watch millionaires sailing their yachts in and out of Port Lympia; enjoy a lazy beach afternoon at classy Beau Rivage Plage; get pampered in one of the luxury spas; and enjoy a performance of *Tosca* in the beautiful Opera House before you dance the night away in one of the many bars.

And if money is burning a hole into your pocket, there are two casinos right on the sea promenade.

### Historic Sites

#### Cathedrale de Ste. Reparate

3 Place Rossetti, Vieux Nice  
Nice, France

**Phone:** 04-9392-0135

<http://cathedrale-nice.com>

This impressive building replaced the original hilltop cathedral and dominates Nice's prettiest square. Its elegant, balanced front was modeled in the second half of the 17th century by Jean-Andre Guiberto on the early Baroque church Santa Susanna in Rome. The church was inaugurated in 1699, but its bell tower was added in the 18th century.

The cathedral glorifies the city's patron saint, Ste. Reparate, a teenage girl martyred in Caesarea (Palestine) in AD 250. After unsuccessfully trying to burn her (it started raining) and filling her mouth with molten peat (she still refused to die), they decapitated the stubborn girl. According to legend, her uncorrupted body reached the shores of Nice in a flower-filled boat towed ashore by angels.

The church shows the traditional basilica cruciform design of St. Peter in Rome and is topped with a shiny, polychrome-tiled dome. The exuberant bright blue and white interior is a riot of ornate plasterwork



and frescoes, with marble columns and balustrades, a gilded high altar, glitzy side chapels maintained by affluent families and local corporations, and three magnificent organs.

Open Tuesday-Friday 9 am-noon and 2-6 pm, Saturday 9 am-noon and 2-7:30 pm and Sunday 9 am-1 pm and 3-6 pm. Free.

### **Cathedrale Orthodoxe Russe St. Nicolas**

Avenue Nicolas II, Cimiez  
Nice, France

**Phone:** 06-7805-0455

<http://www.cathedrale-russe-nice.fr>

The cathedral's five brilliant-green onion domes crowned by golden crosses represent Christ and the four Evangelists; the gilded cupola of the bell tower represents the Virgin Mary. St. Nicolas was modeled on the church of Jaroslav near Moscow. The central cupola reaches a height of 170 ft/52 m. St. Nicolas is one of the largest Orthodox churches outside of Russia and also one of the most striking, its Russian features showing sublime Mediterranean colors. The outside, however, is more impressive than the interior. The church is easily accessible by walking from the center of town.

It was built on the site of a luxurious villa owned by the Romanov family, in which the sick tsarevich and heir to the Russian throne Nicholas Alexandrovich, or Nixa as he was known in his family, died from meningitis at the age of 21 in 1865. Tsarina Maria Feodorovna, his fiancée (who later married Tsar Alexander III), spared no expense when she donated this church to the affluent, aristocratic Russian community of Nice. The ocher-colored bricks were brought in from Bavaria, the pink granite from Italy, the blue majolica tiling from Florence and the white stone from La Turbie. The splendid interior has a beautiful iconostasis embellished with gilded frescoes and intricate carvings.

The church was inaugurated in 1912 and is well-used by the current Russian community in Nice, which has about 9,000 members. A dress code is strictly enforced. No shorts, short skirts or sleeveless shirts are allowed, so cover up. Also check out the Byzantine chapel built nearby in the park shortly after Nicholas' death. He is buried there. Don't be concerned by the black-suited men of the Russian Secret Service guarding the entrance; the Russian government is currently fighting a legal battle over the ownership of the church.

Tuesday-Sunday 9 am-noon and 2-6 pm. Closed Mondays and during special religious services. Free.

### **Chapelle de la Misericorde et de la Confrerie des Penitents Noirs**

Cours Saleya, Vieux Nice  
Nice, France

This masterpiece of the French-Mediterranean Rococo built in 1736 using the plans of Bernardo Vittone from Piedmont is unfortunately closed most of the time. The chapel of the aristocratic Penitents Noirs brotherhood, founded in the 14th century, whose mission was to assure the dead a dignified burial, has an elegant elliptical layout, beautiful trompe l'oeil frescoes and soaring blue-and-gold columns. Don't miss the early Renaissance *Polyptique de la Misericorde* (1430) by Jean Miralhet and a painting with the same subject attributed to Louis Brea, the major local painter, probably finished in 1515. On this painting you can see possibly the oldest existing representation of the city of Nice. Both are on display in the sacristy.

Open only for Mass on Sunday 10:30 am and for visits on Tuesday 2:30-5:30 pm. Free.



## Chapelle Ste. Rita

1 Rue de la Poissonnerie, Vieux Nice  
Nice, France

**Phone:** 04-9362-1362

<http://www.sainte-rita.net>

St. Rita of Cascia lived in the 14th century, was plagued with a violent, abusive husband and children who would not listen to her, and she suffered from a permanent and smelly wound on her forehead caused by a thorn from a figure of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. No wonder she was soon revered as the saint of lost and impossible causes, sickness, wounds, marital problems, abuse and other calamities. "Her" church (officially devoted to Saint Jacques, or Saint Giaume, as the locals call him) is right in front of the city's noisy fish market, where all those problems are discussed loudly and in detail. Whenever things get too hard and hopeless for the downtrodden to bear, a new candle is lit at Rita's altar inside the gilded small Baroque church.

Open Monday-Saturday 7 am-noon and 2:30-6:30 pm, Sunday 8 am-noon and 3-6:30 pm. Free.

## Eglise du Gesu

Place du Gesu, Vieux Nice  
Nice, France

Officially called St. Jacques Le Majeur, this tiny church built by the Jesuits between 1612 and 1642 is known to everyone as the Church of Jesus, and it was indeed inspired by the famous Il Gesu in Rome. The facade was revamped in 1825, but its interior is a showcase of Baroque architecture, with all the ideological and theatrical principles of the masters of the Counter Reformation worked out in ornate stucco, fake marble and celestial frescoes. Wherever you look, you will catch angels in flight.

Open Tuesday and Thursday 2:30-5 pm. Free.

## Eglise et Monastere de Cimiez

Place du Monastere, Cimiez  
Nice, France

**Phone:** 04-9381-0004

[http://www.frenchriviera-tourism.com/culture/religious-heritage-06\\_105.html](http://www.frenchriviera-tourism.com/culture/religious-heritage-06_105.html)

This Franciscan monastery (still used by members of the order), built on the Cimiez hill on the site of an earlier Benedictine monastery, dates from the 17th century, but the rather unremarkable church was heavily restored in the 19th century in a neo-Gothic style. Its saving graces are three beautiful altarpieces by Louis Brea, including a very early and beautiful *Pieta* from 1475 on a golden background and *Crucifixion* with a detailed landscape background, which Louis painted much later (1512). For the third painting, *Deposition From the Cross*, his brother Antoine is believed to have assisted.

The cloisters have interesting esoteric murals from the 17th century, which may have alchemical meanings. The adjoining Musee Franciscain tells the story of the Franciscan order in Nice between the 13th and 18th centuries with frescoes, sculptures and documents. The history of Brother Marc is of particular interest to visitors from the U.S., as he was one of the first Europeans to explore New Mexico and Arizona.

The museum also has a reconstructed, very Spartan-looking monk's cell. It's safe to assume that the friars preferred to spend their time in the gardens of the monastery, which have shaded cypress

walkways, orange and lemon trees, old pergolas and thousands of roses (go in May when they are in full bloom), and a fabulous view of Nice, the Baie des Anges and the valley of the Paillon. This is where recently married couples have their picture taken. In the cemetery next door, you can visit the graves of the painters Henri Matisse and Raoul Dufy.

Church open daily 9 am-noon and 3-6 pm. Museum open Monday-Saturday 10 am-noon and 3-6 pm (till 5:30 pm in winter). Free.

## Hotel Negresco

37 Promenade des Anglais, Centre-Ville  
Nice, France

**Phone:** 04-9316-6400

<http://www.hotel-negresco-nice.com>

The famous Negresco hotel with its extravagant cupola was the idea of Henry Negresco, a former Romanian waiter who had made a fortune as the director of the municipal casino of Nice. He won the financial support of a French industrial magnate to build the most luxurious hotel on the coast. Soon after the hotel's splendid inauguration in 1913, attended by seven ruling European royals, World War I broke out, and the Negresco was turned into a hospital for wounded soldiers. Henry went bankrupt.

In 1957, the local Augier family restored the Negresco to its former glory. In 2003, the building was placed on the National Historic Building Registry. For a few euros, you can sample the atmosphere by ordering a drink at Le Relais, a bar that has seen such illustrious guests as Ernest Hemingway, Marlene Dietrich, Coco Chanel and Salvador Dali. The Negresco has two fine restaurants: Chantecler, decked out in Regency style, and the much more affordable Brasserie La Rotonde.

## Palais Lascaris

15 Rue Droite, Vieux Nice  
Nice, France

**Phone:** 04-9362-7240

<http://www.palais-lascaris-nice.org>

This grand Genoese-style baroque villa with wrought-iron and marble balconies was built by the Lascaris-Ventimiglia family in the early 17th century and restored as a national monument in the 1940s. On the ground floor is a reconstructed 1738 apothecary's shop with some of its original Delftware fittings. A broad baroque staircase lined with classical statues leads up to a series of rooms decorated with trompe l'oeil frescoes, Flemish tapestries and ornate woodwork. On the third floor you can see a collection of antique musical instruments, including a 1578 Italian precursor of the pianoforte. Check out the schedule of baroque concerts held there occasionally in summer. There's a guided tour of the permanent exhibitions available for 5 euros per person every Friday at 3 pm.

Open daily except Tuesday 10 am-6 pm. Free.

## Museums

### Galerie des Ponchettes

77 Quai des Etats Unis  
Nice, France

**Phone:** 04-9362-3124

<http://www.mamac-nice.org>

An offshoot of the MAMAC with special exhibitions throughout the year. In the summer of 2013 the museum featured old Matisse posters of his previous exhibitions that had taken place around the world (Matisse a l’Affiche).

Daily except Monday 10 am-6 pm. 10 euros.

### **Musee d’Archeologie et Site Archeologique de Cimiez**

160 Ave. des Arenes-de-Cimiez, Cimiez  
Nice, France

**Phone:** 04-9381-5957

<http://www.musee-archeologie-nice.org>

The well-kept Museum of Archaeology, adjacent to the Matisse Museum, is accessible through the excavations of Cemenelum, which include well-preserved remnants of Roman baths dating from the second and third centuries, and the vestiges of a 400-seat amphitheater (Arenes) that is now used as a venue for the Nice Jazz Festival. The museum charts the history of civilization in Nice and the Alpes-Maritimes region (of which Nice was the Roman capital) from 1100 BC to the Middle Ages. You can see a stunning array of vases, glass, coins, tools, statues, jewels and models of what Cimiez looked like 2,000 years ago. An underground section shows funeral steles and sarcophagi. A small shop sells reproductions of some of the exhibits.

Daily except Tuesday 10 am-6 pm. Guided tours Wednesday-Sunday at 11 am and 2 and 3:30 pm. Free admission. Guided tours 5 euros.

### **Musee d’Art Moderne et d’Art Contemporain**

Place Yves Klein, Centre-Ville  
Nice, France

**Phone:** 04-9713-4201

<http://www.mamac-nice.org>

The sprawling gray-and-white marble-coated Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art—four concrete towers linked by humpbacked glass walkways offering pretty views of the city—was inaugurated in 1990. The MAMAC’s permanent collection on the second and third floors presents the related schools of French new realism and American pop art, with a particular focus on the artists of the Second School of Nice (Arman, Cesar, Klein and Sosno). The permanent collection has works by Christo, Niki de St. Phalle, Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Rauschenberg, Richard Serra, Franck Stella, Tinguely, and other influential figures of the 1960s and '70s. There is a constantly changing program of temporary exhibitions on the first floor.

Open daily except Monday 10 am-6 pm. Guided tours on Wednesday at 3 pm. Admission is free; guided tours 5 euros.

### **Musee de Paleontologie Humaine de Terra Amata**

25 Blvd. Carnot  
Nice, France

**Phone:** 04-9355-5993

<http://www.musee-terra-amata.org>

The museum was named after the earliest inhabited site to be excavated in Nice—a 400,000-year-old camp of elephant-hunting *Homo erectus*, which predated *Homo sapiens* by more than 350,000 years—and is devoted to the 7-million-year history of humans, specifically the last 900 millennia.

Open daily except Tuesday 10 am-6 pm. Monday is typically reserved for groups. Admission is free. Guided tours 5 euros.

## Musee des Arts Asiatiques

405 Promenade des Anglais  
Nice, France

**Phone:** 04-9229-3700

<http://www.arts-asiatiques.com>

This beautiful minimalist white-marble building was designed by Japanese architect Kenzo Tange in 1998 to represent "a swan that floats on the water of a peaceful lake." The central building, inspired by the structure of the Tibetan mandala, is based on geometrical forms of the square and circle, symbolizing the earth and the sky, reflected in a shallow artificial pool in Parc Phoenix. Four cubes spread out over the lake contain the permanent collection.

The minimalist approach is maintained in the presentation, which only shows a handful of carefully selected artifacts per room: Chinese jade and bronze, Japanese lacquer and ceramics, Cambodian sculpture and Indian textiles. Then the visitor follows an elliptical glass staircase up to the rotunda, the spiritual sphere of Buddhism. The equally beautiful Japanese pavilion stages authentic tea ceremonies on specific days posted on the museum's website. You can also learn the arts of origami, ikebana or calligraphy there. The museum includes a multimedia center for further study of Asiatic culture.

Open daily except Tuesday May to mid-October 10 am-6 pm, mid-October to April 10 am-5 pm. Free.

## Musee des Beaux-Arts

33 Ave. des Baumettes, Cimiez  
Nice, France

**Phone:** 04-9215-2828

<http://www.musee-beaux-arts-nice.org>

Built in 1878, the beautiful former private villa of Ukrainian princess Elisabeth Kotchoubey was converted into a museum in 1925 and now houses a fine collection of paintings from 17th-century Italian works to 19th- and 20th-century romantics and impressionists, including Degas, Boudin, Dufy and Sisley, as well as sculptures by Rodin and others. It is particularly strong in pieces by Nice's native masters: Louis Brea, Carle Van Loo and Jules Cheret. In August 2007, some of the museum's best pieces—two Breughels, a Monet and a Sisley—disappeared in a dramatic broad-daylight robbery straight out of a Tarantino movie. They were recovered a year later in Marseilles. (It's interesting that two of the stolen paintings, Monet's *Cliffs Near Dieppe* and Sisley's *The Lane of Poplars at Moret*, had been stolen before, so be sure to have a close look at them in case the three-strikes rule applies.) The beautiful gardens are worth a visit as well.

Open daily except Monday 10 am-6 pm. Guided tours (in French) Wednesday and Thursday at 3 pm. Museum entrance is free; guided tours are 5 euros.

## Musee International d'Art Naif Anatole Jakovsky

Chateau Ste. Helene, Avenue de Fabron, Cimiez  
Nice, France

**Phone:** 04-9371-7833

<http://www.nice.fr/Culture/Musees-et-expositions/Musee-d-Art-Naif>

This strawberry-pink villa in western Nice was built by the founder of the Monte-Carlo casino and redesigned in 1922 by Francois Coty, the perfume magnate, as his summer residence. It's a little out of the way but easy to access by either public bus or cab and well worth the trip. Do visit the wonderful park filled with rare, fragrant flowers. Since 1982, the villa has housed one of the world's most important collections of *art naif*, bequeathed to the city by art critics Anatole and Renee Jakovsky. The museum, an offshoot of the Paris Pompidou Centre, presents around 600 paintings, drawings, engravings and sculptures from the 18th century to the present day, including works by Henri Rousseau, Bauchant, Lefranc, Rimbert, Seraphine, Vivin and the American painter Gertrude O'Brady, who created a stylized portrait of Jakovsky. Haitian and Brazilian artists (Iracema, Isabel De Jesus, Luis Figueiredo, Miranda and Prefete Duffaut) are particularly well-represented, as are painters from Croatia, including Ivan and Josip Generalic, Lackovic, Kovacic and Mraz.

Open daily except Tuesday 10 am-6 pm. Guided tours (in French) Wednesday at 3:30 pm (must be booked in advance). Museum entrance is free; guided tour is 5 euros.

## Musee Massena

65 Rue de France and 35 Promenade des Anglais  
Nice, France

**Phone:** 04-9391-1910

<http://www.musee-massena-nice.org>

Designed in the style of Italian villas, this beautiful building right on the Promenade des Anglais was built 1898-1901. Since 1921, it has served as a museum presenting the history of Nice in chronological order, including the daily life of the Nicois and Carnival. The gardens are worth a visit—they were designed by botanist Edouard Andre who also constructed the gardens of the Monte Carlo.

Open daily except Tuesday 10 am-6 pm. Free.

## Musee Matisse

164 Ave. des Arenes-de-Cimiez, Cimiez  
Nice, France

**Phone:** 04-9381-0808

<http://www.musee-matisse-nice.org>

This late 17th-century intimate Genoese villa is located in the leafy quarter of Cimiez, just a short walk away from the monumental Hotel Regina. (Matisse lived and worked in two converted apartments after World War II and died there in 1954.)

Matisse's huge stylistic range included primitive art, impressionism, sculpture and abstraction. Although his most famous works were snapped up early by collectors and museums all over the world, this museum, established in 1963 with the original collection donated by the artist to the city of Nice, shows an impressive amount of the artist's paintings, drawings and engravings, sculptures and illustrated books (including Joyce's *Ulysses* and Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal*), documenting the artist's stylistic evolution. Matisse's last work, the giant paper cutout *Flowers and Fruit* (1952-53), dominates the light-filled atrium.

Don't miss the sultry *Odalisque With a Red Box* (1926) and the most famous painting of the collection, *Still Life With Pomegranates* (1947). Other beautiful works include the blue gouache paper cutouts *Blue Nude* and *Woman With Amphora*.

Open daily except Tuesday 10 am-6 pm. Free. Guided tours Monday, Wednesday-Thursday and Friday at 3 pm. 5 euros.

## Musee National Message Biblique Marc Chagall

Avenue Docteur-Menard, Cimiez (corner of Boulevard de Cimiez)  
Nice, France

**Phone:** 04-9353-8720

<http://www.musees-nationaux-alpesmaritimes.fr/chagall>

This low geometrical building, constructed of pale stone from La Turbie and set among a garden of olive and cypress trees, was designed by Andre Hermant, a follower of Le Corbusier. Its highlight is a complete set (17 large canvasses) of vivid and colorful biblical paintings created by Marc Chagall between 1954 and 1967.

Chagall's otherworldly interpretations of *The Creation of Man* and *The Garden of Eden* are particularly fascinating. In an adjacent, octagonal gallery, the stunningly glowing red series of the *Song of Songs* dedicated to Chagall's wife, Vava, captivates the mind.

The museum also shows an impressive collection of sculptures, stained-glass windows, tapestries, preparatory sketches, gouaches, engravings and lithographs. Also note the exterior mosaic of the prophet Elijah soaring across the sky in his chariot of fire among signs of the zodiac.

Open daily except Tuesday May-October 10 am-6 pm, November-April 10 am-5 pm. 8 euros (9 euros during temporary exhibitions). Free for anyone younger than 26 and for everyone on the first Sunday of the month. Guided tour 4.50 euros.

## Theatre de la Photographie et de l'Image

27 Blvd. Dubouchage, Centre-Ville  
Nice, France

**Phone:** 04-9713-4220

<http://www.tpi-nice.org>

This gallery, located in the former Theatre de l'Artistique, presents the art of photography in all its forms, from journalism to fashion, art and experimental photography. Excellent temporary exhibitions featuring new talents. The best exhibition is the annual *Septembre de la Photo*.

Open daily except Monday 10 am-6 pm. Free.

## Neighborhoods & Districts

### Port Lympia

Also called Le Port, the 17th-century port of Nice is on the east side of Vieux Nice. It is a handsome rectangle of old and new buildings with warm, russet-colored facades around a harbor teeming with large and small craft, including local ferries. Its busy quaysides are popular spots for dining or a waterside evening stroll.

## Vieux Nice

Vieux Nice  
Nice, France

Once a dangerous slum, this is now the trendiest part of Nice: a maze of narrow streets east of Place Massena with baroque churches, pastel-colored Genoese buildings, cafes, bistros, nightclubs, designer boutiques and galleries. Don't miss a stroll on beautiful Cours Saleya with its colorful flower and food markets.

## Parks & Gardens

### Jardin Albert 1er

Avenue de Verdun (at Avenue des Phoceans)  
Nice, France

Nice's oldest public garden provides a welcome shady oasis between the old and new towns.

Open daily 24 hours.

### Parc du Chateau

Montee du Chateau at Montee Montfort  
Nice, France

The park of Castle Hill at the eastern end of Vieux Nice is the site of the ancient acropolis of Nikaia. Walk up the steps to the chateau or take the free Ascenseur du Chateau (chateau lift) from the seafront right by Hotel Swiss and enjoy the sweeping views from the breezy belvedere across the Baie des Anges and the rooftops of Nice. In the 16th-century Tour Bellanda, Hector Berlioz composed his *King Lear Overture*. The park has an 18th-century artificial waterfall called Cascade Donjon with a viewing platform and a playground for children.

Open daily April, May and September 8 am-7 pm; June-August 8 am-8 pm; October-March 8 am-6 pm.  
Free.

### Parc Floral Phoenix

405 Promenade des Anglais  
Nice, France

**Phone:** 04-9229-7700

<http://www.parc-phoenix.org>

This beautiful park with 20 separate gardens close to the airport and next door to the Musee des Arts Asiatiques presents the habitat of the Mediterranean flora. The giant greenhouse with its diamond dome is one of the largest in Europe. It has 2,500 different plants, including a terrific selection of delicate orchids, thriving in seven tropical climates. Rare species of ducks, black swans and pelicans live on the shores of the park's lake. Interesting temporary themes and exhibitions.

Open daily April-September 9:30 am-7:30 pm, October-March 9:30 am-6 pm. Last entry one hour before closing. 2 euros adults, free for children younger than 12.



## Recreation

Nice and its hinterland, the Pays Nicois, offer a great selection of activities. The beaches are just a few feet/meters away from the famous Promenade des Anglais, which is occupied by strollers, joggers and skaters.

Sailing, kayaking, diving, parasailing and beach volleyball are only some of the watersports the French Riviera offers.

The hinterland is great territory for hikers, and when you return to the city you can relax in one of several luxurious spas.

## Shopping

Nice has its fair share of high-end boutiques and luxury stores on and around New Town's Rue Paradis, but Cannes and Monte Carlo probably have more to offer for glam shoppers.

With its warren of streets, Vieux Nice is the most attractive place to shop. There you can browse for art, crafts, clothes and fabulous specialty foods (fruit confits, handmade pasta) at the markets and local shops. The flower and fruit markets on Cours Saleya are great to watch.

The pedestrian zone around Place Massena has scores of designer clothes shops and cheap boutiques, while on Avenue Jean Medecin you'll find Nice's biggest department store, Galeries Lafayette, as well as the local mall Nice Etoile.

**Shopping Hours:** Generally, shops are open Monday-Saturday 10 am-6:30 or 7 pm. Food stores may open earlier. Most stores close on Sunday, and some on Monday. Many smaller shops stay open until 7 or 8 pm. Butcher shops, fish markets, and fruit and vegetable stands often close 1-4 pm and then reopen until 7 or 8 pm. Small grocery shops stay open to 11 pm.

## Department Stores

### Galeries Lafayette

6 Ave. Jean Medecin  
Nice, France

**Phone:** 04-9217-3636

<http://www.galerieslafayette.com/magasin-nice>

A branch of the famous upscale Parisian department store in the heart of Nice right on Place Massena. On its six levels you will find anything you can possibly want, including fashion and a well-stocked food hall. On the top floor a restaurant and a cafe await weary shopaholics.

Open Monday-Saturday 9:30 am-8 pm, Sunday 11 am-8 pm.

## Markets

### Cours Saleya

Cours Saleya  
Nice, France

Cours Saleya is famous for its colorful flower market, which takes place at its western half, while the eastern end is reserved for a great food market where you can buy exotic spices, delicious fruits and

vegetables, candied fruits and much more. On Monday, Cours Saleya also hosts an antiques market. In the summer months check out the lively art market (June-September).

Flower market Tuesday-Saturday 6 am-5:30 pm, Sunday till 1:30 pm; food market daily except Monday 6 am-1:30 pm; antiques market Monday 6 am-6 pm.

## Marche aux Poissons

Place St. Francois  
Nice, France

This busy fish market takes place around the square's central fountain in the Old Town. Go early to sample the atmosphere. A few hours later, the fresh catch will be snapped up.

Open daily except Monday 6 am-1 pm.

## Marche aux Puces

Place Robilante  
Nice, France

Nice's flea market is always worth a visit. It's best to go in the morning.

Open Tuesday-Saturday 10 am-6 pm.

## Shopping Areas

### Centre Commercial Nice TNL

15 Blvd. du General Louis Delfino  
Nice, France

**Phone:** 04-9356-8240

<http://www.nicetnl.com>

This mall right in the center of Nice, just a short walk from the Acropolis conference center, has more than 60 shops and restaurants under one roof.

Monday-Saturday 9 am-8:30 pm. Open Sunday in December.

## Dining

### Dining Overview

Nice's cuisine still shows its Ligurian influences, with its love for seafood, olive oil and tiny black olives, chickpeas, fresh basil and pine nuts.

For starters, the Nicois eat pasta (for example, ravioli filled with seafood, artichoke hearts or walnut sauce), gnocchi or, in the winter, *soupe au pistou*. This hearty soup is made with *courgettes* (zucchini), tomatoes, beans, potatoes, onions and vermicelli, and served with *pistou*, a sauce based on basil, pine nuts and garlic. Another Nicois favorite is *bourride*, a fish soup served with aioli.

Rightfully popular is the *salade nicoise*, usually made with quartered tomatoes, capers, black olives, spring onions, anchovies or tuna, green beans, and with or without hard-boiled eggs and potatoes.

Grilled fish and *estocafinado* (a stew of salt cod, garlic and tomato stockfish) appear on most menus, as do ratatouille or *tourte aux blettes* (a pie filled with boiled Swiss chard, pine nuts and raisins in vinaigrette). The Nicois also love *socca* (a sort of chickpea flour pancake), *pan bagnat* (a sandwich filled with tuna, onions, tomato, egg and olive oil), *pissaladiere* (onion tart), *petits farcis* (stuffed vegetables with meat or herb and mushroom fillings) and courgette flowers.

Nice has its very own local wine, the high-quality Bellet, from one of the smallest vineyards in France.

Expect to pay within these general guidelines, based on the cost of a dinner for one, including tax and service charge but not including drinks: \$ = less than 20 euros; \$\$ = 20 euros-35 euros; \$\$\$ = 36 euros-50 euros; and \$\$\$\$ = more than 50 euros.

## Local & Regional

### Aphrodite

10 Blvd. Dubouchage  
Nice, France

**Phone:** 04-9385-6353

<http://www.restaurant-aphrodite.com>

In a formal contemporary setting, David Faure's innovative cuisine hovers between traditional and artistic *terroir* dishes and molecular experiments. Sample dishes such as roasted lobster tail with thyme, mussels in *pistou* soup, or saddle of rabbit stuffed with basil and confit shallots. There's a wholly vegetarian menu, too, and the wine list is impressive. Excellent desserts, friendly service. You can also eat on a pretty terrace shaded by magnolia trees. Very affordable set menu for lunch.

Open Tuesday-Saturday for lunch and dinner. Closed first three weeks in January and for about two weeks (variable) in August. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

### Chantecler

37 Promenade des Anglais  
Nice, France

**Phone:** 04-9316-6400

<http://www.hotel-negresco-nice.com/les-restaurants/le-chantecler>

One of the grandest and best places to eat in Nice, this opulent, Michelin-starred restaurant is in the Hotel Negresco, a luxurious historic landmark on the Promenade des Anglais. Chef Jean-Denis Rieubland describes his cuisine as "inspired by Provence with the respect of its products and traditions." The azure Mediterranean can be seen from the window. Service is highly professional but friendly. The food is classic, refined haute cuisine at top prices, although the set Sunday lunch is a surprising bargain.

Open Sunday for lunch and dinner, Wednesday-Saturday for dinner only. Reservations required. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

### Charlotte's

30 Rue Alberti  
Nice, France

Beautiful little bistro with fresh, local ingredients and hearty, rustic French food. New menu every day as the chef works with whatever is in season and available from the market.

Monday-Thursday for lunch and dinner. Friday and Saturday dinner only. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$\$. No credit cards.

## Chez Pipo

13 Rue Bavastro (at the port)  
Nice, France

**Phone:** 04-9355-8882

<http://www.chezpipo.fr>

This small restaurant is where the locals gather to eat the "sacred Nicois trilogy" of *socca* (the best in town), *pissaladiere* and *tourte aux blettes* at unbeatable prices. Wash it down with a glass or two of local rose. Expect the place to be fuller than full at all times, and be prepared to wait in line outside until you can snatch a seat at one of the long tables with wooden benches.

Open Tuesday-Saturday for lunch and dinner, Sunday for dinner only. Closed in November. Reservations not accepted. \$. No credit cards.

## Don Camillo Creations

5 Rue des Ponchettes  
Nice, France

**Phone:** 04-9385-6795

<http://www.doncamillo-creations.fr>

Behind the low-key facade of a house on a residential street, a short walk from Cours Saleya, the award-winning young chef Marc Laville and his team serve creative and refined local Mediterranean and Italian fare with ingredients fresh from the local markets. Try grilled langoustine with orange chutney, lobster stew with artichokes, truffle risotto, Corsican sausage with onion rings, or pan-fried foie gras served with a mille-feuille of *pissaladiere* and *socca*. The wine list has matching local Bellet wines. Affordable set menu for lunch, a rarity for a restaurant of this class in this city. Leave room for the delicious desserts. Elegant contemporary interior.

Open Tuesday-Saturday for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Flaveur

25 Rue Gubernatis  
Nice, France

**Phone:** 04-9362-5395

<http://www.flaveur.net>

Tables are close together in this small and intimate restaurant with contemporary decor. Wooden cutouts of fish decorate the walls. Portions are on the small side, and service can be slow and disorganized, but this is one place where Michelin-starred dining need not cost the earth. For those in a rush during lunchtime, the dish of the day is 28 euros or three courses for 38 euros.

Tuesday-Friday for lunch and dinner, Saturday for dinner only. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Keisuke Matsushima

22 Rue de France  
Nice, France

**Phone:** 04-9382-2606

<http://www.keisukematsushima.com>

The *equipe* of the celebrated Keisuke Matsushima, alias Kei, serves Michelin-starred local and Mediterranean cuisine with a strong Italian accent. The only Asian touches you might find are a sprinkle of wasabi or a hint of Szechuan pepper. You will dine in a minimalist modern Zen setting. The menu excels in seafood. Signature dishes are fried red mullet with artichokes, pan-seared Breton crayfish and sauteed calamari, but also a heavenly mille-feuille of Simmental beef or braised pork with honey. The desserts are to die for, and the cellar has a very interesting, but mostly pricey selection of exclusively French wines. A three-course lunch menu is available.

Tuesday-Friday for lunch and dinner, Saturday and Monday for lunch only. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## La Cantine de Lulu

26 Rue Alberti  
Nice, France

Lucien Brych, or Lulu as the locals affectionately call him, serves up wonderfully simple local dishes and French classics in his illustrious bistro with only a few tables. Try the *daube Provencale* (beef stew) and handmade *merda de can* (delicious green gnocchi), or sample the classics of Nicois cuisine by ordering the *farandole gourmande* (seven or eight starters). For dessert the Promenade des Anglais, a mellow chocolate cake with orange confit and vanilla sauce, is highly recommended. The first Friday of the month is reserved for the grand aioli, and the last Friday of the month is stockfish and bouillabaisse day.

Open Monday-Friday for lunch and dinner. Closed in August. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## La Merenda

4 Rue Raoul Bosio  
Nice, France

This restaurant, run by eccentric chef Dominique Le Stanc, has no phone and is closed on weekends. He left his Michelin-starred restaurant Le Chantecler at the Negresco hotel to open a simple shoebox-sized and invariably packed bistro in Old Nice in the vicinity of the opera. You can make a reservation, if you pass by earlier in person, but most people just queue up outside until a few of only 24 seats become available—two rows of tables and tiny stools, and be prepared to share a table. The fare prepared in the tiny open kitchen at the back of the room—Provençal cuisine prepared with local ingredients fresh from the market—is chalked up on a blackboard. Try *pistou* soup, ratatouille, tripe à la Nicoise with panisse (potato-sized chunks of fried chickpeas), oxtail, slowly stewed *daube de boeuf*, stockfish (dried-cod stew with aniseed, simmered with onions, tomatoes, garlic, olives, peppers and potatoes), polenta with gorgonzola, *petits farcis* (stuffed vegetables) or andouillettes (mini sausages made from pork tripe). Service is swift, but prices are on the rise.

Open Monday-Friday for lunch and dinner. Closed three weeks in August. Reservations are recommended but only available if you inquire in person. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. No credit cards.

## L'Aromate

20-22 Ave. du Marechal Foch  
Nice, France

**Phone:** 04-9362-9824

<http://www.laromate.fr>

Young chef Mickael Gracieux, winner of a Michelin star just two years after starting his first restaurant, has learned his trade working for some of the best chefs in France, and it shows. In the evening, he serves modern French cuisine including a fabulous crab in ginger jelly, truffled scallops, roast lamb shoulder with carrot mousse, or potato tarte with onions, smoked bacon and parsley. At lunchtime he serves risottos and simpler fare. Prices are rather high, but the small selection of regional wines is still quite affordable.

Open Tuesday-Saturday for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Le Bistrot d'Antoine

27 Rue de la Prefecture  
Nice, France

Great, unpretentious brasserie that is full of locals every night. Wonderful atmosphere and great value. Try the truffle risotto or the grilled duck magret.

Tuesday-Saturday for lunch and dinner. Reservations required. \$-\$\$\$. No credit cards.

## L'Escalinada

22 Rue Pairoliere  
Nice, France

**Phone:** 04-9362-1171

<http://www.escalinada.fr>

This rustic, unpretentious place, opened in 1952, serves authentic traditional Nicois dishes. Many locals eat there and swear that Brigitte Autier's *merda de can* (gnocchi prepared in the local way) tastes better than anywhere else on the Cote. Also try the tripes, stockfish, red mullet, stuffed vine leaves, Provencal beef stew, Marsala veal stew and *porchetta* (suckling pig). The brave can order *testicules de mouton panes* (sheep's testicles in batter). For dessert try the sweet *mangold* cakes or (in summer) the lemon tarts. Great list of regional wines such as the Clos St. Vincent or the Clos St. Joseph. Also sample the local digestif called *farigoulette*, a thyme liqueur. Friendly atmosphere, impeccable service. You can also eat on the candle-lit streetside terrace. Three-course menu available.

Open daily for lunch and dinner. Closed mid-November to mid-December. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$. No credit cards.

## Le Sejour Cafe

11 Rue Grimaldi  
Nice, France

**Phone:** 04-9327-3784

<http://www.lesejourcafe.fr>

Opened May 2013 in the center of town by Renaud and Marilene Geille with their daughter Marina, this bistro offers gourmet contemporary Mediterranean cuisine in an authentic and cozy environment. It specializes in seafood and fish, sourcing local ingredients.

Tuesday-Saturday for lunch and dinner. It becomes a tearoom in the afternoon. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## L'Univers de Christian Plumail

54 Blvd. Jean Jaures  
Nice, France

**Phone:** 04-9362-3222

<http://www.christian-plumail.com>

Christian Plumail is an institution in Nice, with a rightfully deserved Michelin star. Sample excellent cuisine *du terroir* such as red mullet soup, sea bream, *loup de mer* in coconut sauce, suckling lamb from the Pyrenees, sweetbread with morels and a great selection of regional starters that you can order as a full set menu. Excellent lunch menu at a moderate price, and fine wines served by the glass, too.

Open Tuesday-Friday for lunch and dinner, Saturday and Monday for dinner only. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Seafood

### L'Ane Rouge

7 Quai des Deux Emmanuel  
Nice, France

**Phone:** 04-9389-4963

<http://www.anerougenice.com>

The Red Donkey is a popular restaurant by the harbor with excellent seafood. In a refined setting, chef Michel Devillers serves up a mean bouillabaisse (order in advance), or try the cod in coconut sauce, sauteed sea bream with onion chutney and artichokes, *loup de mer* or red mullet. In autumn, regional game dishes appear on the menu. Delicious desserts, fine selection of matching wines, beautiful terrace. Three-course prix-fixe business lunch is available. Closed Wednesday, when the chef occasionally offers cooking lessons.

Open Friday-Tuesday for lunch and dinner, Thursday for dinner only. Reservations recommended. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.



## Le Cafe de Turin

5 Place Garibaldi  
Nice, France

**Phone:** 04-9362-2952

<http://www.cafedeturin.fr>

This old cafe is a real institution in Nice, opened 200 years ago on a corner of then Place Victor (now Place Garibaldi) and Boulevard Jean Jaures. A hundred years ago it was more like a cabaret, but today it specializes in seafood, which may well be the best served in Nice. Enjoy the authentic decor inside or sit outside under the colonnades of Place Garibaldi and sample fresh oysters, plates of mussels, langoustine, crab and sea urchins (the latter September-April only). Prices are a bit steep, and service can be rough, though nobody seems to care. If it's full, the annex Le Petit Turin serves the same delicacies.

Open daily for lunch and dinner. Closed part of July. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Security

### Etiquette

It is sometimes said that the predominant religion in France is French. The country is rightfully proud of its culture, and visitors who exhibit an understanding of the country's lifestyle and customs will be given more consideration than those who don't.

At the same time, the people of Provence and the Cote d'Azur are also proud of the many cultural and historical differences between "the South" and "the North." It is polite and sensible to share in their opinion.

**Appointments**—Schedule meetings well in advance. Punctuality is expected. It is not necessary to have your business cards translated into French, but it does make a great impression with the French and shows consideration on your part.

**Personal Introductions**—Handshakes are the common form of greeting and are somewhat less firm than is common in some other countries. Eye contact should be direct. On meeting, always use professional titles or standard French titles (monsieur, madame, mademoiselle) along with the person's last name. Don't use a person's first name until instructed to do so, and if speaking French remember to always use the formal *vous* even when on friendly terms (adults, especially middle-aged and older, usually use *tu* only when there is genuine personal friendship). *Les bises*, or light kisses to the cheeks as a greeting, occur only among close acquaintances. As a visitor, participate only if your host initiates the action. Do not expect your smile to be reciprocated. The French do not smile just to be smiling.

**Negotiating**—The French are formal in their business dealings, but the conversation may take a winding path and at times may dwell on minutiae. Do not let this confuse or frustrate you. Decisions are typically made very formally and deliberately and after respectful consultation with superiors. Junior executives typically do not have a great deal of authority. The French tend to avoid the subject of money in meetings, although it is by no means taboo. It shouldn't, however, be the first item on the agenda.

**Business Entertaining**—Business lunches are common and often extended in duration—three hours is not uncommon. Maintain good table manners at all times, hold knives and forks correctly, and keep your hands visible while dining.

**Body Language**—The French converse at a somewhat closer distance than is common in some other countries. It is not unusual for polite conversational touching to occur. "Thumbs up" means "OK"—and it can also mean "one." Good posture is important, as is stylish, good-quality clothing. Chewing gum in public is considered ill-mannered, as is eating while walking on the street.

**Gift Giving**—Though the practice is not typical, tasteful gifts are appreciated. They are usually only given after a relationship is somewhat established. If you are invited for dinner at someone's house, take flowers and/or a bottle of wine. Any type of flower is acceptable, but avoid white and red, which are reserved for funerals and romantic relationships, respectively. If you give wine make sure it's of the highest quality you can afford.

**Conversation**—If you speak French, do so. If you do not, learn a few polite phrases—and learn them well. But do not be offended if your French pronunciation is corrected. Good topics are food, wine, art and French soccer or rugby. Be careful not to inadvertently demean any aspect of French culture. The French are a private people. Personal questions are considered poor form. Privacy extends to the audible level of conversation. The French tend to speak more quietly than people from the U.S. or even other European countries.

**Other Information**—Office doors are typically kept closed; knock before entering. The French pride themselves on their leisurely lifestyle. It is not unusual to have six weeks of vacation per year.

## Personal Safety

Nice is generally a safe city. However, you should take all normal precautions, because thefts (particularly pickpocketing and purse snatching) do occur. Be particularly vigilant against car break-ins; any bag, case or other object left in view is temptation to a thief. Always take your belongings with you. It is best to leave rental cars in a garage. Also, keep the car locked when driving to avoid purse- or luggage-snatching by thieves on motor scooters. Watch your belongings on public beaches at all times. The best way to avoid trouble with panhandlers or beggars is with a firm but polite refusal—ignoring them is usually not effective.

If you are the victim of a crime, the police station at 1 Ave. Marechal Foch (phone 04-9217-2222) is open around the clock, and you will usually find an English-speaking officer. Expect a fair share of French bureaucracy nonetheless. The emergency line for the police is 17, and for the fire brigade 18. For emergencies on the water call 1616.

For the latest information, contact your country's travel-advisory agency.

## Health

No unusual health risks exist, with one exception: France has one of the highest rates of HIV/AIDS in Europe, so unprotected sex is a high-risk activity. Condoms (*preservatifs*) are available at pharmacies and at dispensers near them.

Although tap water is safe to drink throughout the country, many French people choose to drink bottled water. Food sold by street vendors is generally safe to eat.

Nice has excellent medical and dental facilities. The pharmacies are first-rate, and many sell herbal and alternative-medicine treatments as well as standard medications. Many medications from your own country may not be available, however, so take along your own supply. All pharmacies are designated by

a green neon cross, and most are open Monday-Saturday 8:30 am-8 pm. They all post on their doors a list of pharmacies that are open Sunday or after hours.

SOS Medecins provides on-call doctors for nonurgent medical care 24 hours a day (phone 04-9203-3335). The dentists at SOS Dentistes are available around the clock on weekends and on weekdays during school vacations. The line for dental emergencies Monday-Friday is 04-9203-3282 and on weekends 04-9203-3375. Most of these health-care professionals have at least a basic understanding of English.

For the latest information, contact your country's health-advisory agency.

In emergencies, go to the city-center Hopital St.-Roch, 5 Rue Pierre Devoluy. It is part of Le Centre Hospitalier Universitaire de Nice. Phone 04-9203-3333 or 04-9203-3322. <http://www.chu-nice.fr>.

The regular emergency line is 04-923-7777 and the pediatric emergency line is 04-9203-0392. In case of possible poisoning the poison control hotline is 04-9175-2525.

## Disabled Advisory

Nice is not always the easiest city for travelers with disabilities to maneuver, but the government is trying to make the city more accessible. Most monuments, museums and attractions are suited for wheelchairs.

An organization called Tourisme et Handicaps (<http://www.tourisme-handicaps.org>) assesses business premises for suitability for disabled people and is introducing a sticker, "Destination Pour Tous," that approved premises may display.

The Nice Tourist Office website has a page on Accessible Nice. <http://en.nicetourisme.com/accessible-nice>.

## Facts

### Dos & Don'ts

Do say *bonjour* (good morning) when meeting people, and *bonsoir* in the evening, typically after 3 pm. This courtesy extends to absolutely everyone, even if you are only buying a metro ticket or a morning paper. For a polite goodbye say *merci, au revoir* (thank you, goodbye) when leaving a store or other establishment.

Don't forget to address people by their full title when speaking to strangers: *monsieur* for men, *madame* for married women and *mademoiselle* for unmarried women. You will have to decide whether a woman is a *mademoiselle* or a *madame*.

Do say *pardon* if you bump into someone, even lightly, though they may say it to you first, even if it is your fault.

Don't fill wine glasses too full when pouring for other people. Many French wine drinkers like to swirl their wine around in the glass in order to release the full bouquet.

Don't be afraid to try out new food on French menus—it's probably delicious. Try asking for the chef's special du jour.

Do avoid breakfasts at cheaper hotels; they are usually overpriced and of poor quality. Instead of often stale bread in the breakfast room, opt for a fluffy fresh croissant and a cafe au lait in a cafe next door.

Don't smoke in bars, restaurants and discos; it is illegal to do so. You may be fined up to 75 euros.

Do watch out for dog excrement on the sidewalks in Nice, a nuisance even worse than in Paris.

## Geostats

**Passport/Visa Requirements:** Citizens of the U.S. and Canada need only passports to visit Nice. Reconfirm travel document requirements with your carrier before departure.

**Population:** 343,304.

**Languages:** French. You may also hear a local city dialect called Nissart. In addition, most tourism professionals know a good level of English and Italian.

**Predominant Religions:** Christian (Roman Catholic). There are also Protestant, Jewish and Muslim places of worship.

**Time Zone:** 1 hour ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (+1 GMT). Daylight Saving Time is observed from the last Sunday in March to the last Sunday in October.

**Voltage Requirements:** 220 volts. Two round-pin plugs.

**Telephone Codes:** 33, country code; 04, area code;

## Money

### Currency Exchange

France uses the euro as currency. Bank notes are available in denominations of 500 euros, 200 euros, 100 euros, 50 euros, 20 euros, 10 euros and 5 euros (many shops will not accept 200-euro and 500-euro notes). There are coins for 2 euros, 1 euro, 50 cents, 20 cents, 10 cents, 5 cents, 2 cents and 1 cent.

ATMs are the easiest and usually the cheapest way of obtaining cash in euros, drawn on either your debit or credit card. ATMs are located throughout the city center and at banks. Most accept major credit cards and are connected to at least one international banking network (for bank cards). Each machine clearly displays symbols to let you know which cards will work. You can also change money at banks and currency-exchange offices (*bureaux de change*). Not all banks have exchange facilities, so look for those with a change sign.

Big hotels will usually change currency, but the rate is often not favorable. Traveler's checks in U.S. dollars should be exchanged at banks or exchange offices, as very few businesses will accept them.

Major credit cards are readily accepted, although a minimum purchase (usually 10-15 euros) might be required.

When paying for goods or services by credit card, you generally won't be able to use a card that has only a magnetic strip on the back instead of a chip (*puce*) on the front. Using a magnetic strip, customers use their signature to make purchases, whereas the "chip" methods require a PIN only.

Most banks are open Monday-Friday 9 am-noon and 2-4 pm. Banks are closed on weekends and national holidays.

## Taxes

Goods and services in France are subject to a value-added tax, called TVA (*taxe sur la valeur ajoutée*). The price displayed almost always includes tax—the letters TTC (*tous taxes compris*) next to a price mean it's included. The current TVA is 19.6% on most goods, except for food, medicine and books, in which case it is 5.5%. Be aware that it can be as high as 33% on items such as watches, cameras and DVDs.

To benefit from a TVA refund, the unitary purchase price inclusive of tax from any single store must be at least 175 euros. Look for shops with a Tax Free Shopping logo in their windows. You need to be a nonresident of the EU. When you make your purchase, request a global refund check or an export sales invoice (*bordereau de vente*).

When you get to the airport, present the form at the claims counter at customs for an immediate refund, or ask the customs officials to stamp your form and then send it to Global Refund, which will refund you through your credit card. Some stores manage their own TVA refunds and have specific forms and procedures, so always check with customer service.

The details of who may claim TVA refunds are online at <http://www.douane.gouv.fr/data/file/1268.pdf>.

There is also a VAT of 5.5% for all hotels, but this is automatically included in the bill.

## Tipping

By law, all restaurants in France include tax and service within their prices (generally 10%-15% of the bill). This is indicated by *servis compris* at the bottom of the receipt. There is no expectation of any further tip. Nevertheless, at bars and cafes, it's a nice gesture to leave some small change as a tip. This same practice can also be applied to taxi drivers, although no tip is required.

Hotel porters expect 1 euro per bag, and housekeepers may be tipped 2 euros-4 euros per day, although there is no expectation of any tip at all. Lavatory attendants usually levy a small charge of about 0.50 euros, and this will normally be posted clearly on a sign at the entrance.

## Weather

The best time to visit Nice is April-October, although August can be too hot, humid and overcrowded. Winters are generally moderate, but it's really too cold for swimming or lying on the beach.

There's a world of difference between visiting Nice during high season (late spring, summer, early fall) and low. If you're interested in the sights or spas—as opposed to lying on the beach—go during low season. There are no crowds, hotel rates drop, and it's easy to get reservations in good restaurants. The only downside is that a few of the attractions may have shorter hours.

## What to Wear

You really can't dress up too much in Nice, but you will find that locals as well as daytrippers and tourists usually wear casual attire. Only the poshest restaurants, nightclubs and casinos require men to wear a jacket and tie (*tenue correcte*). Elsewhere it is typical to opt for smart casual attire.

Business dress is generally understated and stylish. Dark colored, conservative business suits are standard for men for the initial meeting and business suits or dresses in soft colors work for women.

Although still very sharp-looking, the style of business dress in Nice is a little more relaxed than in Paris or Lyon.

Do not wear shorts for dining out, and walking around the streets in swimwear is considered indecent, with the exception of the waterfront—bikini tops on the Promenade des Anglais are a common sight. If you visit religious buildings, dress modestly.

Even in summer, evenings can be cool, so pack a sweater or light jacket. In winter (October-April) you will need a warmer jacket. Days may be quite balmy, but it can be rainy with a chilly wind, too.

## Livorno, Italy (Port city for Florence)

### Overview

#### Introduction

Situated on the Tyrrhenian Coast, Livorno, Italy, is Tuscany's second largest city, next to Florence.

In addition to offering some of the best seafood in the region, the city's pebbly beaches stretch south from the town's seafront, and there is a compact historic quarter. The old Porto Mediceo part of town was laid out in the 1500s by Florentine architect Bernardo Buonattenti for the Medicis. The five-sided Fosso Real canal is the highlight and is bridged in the east by the Piazza della Repubblica. Take a boat trip along the *fossi* (canals) for an interesting perspective of the city.



The tourist office is just off the Via Grande, in a building that separates the Piazza Grande from the Piazza del Municipio. There, you can book day trips, or the canal boat tour in Livorno. It also sells tickets for the one-hour hop-on, hop-off bus tour of Livorno that starts from the Piazza Grande.

### Port Information

#### Location

The port is a major cruise stop for the Western Mediterranean and serves as a jumping-off point for day trips to Pisa (15 minutes away by train), the walled city of Lucca (35 minutes away), Florence (an hour and a half away by train or car), and the hill town of San Gimignano (also an hour and a half away by car). Taxis line up outside the ships, and the train station is 15 minutes away.

The cruise terminal at the Calata Punto Franco is 0.3 mi/0.5 km away from the city center, and shuttles or taxis can drop you off at the Piazza Grande. Take Bus 1 "Stazione" to the train station, a five-minute ride. From there, trains run regularly to Pisa, Lucca and Florence.



## Florence, Italy

### Overview

#### Introduction

Florence, Italy, is one of the most beautiful cities in the world—and for many visitors, it is the most splendid. While travel to the city usually centers on its attractions, including museums, palaces and churches that overflow with masterful paintings and sculpture, it is not limited to those destinations.

Visitors encounter the spirits of da Vinci, Dante, Boccaccio, Michelangelo and the Medicis, and the days of the Renaissance seem close at hand.



As the birthplace of the Renaissance, Florence combines unequalled beauty with centuries of history in a heady mix. Visitors' first glimpse of the Duomo is likely to take their breath away.

Florence is essentially a proud, provincial city, with a conservative mentality yet very liberal politics. Visitors can sense that its citizens pay a price for living in what has become, essentially, an open-air museum. Florentines—especially those who deal with masses of tourists daily—can be haughty and standoffish toward visitors. But there are many who will offer visitors a warm smile and a helpful gesture.

The vitality of this small city, the robustness of its cuisine, the enduring beauty of its architecture and the richness of its treasures cannot fail to educate, exhilarate and dazzle those who visit Florence.

#### Highlights

**Sights**—The Duomo (The Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore) and its dome; Battistero di San Giovanni (the Baptistery) and its intricate doors; Palazzo Pitti; Ponte Vecchio; Basilica di San Miniato al Monte with the splendid view from the Piazzale Michelangelo; the tomb sculptures by Michelangelo at the Cappelle Medicee; the view of downtown from the rooftop of The Continentale hotel.

**Museums**—*David* and Michelangelo's other sculptures at the Galleria dell'Accademia; the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo (with the original door panels of the Baptistery); the Museo Nazionale del Bargello (with works by Cellini, Donatello and Michelangelo); the Uffizi Gallery; the Galleria Palatina and Royal Apartments in the Pitti Palace.

**Memorable Meals**—A massive, rare *bistecca alla fiorentina* at Il Latini; *fritto del convento* (Florentine chicken and vegetables lightly fried) at the superb Il Francescano in the shadow of Santa Croce's convent; any of the restaurants on Piazza Santo Spirito.

**Late Night**—A stroll around Ponte Vecchio, with the lights reflected in the Arno; jazz at the Jazz Club; hot beats and top DJs at YAB.

**Walks**—A leisurely stroll along the terraced paths of Boboli Gardens; walking through Cascine Park and its enormous Tuesday market; a sunset stroll from Piazzale Michelangelo to Ponte Vecchio; exploring the Piazza Duomo pedestrian zone.



**Especially for Kids**—The Museo Stibbert and its park; the Gozzoli fresco in the Cappella dei Magi in Palazzo Medici-Riccardi; the Duomo's bell tower and dome; Galileo's telescope in the Museo Galileo.

## Geography

The historic city center of Florence, the Centro Storico, is where you'll find most of the city's monuments and attractions. The area was once encircled by medieval city walls. In the 1860s, when Florence was briefly capital of the newly formed Kingdom of Italy, the walls were replaced by large boulevards that today form a ring road (*viali di circonvallazione*) around the old city. The city falls naturally into two sections: the Duomo side of the Arno River, called *di qua d'Arno*, and—across the river—the Oltrarno side. (Oltrarno means "beyond the Arno.")

On the Duomo side, where visitors usually spend most of their time, Piazza della Signoria and the Duomo itself are grand, historic centers of religious and political power. The Oltrarno has its share of monuments such as the Palazzo Pitti and the churches of Santo Spirito and Santa Maria del Carmine, but it is less imposing and can feel more accessible. The last bastion of old Florentine popular culture is in the Oltrarno: The San Frediano neighborhood is still known for its artisans who handcraft shoes, restore furniture and practice goldsmithing, although their workshops are slowly disappearing.

A note about Florentine addresses: A street number such as 36/R means "36 rosso (red)," and 5/N would mean "5 nero (black)." All storefront commercial properties are marked with red street numbers (the coloring is usually worn off, making them simply stone-colored); residences have black numbers (sometimes they may look blue). Don't be surprised if the sequence of numbers is not continuous between the two colors: You may have 5/R followed immediately by 27/N. If there's no letter designation, the address is probably in the black sequence.

## History

Julius Caesar established Florentia, the "flourishing one," in 59 BC as a military post along the banks of the Arno River, and Roman walls embraced what is now the city center. The city did not truly come into its own until the 12th and 13th centuries, becoming an independent republic in 1198. In this period, a few merchant and banking families began to distinguish themselves in the world market, establishing guilds and bringing international commerce to the city. The florin, named after the city, became a standard unit of currency in Europe.

During the 13th and 14th centuries, the Guelphs (supporters of the pope) and the Ghibellines (upholders of the Holy Roman Emperor) battled each other. After these factions faded into history, the Medici family of bankers ruled the city. Their courts employed artists, designers, architects, artisans, musicians and poets, fostering an explosion of artistic production that has shaped the city to this day. Their dynasty lasted, on and off, until 1737, when Florence came under the rule of Maria Theresa of Austria.

At this time, a pact was drawn up in Vienna to guarantee the longevity and integrity of the Florentine artistic patrimony. The masterpieces of the Austrian crown and the private collections of the Medici family were handed over to the Tuscan government. The agreement stipulated that no work of art could be taken from the enormous collection. It also emphasized that the priceless works would be showcased to attract visitors to the region.

Italy itself was unified in 1860, and Florence became the capital of the Kingdom of Italy from 1865 to 1870. (Rome later became capital of the Republic of Italy.) The city had several setbacks in the 20th century: During World War II, all the bridges were blown up except the Ponte Vecchio, and many buildings along the river were destroyed. In 1966, a particularly devastating flood swept through the city,

causing an incredible amount of damage to buildings and artworks. (You can still find markers throughout the city that indicate the water level that day.) More works were lost or seriously damaged in 1993 when a car bomb exploded in front of the Uffizi Gallery. After all three events, Florentines quickly rallied to restore the city and preserve its vital Renaissance legacy.

## Potpourri

Although there is no shortage of torture museums in Tuscany, Florentines were the first people in the world to outlaw the death penalty through the reforms of Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo in 1786.

The great medieval poet Dante Alighieri, author of the *Divine Comedy*, bitterly complained about the "shameless" Florentine women who freely showed their bare breasts in public. Rest assured, they don't do that anymore.

The "Stendhal Syndrome" (fainting from an overdose of art exposure) was first described by the French author Stendhal who experienced dizziness after visiting the church of Santa Croce.

Florence is extremely popular with language students because Florentines are said to speak the purest Italian.

The Uffizi is the busiest museum in Italy, with more than 1.5 million visitors per year. If you don't have a reservation, expect to wait many hours before you can enter.

After Oscar Wilde was arrested and tried in the U.K. in 1895, many affluent gay and lesbian British intellectuals flocked to Florence to enjoy the tolerant lifestyle there.

It is only mildly surprising that Florence was the birthplace of *Pinocchio* creator Carlo Lorenzini, also known as Carlo Collodi (but not in the Tuscan village from which he took his name). Another Florentine native was Realist painter John Singer Sargent, born to American parents in Florence in 1856.

Florence's leather and its beef steak, the famous *bistecca alla fiorentina*, come from the Chianina cow, a huge, pure white animal with large, expressive brown eyes.

## See & Do

### Sightseeing

Visitors rarely allot enough time for Florence, partly because until you've been there, it's difficult to comprehend how much there is to experience in the city. Any visit, brief or extended, should begin with the magnificent Duomo. Don't be content with admiring its stunning exterior: Go inside and gaze at the frescoes and take in the view from the top of the dome.

Afterward, check out the exquisite detail of the famed bronze doors of the adjacent Baptistery. The striking Palazzo Vecchio on Piazza della Signoria still functions as city hall. Take a tour and learn about the palace's integral role in Florentine history—as well as the reason for its unusual trapezoidal dimensions.

The most celebrated art museum in the city is the Uffizi Gallery, considered by many to be, along with the Louvre and El Prado, one of the most important museums in the world. The Uffizi has 13th- to 18th-century Italian and European masterworks—paintings by Botticelli, Hugo van der Goes, Titian, Rubens, Caravaggio, Raphael and Rembrandt, among others. The line at the Uffizi can get very long, so we

strongly encourage advance reservations. Many hotels can make reservations for the Uffizi and other attractions for a small surcharge, similar to booking online in advance.

Another fabulous art museum is the Bargello, with its impressive collection of medieval and Renaissance armor, furnishings and sculpture—including Donatello's lion sculpture, the *Marzocco*, the symbol of Florence. The Accademia, near Piazza San Marco, is chiefly known for housing Michelangelo's *David*, although his many other sculptures there are worth the visit in their own right.

Cross the Arno on the Ponte Vecchio, which has spanned the river since 1345. The bridge still has shops and rooms jutting out over the sides—a common feature in the Middle Ages, although few examples remain today. The Vasari Corridor, which runs above the bridge, links the Uffizi with the Palazzo Pitti.

Sights on the other side of the Arno include the Palazzo Pitti, the archetype of all European royal residences and one of the best preserved, with beautifully decorated baroque interiors and the gorgeous Boboli Gardens on the hillside behind it. Be sure to see the Palazzo's Palatine Gallery, which contains 16th- and 17th-century paintings by Raphael, Titian, Veronese, Rubens and Van Dyck.

The fully furnished Royal Apartments date back to the last kings of Italy. Don't confuse the Palazzo Pitti with the Medici Chapels, which are connected to the Church of San Lorenzo—but they are also well worth a visit.

## Historic Sites

### Basilica di San Miniato al Monte

Via del Monte alle Croci (also accessible from the travertine stairs on Viale Galileo Galilei, or take a No. 12 or 13 bus to the Piazzale Michelangelo and walk from there)

Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-234-2731

<http://www.sanminiatoalmonite.it>

A five-minute walk from Piazzale Michelangelo in the Oltrarno takes you to the Basilica di San Miniato al Monte. One of the most beautiful examples of Romanesque churches in Italy, it offers a breathtaking view of Florence. The church contains a number of treasures, such as Spinello Aretino's 14th-century frescoes in the sacristy depicting scenes from the life of St. Benedict. During the siege of 1529 and 1530, Michelangelo designed the battlements that surround the property. Also, a number of notable people are buried there, among them Carlo Lorenzini, who wrote *Pinocchio* under the pen name Collodi.

Open in winter Monday-Saturday 8 am-1 pm and 3:30-7 pm; in summer daily 8 am-7 pm. Free.

### Battistero di San Giovanni

Piazza San Giovanni

Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-230-2885

[http://www.museumsinflorence.com/musei/Baptistry\\_of\\_florence.html](http://www.museumsinflorence.com/musei/Baptistry_of_florence.html)

There are few buildings in Florence older than the Baptistery of St. John, which is thought to date from the sixth or seventh century. Its present look, however, stems from 11th- and 12th-century renovations, and its monumental doors trace the development of Florentine sculpture from Gothic to Renaissance style. Examine the doors in an order that traces this development: Start with the south set (facing Via Calzaiuoli) designed by Andrea Pisano, and then move to the north doors (facing Via de Martelli). Finally, examine the gilded east doors, which Michelangelo declared worthy of being the "Doors of Paradise," and

that is how they are known. The work of Lorenzo Ghiberti (who also designed the north doors), the east doors represent a revolutionary introduction of perspective into relief sculpture. Those on the Baptistry are reproductions—the originals are on display at the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo to protect them from pollution and too much contact. Inside the Baptistry, the ceiling is covered in beautiful, Byzantine-style mosaics.

Monday-Saturday noon-7 pm (first Saturday of the month 8:30 am-2 pm), Sunday and public holidays 8:30 am-2 pm. Easter Monday, 25 April and 1 May 8:30 am-7 pm. 1 and 2 December 8:30 am-6:30 pm. Closed New Year's Day, Easter, 8 September, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Last entry 30 minutes before closing; enter through the north door. 4 euros.

## Boboli Gardens

Palazzo Pitti, Oltrarno (behind the palace)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-238-8786

<http://www.giardinodiboboli.it>

Eleonora di Toledo, wife of Cosimo I of the Medici family, had the garden built behind the Palazzo Pitti in 1549. The greatest talents of the day were summoned to the task, and the result is a true *giardino all'Italiana*, with lush hedges, evergreen trees, narrow paths, grottoes, fountains, ponds, citrus trees in terra-cotta pots, and a number of antique and late-Renaissance statues. It is today one of the most-visited sights in the city. Also on the grounds are the Museo delle Porcellane (Porcelain Museum) and an amphitheater that Edith Wharton called one of the triumphs of Italian garden architecture. A coffeehouse on the premises invites you to sip an espresso or an expensive drink and to enjoy the unforgettable view. There are three entrances (and ticket offices): on the right side of the Palazzo Pitti courtyard; on Via Romana, the street to the right of the palace; and on Piazzale di Porta Romana, through a gate in the city wall to the right of Porta Romana. If there's a long line at the palace entrance, try one of the others—they're usually less crowded.

The gardens are open 8:15 am until dusk; closed the first and last Monday of the month, 1 January, 1 May and Christmas. 7 euros (admission includes entrance to the Bardini Gardens, the Museo delle Porcellane, the Museo degli Argenti and the Costume Gallery) or you can purchase a combined ticket for the entire museum complex, good for three days, for 11.50 euros.

## Campanile di Giotto

Piazza Duomo (adjacent to the Duomo)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-230-2885

<http://www.ilgrandemuseodelduomo.it/monumenti/4-campanile>

The bell tower of the Duomo, built by Giotto, is just under 85 m/279 ft tall and provides picturesque views of the Duomo, the Palazzo Vecchio, the Church of San Lorenzo and more through its imposing mullioned windows. And you only have to climb 414 steps; there is no elevator.

Daily 8:30 am-7:30 pm (6 January 8:30 am-2 pm). Closed New Year's Day, Easter, 8 September and Christmas Day. Last entry 40 minutes before closing. 6 euros. A combined ticket for all the key monuments of the Cathedral, including the Campanile, the Museo dell'Opera, the Duomo, the Baptistry and the Crypt is 10 euros. Tickets can be purchased in advance online.

## Cappella Brancacci

Piazza del Carmine 14 (Oltrarno, northwest of the Palazzo Pitti)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-276-8224

<http://www.museiciviciorentini.it/en/brancacci>

One of the less publicized jewels of Florence, the Brancacci Chapel is a side chapel of the rather somber church of Santa Maria del Carmine. Inside is some of the very best work of Masaccio (with contributions from Filippino Lippi and Masolino): a series of frescoes (restored in the 1980s) depicting scenes from Genesis and the life of St. Peter. Only 30 visitors are allowed in the cappella at one time.

Monday-Saturday 9:30 am-1 pm and 2-5 pm, Sunday 9:30 am-12:30 pm. The ticket office closes at 4 pm. Reservations suggested during high season and for large groups. 6 euros.

## Cappella dei Magi

Palazzo Medici-Riccardi, Via Cavour 3  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-276-0340

<http://www.palazzo-medici.it/ita/home.htm>

The Chapel of the Wise Men is a small family chapel within the Palazzo Medici Riccardi: It's a little jewel, thanks to Benozzo Gozzoli's gorgeous frescoes. Restoration of the chapel in the early 1990s revealed the vibrant colors of the original, especially the gold leaf used on the figure of Balthasar. The Medicis and their contemporaries of note are represented as part of a procession of wise men that winds around three walls of the chapel toward the nativity scene above the altar. Entrance to the chapel is limited to a maximum of eight visitors every seven minutes.

Daily except Wednesday 9 am-5 pm. 7 euros. Admission includes the courtyard garden and Galleria di Luca Giordano (one of the finest baroque interiors in town) of the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi.

## Cappelle Medicee

Piazza Madonna degli Aldobrandini 6  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-294-883

<http://www.cappellemedicee.it>

The Medici family commissioned the Medici Chapels, part of a larger complex that includes the Church of San Lorenzo, as its own memorial. Some of Michelangelo's most famous and moving sculptures (some unfinished) adorn the tombs of the Medici within the New Sacristy, which he designed. The chapels also contain some of the finest examples of *pietre dure* (hard-stone inlay), also called—inaccurately—Florentine mosaic.

Daily 8:15 am-6 pm; closed the second and fourth Sunday and the first, third and fifth Monday of the month. Also closed New Year's Day, Easter and Christmas Day. 6 euros. Reservations can be made online.

## Loggia della Signoria

Piazza della Signoria (on the Uffizi side of the piazza, near the Palazzo Vecchio)  
Florence, Italy

<http://www.piazza-signoria.com>

Also called the Loggia dei Lanzi, this arcade along the side of the Piazza della Signoria shelters a number of important sculptures, including Cellini's *Perseus Slaying Medusa* and Giambologna's *Rape of the Sabines*. In the square itself are copies of several famous statues that are housed elsewhere in Florence, including Michelangelo's *David* and Donatello's *Judith and Holofernes*. The Loggia's roof was modified and turned into a terrace by the architect Bernardo Buontalenti so that the Medici family could watch the ceremonies in the piazza from a great vantage point.

## Palazzo Pitti

Palazzo Pitti 1  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-294-883 or 055-238-8611

<http://www.polomuseale.firenze.it/en/musei/pitti.php?m=palazzopitti>

Originally built in 1458 by the influential banker Luca Pitti, the palace was purchased about a century later by Cosimo I of the Medici family. He and his wife enlarged it, commissioned the Vasari Corridor (Il Corridoio Vasariano), which connects the palace with the Uffizi across the river, and designed the adjacent Boboli Gardens. Successive generations of Medicis enlarged the palace further in order to house their courts. The palace's museums are located inside The Royal Apartments.

There are eight separate museums in this huge edifice. The most important is the Palatine Gallery, which houses works by old masters. Among the others are museums devoted to silver and other precious materials, porcelain, art from the Napoleonic era to the 1940s, and period dress, which, frankly, aren't that impressive when compared to the Palatine. The ticket office for the museums is on the right side of the courtyard.

Open daily except Monday 8:15 am-6:50 pm. The ticket office closes at 6:05 pm. A combined ticket for the entire museum complex of the Pitti Palace including the apartments and gardens is the best deal—it is 11.50 euros and is valid for three days. A ticket covering just the Galleria Palatina and the Modern Art Gallery, two popular museums, is 8.50 euros. Audio guides are 5.50 euros. No credit cards.

## Palazzo Vecchio

Piazza della Signoria  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-276-8325

<http://www.museiciviciorentini.it/en/palazzovecchio>

The palace and surrounding square have been at the heart of Florentine politics since the 1200s. The palace is still the city hall and plays a vital role in Florentine life. The building took on its trapezoidal shape because of the Guelph government's reluctance to build on the soil of the formerly Ghibelline neighborhood, which they, as victors, had razed to the ground.

Part of the building is open to visitors, including the impressive Salone dei Cinquecento, decorated for Cosimo I by Vasari. In addition to other beautifully decorated rooms, don't miss the original bronze sculpture of *Judith and Holofernes* by Donatello and the *Cherub with a Dolphin* fountain by Verrocchio.



October-March Thursday 9 am-2 pm, Friday-Wednesday 9 am-7 pm; April-September Thursday 9 am-2 pm, Friday-Wednesday 9 am-midnight. The ticket office closes one hour before the building does. Tickets are 10 euros for the museum, 14 euros for the museum and tower. A multimedia guide is available for 5 euros.

## Piazzale Michelangelo

This panoramic terrace on a hill overlooking Florence from the Oltrarno was designed by Florentine architect Giuseppe Poggi in 1869. It offers a splendid view encompassing not only the city, but also the surrounding hills. This area was one of the hot spots in the siege of 1529 and 1530, when Michelangelo was appointed military engineer. To commemorate the artist's role in defending Florence, in the 1800s the city named the open square and avenue after him.

The Piazzale, as it's known to Florentines, gets very crowded on weekend afternoons and evenings, especially in fine weather. Try to catch the view at sunset—it's stunning. The walk up from the Piazza Poggi near the Arno is steep, but a No. 12 or 13 bus can take you there. For a pleasant walk down, take the steps from the front of the balustrade. On the way down stop at the Rose Garden, a pretty garden with a panoramic view and more than 350 kinds of roses. Interspersed in the garden are 11 sculptures from Belgian artist Jean-Michel Folon.

## Ponte Vecchio

The "old bridge" is an enduring symbol of Florence. It spans the most narrow point of the Arno, on the site of the original Roman bridge, with a unique structure dating from 1345. The shops you see there today housed butcher shops and grocers until 1593, when Ferdinand I de' Medici decided that such humble (and smelly) shops were unsuitable for a bridge connecting the Medici residence (Palazzo Pitti) and the government offices (the Uffizi). He decreed that only goldsmiths and jewelers could tend shop on the bridge, and it has remained that way ever since. During World War II, it was the only bridge spanning the Arno that the Germans did not destroy—they focused instead on demolishing the medieval buildings on either side.

The two lines of shops break in the center, affording views of the river in both directions. The bridge crosses the Arno River at Via Por Santa Maria. Heading into the city center (*di qua d'Arno*), Via Por Santa Maria and Via Calimala take you directly to the Duomo; on the other side of the river (Oltrarno), Via de' Guicciardini leads to the Palazzo Pitti.

## Santa Croce

Piazza Santa Croce 16

Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-246-6105

<http://www.santacroceopera.it>

This masterpiece of Florentine Gothic architecture is a basilica run by Franciscan monks. Construction of the church began in the late 1200s and took nearly a century to complete. Beautiful pillars are topped by sweeping Gothic arches. The many altars and small chapels that line the walls of the basilica are filled with tombs, sculpture and paintings. Because many notable Italians—including Michelangelo, Galileo, Machiavelli and others—are buried in the church, it ranks as a national shrine. The church is located on a lovely understated piazza of the same name, with just a handful of cafes and restaurants and a broad open space with benches to stop and appreciate the beauty of the church's marble facade, a relatively recent addition from the 19th century.



Open Monday-Friday 9:30 am-5 pm. 6 euros (includes entrance to the basilica and the Museo dell'Opera di Santa Croce). Last entrance 30 minutes before closing. Free for children younger than 11 and the disabled.

## Santa Maria Novella

Piazza Santa Maria Novella 18  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-219-257

<http://www.chiesasantamarianovella.it>

Visitors arriving by train have the church of Santa Maria Novella as their first, impressive introduction to Florentine art and architecture. The airy nave contains a striking crucifix painted by Giotto, the *Trinity* by Masaccio and Brunelleschi's wooden *Crucifix* (also called the "egg crucifix" because legend has it that Donatello was so impressed by it, he dropped the satchel of eggs he was carrying).

Monday-Thursday 9 am-5:30 pm, Friday 11 am-5:30 pm, Saturday 9 am-5 pm. 5 euros. Ticket office closes 30 minutes before the church closes.

## Santo Spirito

Piazza di Santo Spirito (Oltrarno, northwest of the Palazzo Pitti)  
Florence, Italy 50100

**Phone:** 055-210-030

<http://www.basilicasantospirito.it>

This stark but beautiful Renaissance church is Filippo Brunelleschi's last great work. Inside, *Il Crocifisso* (the Crucifixion), attributed to the young Michelangelo, is on display.

Daily except Wednesday 9:30 am-12:30 pm and 4-5:30 pm. Free.

## Sinagoga

Via Luigi Carlo Farini 4  
Florence, Italy 50121

**Phone:** 055-234-6654

<http://www.moked.it/jewishflorence>

Florence's synagogue is also the location of the Museo di Arte e Storia Ebraica (Museum of Jewish Art and History). The synagogue was completed in 1882, and the museum was established in 1981. The two-story museum gives an overview of the Jewish community and a history of its relationship with the city of Florence. English-language guided tours run every hour.

Sunday-Thursday 10 am-6:30 pm (October-March until 5:30 pm), Friday 10 am-2 pm (October-March till 3 pm). 6.50 euros adults, 3 euros students.

## The Duomo

Piazza del Duomo  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-230-2885

<http://www.ilgrandemuseodelduomo.it>

The Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore—the Duomo—is one of the largest cathedrals in the world. It's topped by Filippo Brunelleschi's dome, a stupendous feat of 15th-century engineering. The architect used a method of his own creation to build it, inventing equipment and machines to meet his needs. The interior vault of the dome features Giorgio Vasari and Federico Zuccari's *The Last Judgment*. It's the largest fresco painting in the world, and it took 16 years to restore.

You can go beneath the nave to visit excavations of the earlier Romanesque church on the site; Brunelleschi's tomb is there. A climb to the top of the dome affords a wonderful panorama of Florence from the base of the lantern, but the 463-step ascent (no elevator) is not for everyone. Enter through the Porta della Mandorla of the Duomo (north side). Lines are shortest around 4 pm.

Visitors can climb the cathedral's dome Monday-Friday 8:30 am-7 pm, Saturday 8:30 am-5:40 pm; closed Sunday and holidays. The cathedral is open Monday-Friday 10 am-5 pm (closes at 4 pm on Thursday in May and October, 4:30 pm January-April, November and December), Saturday 10 am-4:45 pm, Sunday and holidays 1:30-4:45 pm. Last entry 40 minutes before closing. Entrance to the cathedral is free. Admission to the dome itself is 8 euros, but for 10 euros you can get access to all the monuments of the Cathedral complex—the Duomo, Campanile, Museum, Baptistry and Crypt.

## Museums

Museum times and prices change frequently, and museums occasionally close for renovation, trade union meetings, lack of personnel, strikes or to take inventory. Some close for the day at 1 or 2 pm, and most are closed during religious holidays. Check with any of the tourist offices for the latest information.

Entrance tickets for state-run museums can be booked in advance by calling Firenze Musei. A service fee of 3 euros is charged (even for reduced-price or free tickets). The service fee for the Uffizi Gallery and Galleria dell'Accademia, the two sights where lines for entrance are the longest, is 4 euros. Having your tickets in hand will save time, especially during peak tourist season (late spring and summer). Book tickets at least a day in advance. Monday-Friday 8:30 am-6:30 pm, Saturday 8:30 am-12:30 pm. Phone 055-294-883. For more information, visit <http://www.firenzemusei.it>.

The Firenze Card offers admission to more than 30 museums in Florence, as well as bus and tram transportation throughout the city. The card is valid for 72 hours and costs 72 euros. In many cases you can avoid ticket lines by using the card. Check the advantages of the card against your planned itinerary carefully; it will only save you money if you plan to see enough of the attractions it covers. The complete list of museums and attractions it includes is updated regularly. For more information, visit <http://www.firenzecard.it>.

## Museums of Fiesole

Via Portigiani 1  
Fiesole, Italy

**Phone:** 055-596-1293

<http://www.museidifiesole.it>

The nearby hill town of Fiesole has an archaeological area that includes the remnants of Etruscan walls, a Roman theater, an Etruscan temple and Roman baths, plus an archaeological museum. There is also the Bandini Museum (open Friday-Sunday), which houses an art collection that includes Byzantine works and polychrome glazed terra-cotta sculptures from the della Robbia workshop in Florence.

Daily 10 am-7 pm (till 6 pm in March and October; until 2 pm in January and February). Closed Tuesday November-February. Monday-Thursday 10 euros; Friday-Sunday 12 euros, includes admission to the Bandini Museum.

## Galleria d'Arte Moderna

Palazzo Pitti  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-238-8601 or 055-294-883 for reservations

<http://www.polomuseale.firenze.it/en/musei/?m=artemoderna>

Art of the modern era, from Napoleon's time to the 1940s, situated on the second floor of the Palazzo Pitti. Perhaps the most interesting paintings are those by members of the Macchiaioli School—Italy's answer to the Impressionists—including Martelli, Fattori and Signorini.

Daily except Monday 8:15 am-6:50 pm. Closed New Year's Day, 1 May and Christmas Day. 8.50 euros for regular admission, which also includes entrance to the Galleria Palantina.

## Galleria dell'Accademia

Via Ricasoli 60  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-238-8609 or 055-294-883 for reservations

<http://www.polomuseale.firenze.it/en/musei/?m=accademia>

Of the three statues of Michelangelo's *David* in Florence, the original can be admired there. In 1873, it was moved from its original position in front of Palazzo Vecchio, where a copy stands today. You may also view Michelangelo's four *Prigioni* (prisoners) in the Accademia. In their unfinished form, the statues seem to struggle to emerge from the marble. There's also a notable collection of 13th- to 18th-century paintings that would constitute a remarkable museum collection on their own.

Daily except Monday 8:15 am-6:50 pm. Ticket office closes 30 minutes before closing time, but you will have to stand in a very long line to get there. Better to reserve almost a week ahead for an appointment. 6.50 euros.

## Museo Archeologico

Via della Pergola 65 (the public entrance is at Piazza Santissima Annunziata 9B)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-23-575

<http://www.archeotoscana.beniculturali.it/index.php?it/146/finze-museo-archeologico-nazionale>

The Archaeological Museum of Florence is one of the most important in Italy. Originally a Medici collection, it was expanded by the Lorraine dynasty in the late 18th century. There are many priceless remains from the Etruscan period, including the *Chimera of Arezzo*, the *Orator* and the *Minerva of Arezzo*. Greek and Egyptian artifacts are also on display.

Tuesday-Friday 8:30 am-7 pm, Saturday and Sunday 8:30 am-2 pm. Ticket office closes 45 minutes before closing time. Closed New Year's Day, 1 May and Christmas Day. Admission is 4 euros, audioguide is 5 euros.

## Museo degli Argenti (The Medici Treasury)

Palazzo Pitti  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-238-8709 or 055-294-883 for reservations

<http://www.polomuseale.firenze.it/en/musei/?m=argenti>

This museum gets its name from its silver collection, but it contains many other treasures collected by the ruling families of Florence: vases of lapis and other rare gemstones, jewelry, carved ivory and paintings. The setting itself, in rooms designed by artist Giovanni da San Giovanni in 1634, is spectacular.

Daily 8:15 am-4:30 pm November-February; open till 6:30 pm March-May and September; till 7:30 pm June-August; till 5:30 pm October. Closed the first and last Monday of the month. Also closed New Year's Day, 1 May and Christmas Day. 7 euros (includes entrance to the Galleria del Costume, Museo della Porcellane, the Boboli Gardens and the Bardini Gardens).

## Museo dell'Opera del Duomo

Piazza del Duomo 9  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-230-2885

<http://www.ilgrandemuseodelduomo.it>

This museum keeps most of the major works of art from the Baptistery and the Duomo safe from the elements and crowds. Included in its collection are Michelangelo's *Pieta* (made for his own tomb) and Donatello's renderings of Mary Magdalene, St. John the Evangelist and the prophets Habakkuk and Jeremiah. The original eastern doors from the Baptistery are on display there. The Baptistery's stunning silver altar—a masterpiece of Florentine silversmithing—is there, as well.

Monday-Saturday 9 am-7:30 pm, Sunday and holidays 9 am-1:45 pm. Closed New Year's Day, Easter, 1 September and Christmas Day. Ticket office closes 40 minutes before the museum closes. 10 euros.

## Museo di San Marco

Piazza San Marco 1  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-294-883 for reservations

<http://www.polomuseale.firenze.it/en/musei/?m=sanmarco>

This beautiful museum is in the former convent adjoining the church of San Marco. It is best known for the numerous frescoes by Fra Angelico within the monks' cells and elsewhere. Don't miss the *Last Supper* by Ghirlandaio. Because it's located across the square from the Accademia, it's easy to visit both in one day.

Monday-Friday 8:15 am-1:50 pm, Saturday and Sunday 8:15 am-4:50 pm. Closed the first, third and fifth Sunday and the second and fourth Monday of every month. Ticket office closes 30 minutes before the museum closes. 4 euros (7 euros with reservation).

## Museo Galileo (Institute and Museum of the History of Science)

Piazza dei Guidici 1  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-265-311

<http://www.museogalileo.it>

This renovated museum houses the Medici collection of scientific instruments and has a whole section dedicated to Galileo Galilei. Highlights are the vast collection of telescopes and globes and a very macabre display of Galileo's preserved finger. The museum is home to the only original instruments of Galileo that have survived.

Daily 9:30 am-6 pm (Tuesday till 1 pm). Closed New Year's Day; 6 January; Easter; 1 May; and 8, 25 and 26 December. 9 euros. Family ticket (two adults and maximum of two children younger than 18) 22 euros. Video guide 5 euros.

## Museo Nazionale del Bargello

Via del Proconsolo 4  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-238-8606 or 055-294-883 for reservations

<http://www.polomuseale.firenze.it/en/musei/?m=bargello>

The Bargello is impressive, powerful, foreboding and hostile. Once the judicial offices and prison of Florence, it was the scene of many hangings. Now a museum, it holds one of the finest collections of Renaissance sculpture in Italy, with masterpieces by Michelangelo, Verrocchio, Giambologna and Cellini, among others.

Daily 8:15 am-1:50 pm; closed the first, third and fifth Sunday and the second and fourth Monday of the month. Also closed New Year's Day, 1 May and Christmas Day. Ticket office closes 40 minutes early. 4 euros; 7 euros with reservation.

## Museo Stibbert

Via Stibbert 26 (in the hills north of the city center; take a No. 4 bus from Piazza dell'Unita)  
Florence, Italy 50134

**Phone:** 055-475-520

<http://www.museostibbert.it>

This is a great place for children—Museo Stibbert features lots of knights in armor on horseback and a park that surrounds the building. The museum is the city's legacy from the Englishman Frederick Stibbert (1838-1906), who amassed some 50,000 pieces in his beautiful estate on the hillside of Montughi. Arms and armor from around the world make up the bulk of the collection, but you'll see art from Europe, the

Middle East and Pacific Asia, as well as porcelain, furnishings, tapestries and relics from Napoleon I. The bonus is the Arts and Crafts-style villa itself.

Monday-Wednesday 10 am-2 pm, Friday-Sunday 10 am-6 pm; ticket office closes one hour before the museum. Closed New Year's Day, Easter, 1 May, 15 August and Christmas Day. 8 euros adults, 6 euros children ages 4-12, free for children younger than 4.

## Uffizi Gallery

Loggiato degli Uffizi 6  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-238-8651 or 055-294-883 for reservations

<http://www.polomuseale.firenze.it/en/musei/?m=uffizi>

One of the greatest museums in the world, this collection was originally the private property of the Medici family. As the Medici dynasty was ending in the early 1700s, Anna Maria Ludovica de' Medici—the last of the family—determined that the museum would become the eternal birthright of the city of Florence and its citizens.

The museum contains the greatest collection of Italian Renaissance paintings and sculpture in the world, starting with pre-Renaissance masters such as Giotto and progressing through Masaccio, da Vinci, Michelangelo and innumerable others. Don't miss the Botticelli rooms—*Spring* and *The Birth of Venus* are breathtaking. There's also an excellent selection of northern masters, especially Rubens, Van Dyck and Rembrandt. The Uffizi also has an entire wing devoted to works by Caravaggio and others that were previously relegated to storage. The terrace cafe atop the Loggia della Signoria affords wonderful views of the Piazza della Signoria, the Palazzo Vecchio and the town of Fiesole on the horizon.

Various rooms close on occasion because of staff shortages or cleaning, so check the list of closures at the entrance if you're hoping to see a particular work or works by a particular artist. Also note that some pieces from the collection occasionally go on loan. Split up your visit if you have time to do so. Lines can be horrendous, especially in high season—make life easier with advance reservations if at all possible.

Daily except Monday 8:15 am-6:50 pm. The ticket office closes at 6:05 pm. Closed New Year's Day, 1 May and Christmas Day. Reservations can be made online (<http://www.b-ticket.com/b-ticket/Uffizi/default.aspx>). 6.50 euros, 11 euros during special exhibitions. .

## Shopping

The city of Florence has always thrived on its mercantile activity and still does today, even though you'll find that Florentine shopkeepers tend to maintain an air of stolid indifference. The city is a shopping mecca, for better or for worse: Just as some visitors feel overwhelmed by the wealth of artistic treasures Florence has to offer, others feel that the pressure to consume overshadows all other experiences.

Shopping at small, independently run Italian stores might be different from what you're used to. It is customary to greet the owner or shopkeeper with the appropriate *buongiorno* or *buona sera* as you enter. Italians treat their shops as an extension of their own homes, and you'll create a better shopping experience if you are friendly and responsive.

One great thing about shopping in Florence is that you can find a craftsman to make just about anything you can dream up—from shoes to stationery, books, clothes and furniture. A local artisan can turn your dream into reality and it may not be as costly as you might expect.

An important shopping (or window-shopping) destination for any visitor is a stroll over Ponte Vecchio, where jewelers still exercise their trade behind fantastic and brilliant display windows. Leather goods are a great buy: Those with little time to search them out should head for the Santa Croce area. (There's a selection of leather souvenirs from an actual leather-making school inside the church of Santa Croce itself—they are well-made with tourists in mind, but can be quite pricey.) The stalls near the Central Market of San Lorenzo in Via dell'Ariento carry wares that are well-made and reasonably priced.

Anything made of colorful Florentine marbled paper makes a nice gift or keepsake. Other popular souvenirs are antique prints depicting the city and the surrounding hills, classic posters from a museum shop and wooden Pinocchio dolls.

The markets of Florence display a vast array of leather goods, and most of it is quality Italian leather; however, there are some cheap imitations slipping in. Be sure to check all the stitching and seams. Remember that under current Italian law, buyers of fake goods are regarded as accomplices to a crime and can be fined on the spot for such purchases.

If you have the time and inclination, browse the shops on such streets as Via Calzaioli, Via del Corso, Via Roma and the upscale Via Strozzi, which leads to Via Tornabuoni, the Fifth Avenue of Florence. Fashion-seekers will find major Italian and European designers—Armani, Ferragamo, Versace, Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Cartier, Hermes and trendy Roberto Cavalli—along Via Tornabuoni and Via della Vigna Nuova.

**Shopping Hours:** Most shops are generally open in winter 9 am-1 pm and 3:30-7:30 pm; in summer, the afternoon hours are 4-8 pm. Some large department stores and supermarkets stay open during the lunch break, as do some shops in the city center. Certain types of shops, such as clothing boutiques, supermarkets and large stores, are closed all day Sunday and on Monday morning.

## Department Stores

### Coin

Via dei Calzaiuoli 56/R  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-280-531

<http://www.coin.it>

A stylish department store with men's and women's clothing and footwear, household furnishings, cosmetics and more. A good place to shop for larger sizes, which are often hard to come by in Italy.

Monday-Saturday 10 am-8 pm, Sunday 10:30 am-8 pm.

### La Rinascente

Piazza della Repubblica 1  
Florence, Italy 50123

**Phone:** 055-219-113

<http://www.rinascente.it>

Cosmetics, fashion accessories, lingerie, kitchenware and two floors of classic men's and women's clothing, with Missoni knitwear and Versace home furnishings. Great selection of perfumes. Do not miss the great view from the roof terrace, where you can have a coffee.

Monday-Saturday 9 am-9 pm, Sunday 10:30 am-8 pm.



## Oviessa Firenze

Via Panzani 31/R  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-239-8963

<http://www.ovs.it>

Sells reasonably priced clothing for men, women and children. It will handle the paperwork for IVA tax refunds for tourists returning to non-European Union countries. There is a second central location at Via Nazionale 29/R (phone 055-215-346).

Monday-Saturday 9 am-7:30 pm, Sunday 10 am-7:30 pm.

## Markets

### Mercato delle Cascine

(take a No. 17-C bus to the center of the park, which is the far end of the market)  
Florence, Italy

If bargains are your thing, don't miss this famous Tuesday-morning market which the locals call "Il Mercatone." You'll find clothing, sheets, towels, kitchenware, wicker, lingerie, perfume and food for sale. Much of the clothing is tatty, but keep an eye out for the occasional brand-name item at knock-down prices. Keep a close eye on your wallet or purse, too: Pickpockets and purse snatchers frequent the market. The market stretches for about 1 mi/1.6 km along the banks of the Arno River, from Ponte della Vittoria to Ponte all'Indiano.

Tuesday 8 am-2 pm.

### Mercato delle Pulci

Piazza dei Ciompi (a little east of the city center)  
Florence, Italy

Florence's flea market, where you'll find some really off-the-wall items.

Daily 9 am-12:30 pm and 3:30-8 pm; open all day the last Sunday of the month.

### Mercato di San Lorenzo

Via dell'Ariento 10 (near Piazza San Lorenzo)  
Florence, Italy

Probably the most popular market in town, it's much more tourist-oriented than the Cascine market, partly because of its location. On sale are leather jackets, bags, costume jewelry, scarves, belts and small gift items. Prices are fairly reasonable, and the leather goods are well-made. (Check for natural suede inside and "Made in Italy" stamped on real leather and not a postage-stamp-sized square attached to fake leather.) Visit the indoor fresh-produce market, which is an enjoyable experience even if you're not buying anything. You can also get a meal inside the market at the famous Nerbone, or picnic fixings from Perini.

The outdoor stalls are open daily 9 am-7:30 pm in summer, daily except Monday 9 am-7:30 pm in winter. The indoor food market is open Monday-Saturday 7 am-2 pm year-round.

## Mercato Nuovo

Loggia Mercato Nuovo (north of Ponte Vecchio)  
Florence, Italy

Also called the Mercato del Porcellino, after the bronze boar statue—rub his snout and you'll be sure to return to Florence. Look for intricate handmade embroidery and lace, many straw articles and Florentine wood carvings, together with good-quality leather goods at reasonable prices.

Daily except Monday 9 am-7:30 pm, till 8 pm in summer.

## Dining

### Dining Overview

Florentines, like people of other regions of Italy, are very proud of their cuisine. "Italian cooking" as such does not exist—Florentine, Roman and Milanese cuisines do. In Florence, you might say that the cuisine mirrors the character of the city's inhabitants: no-frills, solid and dignified.

*Bistecca alla fiorentina* is a traditional thick, high-quality, grilled T-bone steak served very rare. But steak was not a large part of the diet of the people whose culinary arts made Florentine cooking what it is today. The staple fare was stick-to-the-ribs, vegetable-based soups served with a drizzle of olive oil on top. Among the soups, two traditional Florentine favorites are *pappa al pomodoro* (tomato, basil and bread soup) and *ribollita* (bean and vegetable soup with bread).

Porcini mushrooms, a real delicacy, are a staple in *risotto ai funghi porcini* (risotto with porcini mushrooms), *tagliatelle ai funghi porcini* (egg pasta with porcini sauce) and *porcini alla griglia* (grilled porcini caps). And it would be a disservice not to elaborate on haricot beans when talking about Tuscan food. Classic preparations include cooking with fresh sage and tomato (*fagioli all'uccelletto*) or with sausage (*fagioli e salsiccia*). The prosaic sound of these dishes belies their irresistible flavor.

Tuscany is undeniably one of the greatest wine-producing regions in the world. Chianti is the most ubiquitous, although quality can vary. Deviation from Chianti's traditional recipe guidelines has given rise to a new regionally specific classification called "Super Tuscan" you should try. In addition to sampling the Chianti, you should not leave without tasting the exquisite and expensive Brunello di Montalcino or the more moderately priced, but very good, Vino Nobile di Montepulciano.

Navigating the seas of Florentine dining spots—from the inexpensive *fiaschetteria* to the pricey *enoteca*, from the *ristorante* to the trattoria and pizzeria—can be as bewildering as it is exhilarating. Once upon a time, the trattoria was an everyday establishment offering simple, hearty fare. Nowadays, because the charm of these places has acquired a price tag, a meal in a well-known trattoria may be just as elegant and expensive as one in a *ristorante*.

Pizzerias frequently offer a whole gamut of choices, from steak to fish, but it's worth remembering that the pizzeria's specialty is pizza—usually cooked in a wood-burning oven. In Florence, pizza is baked in large rectangular baking sheets, and you decide the size of your slice. Price is by weight.

The *fiaschetteria* and *enoteca* are specialized wine shops that frequently serve light meals, including sandwiches made with *porchetta* (roast pork), soup and crostini. If you'd like to try a takeout specialty and are not too squeamish, try a *lampredotto* or tripe sandwich from one of the tripe stands (*trippaic*) in the markets of San Lorenzo, San Ambrogio or Il Porcellino.

The trend for people who work in the city to have lunch near their workplace rather than at home has meant a surge in inexpensive lunch places. Paradoxically, the same restaurant may offer the identical menu for dinner that it does for lunch, but at double the price. Also, in order to be competitive at lunchtime, elegant cafes will provide a splendid buffet lunch for the same price as their scruffier counterparts.

Italians don't usually bother with breakfast (apart from a cappuccino and maybe a pastry). However, some of the hipper bars and restaurants now offer what they call an English or American breakfast or even an American-style Sunday brunch.

Most restaurants open for lunch noon-2:30 pm, with the rush 1-2 pm. Dinner hours begin at 7 pm at the very earliest (more typically at 7:30 pm) and continue until at least 10 pm; many places stay open until midnight. Florentines dine punctually at 8:30 pm, so if you want to enjoy your meal at a quieter time or avoid lines, plan to dine a bit earlier.

Here is a sampling of restaurants in town. Expect to pay the following for dinner for one, excluding drinks and tip: \$ = less than 20 euros; \$\$ = 20 euros-35 euros; \$\$\$ = 36 euros-65 euros; \$\$\$\$ = more than 65 euros.

## Local & Regional

### Cantinetta Antinori

Piazza degli Antinori 3/R (near Stazione Santa Maria Novella)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-292-234

<http://www.cantinetta-antinori.com/it/firenze>

Wine bar and restaurant managed by the Antinori family, which has been producing wines since 1385. Savor locally produced wine, olive oil and goat cheese, along with other Tuscan dishes, in the small but elegant restaurant.

Monday-Friday for lunch and dinner. Closed in August and the week of Christmas. Reservations recommended. \$\$-\$\$\$.

### Cantinetta dei Verrazzano

Via dei Tavolini 18/R  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-268-590

<http://www.verrazzano.com/en/the-place>

This elegant *enoteca* was created by the family that owns Castello da Verrazzano, a well-known Chianti producer. The atmosphere is warm and charming—terra-cotta floors, marble counters and dark wood furnishings. The location—a stone's throw from Palazzo Vecchio and the Duomo—couldn't be better. Make a light lunch or dinner out of a good wine and warm focaccia baked on the premises with thyme and pecorino (sheep's-milk cheese) or porcini mushrooms.

Monday-Saturday for breakfast, lunch and dinner. \$-\$\$.

## Coco Lezzone

Via del Parioncino 26/R (near the Duomo)  
Florence, Italy 50123

**Phone:** 055-287-178

<http://www.cocolezzone.it>

You can eat typical Florentine fare at communal tables in this well-hidden restaurant whose name comes from a dialect phrase meaning "dirty cook." Florentines say the food reminds them of Grandma's home cooking.

Monday and Wednesday-Saturday for lunch and dinner till 10:30 pm. Closed Tuesday and Sunday. \$\$\$.  
No credit cards.

## Eataly

Via Martelli 22/R  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-015-3610

<http://www.firenze.eataly.it>

This marketplace, restaurant and food experience all in one is part of the slow food movement. It features small-production vendors selling artisanal food products, courses in food and tastings, and other events such as a fruit and vegetable sculpture show. There are small food stations spread across the first and second levels offering food and wine from all producing regions of Italy—including a seafood station, pasta station, meat station, artisanal gelato stand, and a coffee and espresso station featuring regional pastries and desserts.

Daily 9 am-10:30 pm. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Enoteca Pitti Gola e Cantina

Piazza Pitti 16 (in the Oltrarno, across the street from Palazzo Pitti)  
Florence, Italy 50125

**Phone:** 055-212-704

<http://pittigolaecantina.com>

This charming little *enoteca* offers an excellent selection of fine Chianti reserves, with delicious Tuscan snacks to go with your choice of wine. The restaurant buys its pork from one of Tuscany's most famous meat slayers and man of letters—Dario Cecchini, the so-called "poet butcher" of Chianti. Chef Marzia Sasseti prepares the pasta dough daily and uses only the freshest local ingredients to create classic Tuscan dishes such as braised meats, soups and pastas.

Open daily except Monday for lunch and dinner. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Harry's Bar

Lungarno A. Vespucci 22/R (along the river)  
Florence, Italy 50123

**Phone:** 055-239-6700

<http://www.harrysbarfirenze.it>

Although the original bar and restaurant is in Venice, Harry's Bar Firenze is considered an elegant second location and is frequented by a dwindling crowd of nostalgics. You'll find classic food there—try the curried chicken breasts or the Milanese-style cutlets.

Daily for lunch and dinner until midnight; closes 3-7 pm. Reservations required. \$\$\$\$ . Most major credit cards.

## Il Cantinone di Gallo Nero

Via San Spirito 6  
Florence, Italy

Chef Michele prepares traditional, tasty Tuscan cuisine including wild boar, hare, *ribollita*, fresh pastas ,and the classic T-bone *bistecca* of Chianini beef.

Daily except Monday for lunch and dinner. \$\$-\$\$\$ . Most major credit cards.

## Il Franceseano

Largo Bargellini 16 (near Piazza Santa Croce)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-241-605

<http://www.ilfrancescano.com>

Dining there is like having a personal chef welcome you into his elegant but understated home to sample his personal favorite dishes. The pastas are excellent—try the handmade *gnudi a burro e salvia*, a delicious kind of dumpling. The owners care about freshness and quality. They have a local farm provide the olive oil; they often welcome diners with a complimentary glass of *prosecco*; and the *fritto del convento* is good enough to make you want to become a monk.

Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$ . Most major credit cards.

## Il Latini

Via dei Palchetti 6/R (near Piazza Goldoni)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-210-916

<http://www.illatini.com>

Even though the place is usually packed with tourists, it's still a favorite of Florentine residents and offers communal-style dining at its best. Tuscan meats, especially *bistecca alla fiorentina*, are the specialty, and no one makes *pappa al pomodoro* better. Don't miss the antipasti. Lines can be long.

Daily except Monday for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$ . Most major credit cards.

## Il Santo Bevitore

Via Santo Spirito 64/R  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-211-264

<http://www.ilsantobevitore.com>

A very serious-looking wine bar that doubles as a restaurant with inventive dishes. The great wine cellar includes reasonably priced, good wines.

Monday-Saturday for lunch and dinner, Sunday for lunch only. \$\$\$. Visa and MasterCard accepted.

## La Bussola

Via Porta Rossa 58R  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-293-376

<http://www.labussolafirenze.it>

Great neighborhood trattoria, not far from the Piazza Repubblica, the name of which means "the compass." Excellent grilled stuffed squid, tuna and other fish dishes, as well as grilled meats. Up front is a more casual section serving delicious wood-fired oven pizzas.

Open daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## La Casalinga

Via dei Michelozzi 9/R (on the Piazza Santo Spirito, two minutes from Palazzo Pitti)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-218-624

<http://www.trattorialacasalinga.it>

This is one of the best values in the city for a sit-down, well-prepared meal. It has become very popular among locals and tourists alike as a lunch destination—get there before 1 pm and there may be no line. Evenings are less crowded. The lasagna will make your mouth water, and save room for some dessert sorbet.

Monday-Saturday for lunch and dinner. Closed for three weeks in August and the week of Christmas. Reservations recommended. Most major credit cards.

## La Grotta Guelfa

Via Pellicceria 5/R  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-210-042

<http://www.grottaguelfa.it>

Charming restaurant tucked away in a small square not far from the Piazza Repubblica, this place is always teeming with locals. It specializes in *bistecca*, ossobuco, grilled meats, pastas and soups, all with exceptionally fresh, high-quality ingredients. Good service as well, and a nice roomy outdoor terrace.

Open daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Lo Strettoio

Via di Serpiolle 7  
Florence, Italy 50141

**Phone:** 055-425-0044

<http://www.lostrettoio-tuscanrestaurant.com>

This Tuscan restaurant is in a restored olive-oil processing center built in the 16th century. The press is the centerpiece of the dining room. Located a short drive from the city center, it has stunningly beautiful views of Florence from the terrace. There is an excellent wine selection and a *grapperia* with more than 200 varieties of grappa.

Tuesday-Saturday for lunch and dinner, Sunday for lunch only. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Relais le Jardin

Piazza d'Azeglio 3 (in the Regency Hotel)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-245-247

<http://www.regency-hotel.com/restaurant>

The atmosphere at this charming place is both refined and intimate, thanks to two small, attractive dining rooms—one overlooking the garden. Service is excellent, and most importantly, the food is of the highest quality. The Tuscan and Italian menu changes every two weeks to accommodate seasonal variations in ingredients. House-made pasta and desserts are a constant, as is the excellent selection of wines.

Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended for lunch, required for dinner. \$\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Sostanza-Troia Dal 1869

Via della Porcellana 25/R (a few blocks south of Stazione Santa Maria Novella)  
Florence, Italy

This tiny trattoria is known as "Il Troia" (the trough) because of its long, wooden communal tables. It has a long history, as you might guess from the faded photos of prominent guests that cover the walls. Nothing could be less pretentious than the atmosphere and the country-style home cooking. Try the vegetable soup (*zuppa alla paesana*), the homemade tortellini and the boiled meats. This trattoria attracts an international clientele. The first dinner seating is popular with tourists, but for a more authentic experience book the second seating, which is popular with locals.

Monday-Friday for lunch and dinner; closed 2-7:30 pm. Closed during the month of August. Also open Saturday for lunch and dinner in April, May, September and October. Reservations highly recommended for dinner. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. No credit cards.

## Taverna del Bronzino

Via delle Ruote 27/R  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-495-220

<http://www.tavernadelbronzino.com>

Taverna del Bronzino is an elegant, understated restaurant in the San Marco area. It was the art studio of the painter Bronzino's student, Santo di Tito, in the 16th century. The outstanding cuisine varies between



Florentine and international and is considered unequalled for fish dishes. Attentive service, beautiful presentation and a great choice of wines add to the experience.

Monday-Friday for lunch and dinner, Saturday for lunch only. Reservations recommended. Business dress. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

### Trattoria Angiolino

Via Trento 739  
Florence, Italy 50129

**Phone:** 055-873-9438

<http://www.trattoriaangiolino.it>

The friendly staff and reliably delicious food make this old-style trattoria an unfailingly pleasant place to dine. Among the pastas, the *penne all'Angiolino* (pasta with tomato, meat and red-wine sauce) is an institution. The kitchen also makes a mouthwatering, massive *bistecca alla fiorentina*. For vegetarians, the dish of fried artichokes and other vegetables is a house specialty.

Tuesday-Saturday for lunch and dinner, Sunday for lunch only. Closed Monday. Reservations highly recommended for dinner. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

### Trattoria Gabriello

Via Condotta 54/R  
Florence, Italy

A typical, lovely trattoria, open since 1858, that is very popular among locals. Home-style, Florentine favorites with specials changing daily. The *melanzane alla parmigiana* (eggplant parmesan) is to die for.

Open daily for lunch and dinner. \$-\$\$\$. No credit cards.

### Vini e Vecchi Sappori

Via dei Magazzini 3/R  
Florence, Italy

This little gem of a trattoria is steps away from the Piazza della Signoria, near the same side as the Gucci Museum. It's a family affair: Tomasso manages the place, his mom cooks and his *babbo* tends the bar. You'll need a reservation, but even if you have one, be prepared to wait, as the locals tend to linger there, savoring the delicious food. Try the tagliatini with duck ragout or the *carciofi ripieni* (stuffed artichokes) and have a glass of the excellent house Chianti.

Daily except Wednesday for lunch and dinner. Reservations required. No credit cards.

## Security

### Etiquette

Contrary to the relaxed image many have of Italy, the Italian business world emphasizes formality and procedure. Get assistance from a local contact, go through proper channels, and always present yourself and your firm as well-polished and accomplished.

**Appointments**—Having an intermediary is essential. Without someone to make the appropriate contacts, you'll find it hard to get much accomplished. Your go-between can help schedule meetings, which should

be set up well in advance. It is very difficult—nearly impossible, in fact—to call on a businessperson unannounced. Confirm your meetings a day or two before they're set to take place, but expect last-minute changes, and if you're meeting outside of an office, don't expect punctuality.

**Personal Introductions**—Greet others with a handshake and a slight nod. Titles are important: Use any professional titles that are supplied on introduction or, better yet, ask for a list of the participants and their official titles in advance of the meeting. Continue to use the title and last name unless you are instructed otherwise.

**Negotiating**—The pace of negotiations is slow, and final decisions are not made by lower-level functionaries. The chain of command in Italian business is both vertical and horizontal, and decision-making can take a long time. Last-minute demands can be made by a person who enters the negotiations late in the game. In fact, this is sometimes used as a negotiating tool. Remain patient and calm at all times.

**Business Entertaining**—Business dinners are common but will typically involve only a few key players. If you are hosting the dinner, ask your Italian contact whom to invite. If you want to pay, tip the waiter ahead of time and ask that the bill be quietly given to you. If you do not make such arrangements in advance, you will have to ask for the check; it will not be brought to you automatically.

**Body Language**—Italians typically converse while standing close to one another. They tend to gesture when talking, and handshakes can extend longer than in other cultures. There is an entire system of hand signs that they use all the time, though none are likely to be made inadvertently by a foreigner. More often, visitors to Italy will start to imitate the gestures used by the locals without understanding the precise meanings of the movements—a practice we'd caution against.

**Gift Giving**—Small but high-quality gifts are appropriate in some situations: Ask your intermediary for advice. If you are invited to a home, take flowers or chocolates. Exercise caution in giving wine: Many Italians are experts; if you're not, you may want to select a different gift.

**Conversation**—Very little is off-limits in Italian conversation, but avoid being critical of Italian society and culture, even if your host is. Soccer is a passion and an easy topic, as are art, travel and Italian culture. The less positive sides of Italy, including Mussolini, World War II and the Mafia, are probably better avoided.

## Personal Safety

In Florence, as elsewhere, the best safety guideline is to use common sense. Florence is a lively place, and even on weekday evenings—especially during high season—the streets are relatively full until about midnight (much later on weekends).

Although there's no reason to avoid going out at night in the center of town, women traveling alone should take extra precautions. Avoid the Santa Maria Novella train station and the surrounding area at night: Transients congregate there. Do not cross any parks or large grassy squares, such as the Fortezza del Basso, in the dark.

Pickpocketing, unfortunately, is quite common. Pickpockets and purse snatchers often target tourists in crowded places, such as public buses, the train station or even churches. The Cascine street market is notorious. Italians often carry day packs backwards, with the pack in front of them where they can keep an eye on it. This way it is unlikely that a backpack can be slashed with a knife and the contents removed

without the holder even being aware of the action behind them, a rather common way to separate tourists from their cameras or other valuables.

Watch out for packs of "gypsy" children who tend to come out of nowhere to create a small scene. While some distract you by harassing you or asking for money, another one of them—or a parent—may be making off with your wallet or purse. Keep a good lookout for people—even children—carrying a wrapped newspaper, a piece of cardboard or a raincoat on their forearm: That's a typical method of concealing the action. And keep your purse or bag tightly closed with single-minded determination.

Men should put wallets in either an inside zippered pocket or a front trouser pocket. (Gripping a wallet tells thieves where the wallet is located and makes things easy for them.)

Another thing to watch out for is purse snatchers on motorbikes: They may grab your purse as they ride by (more common on relatively isolated residential streets). A purse strap slung diagonally across your body, with the purse away from the road, will help you avoid being a target.

When stopping at traffic lights, watch for children cleaning your windshield. They are sometimes used to distract you while others clear the backseat and trunk of your car within seconds.

For the latest information, contact your country's travel-advisory agency. For the police, call toll-free 113; for the fire brigade, call 115.

## Health

Hygienic standards are generally similar to those in other industrialized nations. The water is safe to drink, although most Italians prefer the bottled variety. The water at public fountains on public squares is safe—and a boon in hot weather. Food sold on the streets is usually fine, but trust your instincts. Only buy gelato advertised as made in-house from shops with a high turnover so you are sure that the stock each day is fresh.

Medical facilities are generally very good in Florence. English-speaking medical services are offered at Via Roma 4. Monday-Friday 11 am-noon, 1-3 pm and 5-6 pm, and Saturday 11 am-noon and 1-3 pm. No appointment is necessary. The service also makes house calls 24 hours a day all year. Phone 055-475-411. <http://www.medicalservicefirenze.it>.

The hospital, Misericordia di Firenze on Vicolo degli Adimari 1, also offers medical attention for tourists Monday-Friday 2-6 pm. Phone 055-212-222.

Pharmacies (*farmacias*) are located throughout Florence and are indicated with a red or green neon cross that is lit when the store is open at night. (The door will sometimes be closed; ring the buzzer for service.) Regular hours are Monday-Saturday 9 am-1 pm and 3-7:30 pm, with a few minor variations. Pharmacies open 24 hours are listed on the city-run website [http://www.en.comune.fi.it/quick\\_links/pharmacies.htm](http://www.en.comune.fi.it/quick_links/pharmacies.htm).

Pharmacists in Italy can be of more help for minor ailments than pharmacists in the U.S. For major concerns, call the toll-free medical emergency number: 118.

Visitors to Italy are advised to write down the scientific or generic name of prescription medicines and keep them in a safe place during travel. If medicines are lost or a prescription runs out, making a trip to the pharmacy might be all you need to do to fill it.

During off hours and on Sunday and holidays, at least one pharmacy is open in every neighborhood. These are called *farmacia di turno* and are listed in the newspapers *La Nazione* and *La Repubblica* (in the Florence section). A window outside each pharmacy lists the closest *farmacia di turno*.

For the latest information, contact your country's health-advisory agency.

## Disabled Advisory

In general, Florence—and the rest of Italy—is not an easy place for the disabled because not all structures are equipped with ramps. Sensitivity to this issue is growing, however, and a few of the most important museums (Uffizi, Accademia, Bargello) are accessible, although the historic center is otherwise not easily navigated. The Santa Maria Novella train station is also fully accessible. All tourist offices offer up-to-date listings.

Some public restrooms are wheelchair-accessible, especially in the larger establishments. There's extensive information about the accessibility of public buildings at [http://en.comune.fi.it/health\\_safety/accessibility.html](http://en.comune.fi.it/health_safety/accessibility.html).

The city has created a website, "Florence Without Barriers," that offers information for the disabled about getting around the city, where to stay, where to eat and other useful services. <http://firenzeturismo.it/en/florence-accessible/florence-without-barriers.html>

## Facts

### Dos & Don'ts

Do wear comfortable shoes, as the pavements in Florence are a nightmare for high heels.

Don't ignore Florence's traffic rules—authorities have made sure that tourists won't escape the hefty fines.

Do visit the *aperitivi* bars of Florence in the early evening. They are the places to be seen at these hours, and most serve free nibbles of food with your drink, which is welcome when you're not used to Italy's later dining hours.

Don't—never, in fact—buy brand-name articles from street vendors, as they are bound to be fake. You may even face hefty fines when caught at the border or an Italian airport with a fake Rolex watch or Gucci bag.

Do enjoy the great view of Florence from the neighboring town of Fiesole or from the panoramic terrace of the Piazzale Michelangelo in the Oltrarno area of Florence, where the views are gorgeous and sweeping, particularly at sunset.

Don't order a cappuccino after a meal, as you will get a blank stare from the waiter. Italians only drink cappuccinos in the morning; after meals, they drink espresso.

Do visit the historic center at 5 am to enjoy an hour of almost tourist-free Florence.

Do learn some very basic Italian words, which are very much appreciated in the shops and restaurants. Say *buongiorno* for "good day" when you are entering a shop, and *buona sera* in the evening (after 3 pm). Say *arrivederla* or *arrivederci* (less formal) for "goodbye." Two other useful phrases are *grazie* (thank you) and *per favore* (please).

## Geostats

**Passport/Visa Requirements:** Citizens of Canada and the U.S. need only a passport for stays of less than three months. Check travel document requirements with your carrier before departing.

**Population:** 366,039.

**Languages:** Italian, but English is usually spoken in places most frequented by tourists.

**Predominant Religions:** Christian (Roman Catholic).

**Time Zone:** 1 hour ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (+1 GMT). Daylight Saving Time is observed from the last Sunday in March to the last Sunday in October.

**Voltage Requirements:** 220 volts. Two- and three-prong round plugs are used.

**Telephone Codes:** 39, country code; 055, city code;

## Money

### Currency Exchange

Italy uses the euro as its currency. ATMs accept a range of foreign bank and credit cards for dispensing currency and are the most convenient way to get money. They usually give better rates than money-changing stands. Cash and traveler's checks may be exchanged at banks, commercial exchange offices and post offices, but be prepared for an ordeal—this is no longer a common way to get cash.

A detailed list of banks and commercial exchange services is available at the tourist information office at Via Cavour 1/R. It also has an updated list of post offices where you can exchange money.

The post office charges a fairly low commission (about 0.50 euros for cash and 1 euro for checks) if you're exchanging a relatively small amount of money. Banks often pay a higher exchange rate than the post office, but they may also charge a higher commission. Because this commission is a flat charge, it may be worthwhile to exchange relatively large sums at a bank.

Banks are open Monday-Friday 8:30 am-1:30 pm; most reopen for an hour in the afternoon, from about 2:30.

## Taxes

Italy imposes a value-added tax, known as IVA, on the price of most items, ranging from 4% for essential items (such as food) to 22% for nonessentials (such as leather goods). If you make a large purchase (more than about 155 euros) in a store and plan to take the items out of Italy, it may be possible to receive a refund of the IVA. Participation in this program is left up to the individual stores, so you may have to look around. Stores participating in the program usually have a special sticker or sign in the window, but it's still a good idea to verify participation before making your purchase. The refund can be claimed when you leave the last European Union country through which you are traveling.

Detailed instructions on how to get the VAT refund can be found in English on the Italian government customs and duty website: <http://www.agenziadogane.gov.it/wps/wcm/connect/internet/ee/vtatrefund>. A central phone number for the Customs Agency is 06-5024-6061.

## Tipping

Tipping is not obligatory. All restaurants include a cover charge per person (*pane e coperto*) that ranges from about 1 euro to about 4 euros per person. They sometimes add a 10%-12% service charge (*servizio*) as well. However, if you wish to reward especially good service, you might leave an extra 5%-10%.

In hotels, you might consider leaving the housekeepers 3 euros per day, per person, at the end of your stay. Porters and room-service personnel can be given 5 euros-10 euros. For taxi drivers, it's usually appropriate to tip about 1 euro unless it's an especially large fare.

## Weather

Summers are hot, with July being the hottest month. Temperatures can easily surpass 100 F/38 C, but 89-93 F/32-34 C is more the norm. Spring and fall tend to be mild, but don't be surprised to see the odd 80 F/27 C day even in April. A good time to visit is in late September or October—the sky is clear, the vineyards are in harvest, and the long, hot, muggy summer is over. Rain tends to be infrequent but heavy; it is most common in February and March and in the fall.

Although winter temperatures are not very low, dampness makes the cold penetrating. Winter temperatures can drop to just below freezing at night and warm up to 46-50 F/8-10 C during the day. Snow is rare.

## What to Wear

Italians dress very well and are extremely fashion-conscious. For visitors who want to be taken seriously, neat, casual attire is appropriate for everyday situations.

Italians tend to find tourists who sightsee in beach or sports attire rather amusing. You'll feel more comfortable (and get more attention) shopping in expensive clothing stores or patronizing more refined restaurants if you're dressed well, but if you do any walking in Florence, opt for comfortable shoes.

Show respect for religious places by dressing appropriately. If you're wearing short skirts, sleeveless tops or shorts, you will not be allowed to enter, particularly in churches and cathedrals, where they might ask you to put on a covering or deny you access. Business meetings require a suit and tie for men and equivalent apparel for women.

## Civitavecchia, Italy (Port city for Rome)

### Overview

#### Introduction

Located 43 mi/69 km west of Rome, Civitavecchia, Italy, is one of the most popular destinations for ferry travelers in the Mediterranean.

All major cruise lines begin and end voyages there or stop for shore excursions to see Rome and the Vatican.

## Port Information

### Location

The enormous port in Civitavecchia is not very attractive. From the ferries to the port entrance is 0.5 mi/0.8 km; shuttles are available.

The train station is another 10-minute walk. Trains leave for Rome's Termini Station every 20 minutes and take about one hour and 15 minutes. Buses also go to Rome. Trains do not run direct to Fiumicino Airport; travelers must go first to Rome, and transfer trains. Total travel time is at least two hours.

Taxis are not always available.

Private shuttle companies take travelers from Civitavecchia to Rome or the Fiumicino Airport.

### Rome, Italy

## Overview

### Introduction

Rome, Italy, seems to have its own gravitational pull, attracting not only millions of tourists each year, but also the most creative artists and thinkers of every era. All that surrounds a visitor in Rome—the stunning art and architecture, the terrible traffic, the grandeur of scale and the lively (almost hyperanimated) citizens—guarantees an unforgettable trip.



Known as "The Eternal City," Rome is a supreme palimpsest. The ruins of pagan temples have become the foundations of Christian churches, ancient theaters have been made into medieval family fortresses, and Corinthian columns support new walls. The ages are layered, one atop the other, but the flow of Roman life is ever forward, with a respect for its glorious past.

Rome wasn't built in a day, so don't expect to see it in one. The historic center alone could absorb a week: the Michelangelo-designed Campidoglio, the Pantheon, the Palatine Hill and the Roman Forum, as well as the nearby Colosseum and Baths of Caracalla. The basilicas take a little longer because they are spread throughout the city.

If it's Rome's views you're after, climb up into the dome of St. Peter's or admire the panorama from the top of the Spanish Steps (better yet, from the Pincio Gardens above it) at sunset. Or survey the Forum at night from the Capitoline. Bustling, beautiful Rome, sprawling among its seven hills, is fascinating for both its ancient and its modern wonders.

Of course, not everyone immediately loves Rome: Some dislike the city's untidiness and seeming disorganization. But give *la città eterna* a chance to charm, or else risk missing something magnificent.



## Highlights

**Sights**—The ancient Forums, Palatine Hill, Foro di Traiano, Piazza del Campidoglio and Colosseo (the Colosseum); Basilica di San Pietro; the fountains of Piazza Navona; the Spanish Steps; The Pantheon; Trevi Fountain; Circo Massimo; the catacombs and monuments along the ancient Appian Way; Piazza del Popolo and the Pincio Gardens above it; Castel Sant'Angelo.

**Museums**—The Musei Vaticani and the Sistine Chapel; sculptures, frescoes and the Tabularium of the Musei Capitolini; phenomenal art at the Museo e Galleria Borghese; the privately owned Galleria Doria Pamphili; the unique paintings in Palazzo Barberini; the modern works at the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea or the MACRO Museo d'Arte Contemporanea; the Etruscan treasures at the Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia; history's layers at the Museo Nazionale Romano—Crypta Balbi.

**Memorable Meals**—Linguine with lobster sauce followed by baked turbot at Ristorante da Vincenzo; Mediterranean sushi at F.I.S.H.; fried fillet of codfish with zucchini flowers and artichokes *guida* at Piperno; sliced, aged beef with fresh basil and Parmesan cheese at Da Tullio; brusque service and celebrities in the Spartan Pizzeria Panattoni "Ai Marmi"; nouvelle cuisine at L'Antico Arco, atop the Gianicolo Hill; wandering the ancient streets with slices from any *pizzeria al taglio* (takeaway); a picnic from the gourmet deli Volpetti.

**Late Night**—Fine jazz at Alexanderplatz; kitsch at Jonathan's Angels; a quiet drink at the swanky Caffè della Pace; dancing at Zoobar or other Testaccio hot spots; late-night vistas from atop the Gianicolo Hill, at the electric Piazza Navona or while walking from Piazza Venezia to the Colosseum.

**Walks**—A leisurely walk from the top of the Spanish Steps to the Pincio Gardens at dusk; a daytime walk through the outdoor market at Campo dei Fiori; an excursion from the Trevi Fountain to the Pantheon before or after dinner; a nighttime trek to view the Colosseum and the ruins of the Forums beautifully illuminated; a midnight adventure through the medieval streets of Trastevere; a stroll in the picturesque open spaces of Villa Borghese and Villa Pamphili.

**Especially for Kids**—A visit to the Museo della Civiltà Romana; the Bioparco zoo in Villa Borghese and its Children's Farm; the Explora—Il Museo dei Bambini di Roma children's museum; go-karts on the Pincio; climbing the dome of Basilica di San Pietro; sticking your hand in La Bocca della Verità (the Mouth of Truth) at Chiesa di Santa Maria in Cosmedin; playing with food at the National Pasta Museum; searching for animals and other hidden pictures on fountains and monuments; indulging in gelato and pizza.

## Geography

For urban planners and traffic managers, Rome is a headache. Streets originally designed for horses now have to accommodate SUVs. Fortunately, visitors need only focus on navigating the city, not solving its traffic problems.

The city's historic center is the Centro Storico—it's on the left bank (east side) of the Tiber River (called the Tevere in Italian), and home to the original seven hills. The ancient political, spiritual and commercial heart of this area is the Campidoglio (Capitoline Hill) and the adjacent Foro Romano (Roman Forum). Nearby are the most important monuments of ancient Rome, including Trajan's Markets, the Imperial Forum, the Colosseum and the Arches of Constantine, Septimius Severus and Titus. To the south are Palatine Hill, Circus Maximus and, a bit farther, the Baths of Caracalla, the Appian Way and the Christian catacombs.

The city's main piazzas are also helpful for orientation. Piazza Venezia and the adjoining Piazza Campidoglio are just northwest of the Roman Forum, and Piazza Navona is still farther northwest. Piazza del Popolo is on the western edge of Villa Borghese, a large park northeast of the Centro Storico. Piazza di Spagna and the Spanish Steps are just south of Piazza del Popolo. Connecting Via del Popolo and Piazza Venezia is Via del Corso, the city's main street.

On the right (west) bank of the Tiber, west of the Centro Storico, is Vatican City. To the south of the Vatican are Villa Doria Pamphili and Gianicolo (Janiculum Hill). The medieval neighborhood of Trastevere (literally, "across the Tiber") is between the Gianicolo and the river, nestled in the westward bend of the river across from Isola Tiberina, an island in the Tiber. On the east side of Tiberina is the old Jewish ghetto, which contains one of the largest synagogues in Europe, along with some of the best restaurants serving traditional Roman fare.

## History

Rome is nicknamed The Eternal City not merely for surviving almost 3,000 years, but also for retaining political, religious and artistic significance throughout that time. Legend has it that Rome was founded by Romulus in 753 BC, but archaeologists have found evidence of a much earlier Etruscan settlement. Fact and myth are difficult to untangle, but it's clear that Rome was already the major power in Latium by the time of the Republic's foundation in 509 BC. By the first century AD, Rome was dominating the Mediterranean through military conquest, cunning diplomacy and innovative political organization.

During the period of the late Republic, Julius Caesar and other generals extended the boundaries and glory of Rome, while simultaneously destroying its principles of government. The Roman Empire followed, remaining a heavyweight power for hundreds of years. Initially, literature flourished, with great emerging writers such as Cicero, Virgil, Catullus and Ovid. As the arts bloomed, however, the political structure crumbled. Squabbles and coups—as well as increased debauchery—eventually led to the Empire's division and fall.

In the first century AD, the apostles Peter and Paul arrived in Rome to proselytize, but they were martyred, along with hundreds of other Christians. Persecutions continued, on and off, until the Emperor Constantine legalized the faith in 312. The first Christian emperor also gave the Catholic Church temporal powers, beginning the papal state, which continued until the end of the 19th century (with occasional periods of foreign occupation). Papal coffers funded the projects of Michelangelo, Raphael and Bernini, the University of Rome and much of the city's infrastructure—as well as the infamous inquisitions, beginning in the 12th century.

Benito Mussolini descended on Rome in 1922 and formed the world's first fascist government. When World War II broke out, the nation allied itself with Nazi Germany, but the Partigiani (Resistance) soon convinced most Italians to support the Allies. Rome's open-city status spared it from the destruction of bombing but did little to stop the massacres and pillaging by the Germans.

American troops liberated Rome on 4 June 1944, yet the city and country were destitute. The 1950s economic boom revived both, triggering the *dolce vita*, era of glamour. The capital steadily grew in cultural and political power. The city had a makeover for the Vatican's 2000 jubilee and now has a revitalized urban plan, improved infrastructure and massive restoration projects under way. Rome continues to bloom with art, architecture, culture, tourism and fine living.

## Potpourri

The Kingdom of Italy was proclaimed on 17 March 1861, but it was not finally unified until 1870.

The calendar we use today is more than 2,000 years old and was started by Julius Caesar. The month of July is, in fact, named after the emperor himself.

Italy celebrates 1 May as a national holiday, akin to the U.S. Labor Day; during this time, Rome hosts numerous music concerts, and international celebrities congregate in the city.

Ferragosto on August 15 is a national holiday when almost everything in Rome is closed with the exception of tourist restaurants. The holiday was established by the Emperor Augustus in 18 BC because he needed a rest. It is derived from the Latin words *Feriae Augusti*, or Augustus' rest. It also coincides with the Catholic Feast of the Assumption.

The games held to mark the inauguration of the Colosseum lasted for 100 days and nights, during which more than 5,000 animals were killed.

The historical center of Rome was frequently flooded by the Tiber River until retaining walls were built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Since then, the river has flooded the city only once, in 1937.

Italian children have only recently started receiving gifts only from Santa Claus. Until the last decade or so, Italian children primarily received presents from the Befana witch on the eve of 6 January, which is Epiphany or Twelfth Night. The tradition traces from pre-Christian times. Befana leaves a lump of coal (mostly candy shaped as coal), since no children are thought to have been good all year.

Romans have traditionally used "talking statues" to voice their opposition to corruption and abuses by tacking notes onto statues on busy streets. Although the practice has been largely abandoned, four important talking statues remain: The *Pasquino* (Piazza Pasquino), *Marforio* (Capitoline Museums), *Babuino* (Via Babuino) and *Il Facchino* (Via Lata).

Romans are among the most superstitious Italians. When Romans see a nun, they immediately touch iron to ward off bad luck; bird excrement on the shoe and hearing a cat sneeze are considered signs of good luck. In a restaurant, pouring from a bottle with your hand on the bottom, or failing to look your companion in the eye while clinking glasses together for a toast are both said to bring bad luck.

## See & Do

### Sightseeing

Rome is a great open-air museum with a high concentration of monuments, churches and artwork, enmeshed in a modern city with a lot of fast cars, mopeds and people strolling around in very stylish shoes. Even the smallest courtyard hidden in the narrowest street may hold a tiny, wonderful detail—a decorated sidewalk or a stray column, fresco or fountain. To get the most out of your visit, you'll need to walk (but we recommend wearing comfortable shoes). Before setting off, stop by one of the information kiosks that dispense maps, brochures and advice in several languages.

Start in the historic heart of the city, called the Centro Storico. That's where you'll find the Imperial Forums, including the Roman Forum, Trajan's Column and Markets, and the Palatine Hill. Nearby are the Arch of Constantine, the Colosseum and the Circus Maximus. Then detour a bit to visit the palaces around Piazza del Campidoglio, which contain the Capitoline Museums.

On another day, explore the area between the Forums and Piazza del Popolo: You'll pass the facades of noble palaces and churches and stroll through elegant squares. Along the way, be sure to turn off the Via del Corso to visit the Pantheon to the west and the Trevi Fountain to the east. Once you reach Piazza del Popolo, take time to enjoy the green expanse of the Pincio Gardens. The nearby Villa Borghese is home not only to umbrella pines but also to three world-class museums: Galleria Borghese, Galleria Nazionale di Arte Moderna and Museo Nazionale di Villa Giulia.

World-famous examples of Christian and pre-Christian art and architecture are contained in St. Peter's Basilica and the Vatican Museums in Vatican City. The medieval district of Trastevere, across the river from the oldest part of Rome, has one of the oldest churches in Christendom, Basilica di Santa Maria in Trastevere. But it's also a great place to stroll, dine or shop, especially at night, when the bohemian streets come alive. Back across the river, on the left bank, the Jewish Ghetto is another medieval area full of ambience. If time permits, you can also visit the Catacombs of San Sebastiano or San Callisto or, invariably, one more church.

Be forewarned: Hours of admission for museums and historic sites sometimes change without notice. To save yourself stress, call to check times or reserve a time slot for something that is important to you. Booking at the Vatican Museums can save hours in waiting time, and reservations are compulsory at the Galleria Borghese. To enter churches, women must have their shoulders covered and men must have their knees covered. As a rule, most churches are open in the morning, close around 12:30 pm for lunch and reopen at 3:30 pm. Keep these guidelines in mind and you'll avoid the dreaded *chiuso* (closed) sign.

One way to make planning easier is to use a ticket broker that specializes in booking museums and historic sites. Pierreci books visits to museums and guided tours to landmarks in the city (<http://www.pierreci.it>). Ticketeria books tickets to museums and landmarks, as well (phone 06-32810 Monday-Friday 9 am-6 pm, Saturday 9 am-1 pm; <http://www.ticketeria.it>). Whether you book by phone or online, get a confirmation number for your reservation and take it with you. You will be charged a booking fee, but it's worth it for the convenience.

The city of Rome has a wide selection of passes that offer discounts on admission to many of the most popular historic sites, museums and galleries. The Roma Pass is the most popular option: 34 euros gets you free admission to two sites (including the Colosseum, with the added benefit of getting to skip the long line), three-day public transportation passes and reduced rates at subsequent sites. Purchase passes at tourist offices, most participating museums and galleries or online. <http://www.romapass.it>.

## Historic Sites

### Basilica di San Pietro

Piazza San Pietro (Metro stop: Ottaviano-San Pietro)  
Vatican City, Italy

**Phone:** 06-6988-1662 for the Office for Pilgrims and Tourists

[http://www.vatican.va/various/basiliche/san\\_pietro/index\\_it.htm](http://www.vatican.va/various/basiliche/san_pietro/index_it.htm)

As the spiritual center of the Catholic Church, St. Peter's is the ultimate destination for Catholic pilgrims, but it also draws visitors with its masterpieces of art and architecture. Most noticeable—at least from a distance—is the dome, designed by Michelangelo, which is the world's second largest. An outer shell protects the gold-encrusted interior dome. Between the shell and the dome is a spiraling walkway that guests can climb to the cupola, which overlooks Rome and Vatican City. Walk the whole way or take an elevator to the terrace, which is lined with statues of Jesus, the apostles and other saints. The tight, slanting stairway that ascends from there is not for the claustrophobic, but it's definitely worth the effort.

Another Michelangelo masterpiece, the *Pieta*, lies behind bulletproof glass in the basilica. Perhaps appropriately for its subject matter, it seems quite small—just as most visitors feel in this massive structure. Also noteworthy are the tomb of Clement XIII by Canova—the sculpted lions almost roar—and a stunning mosaic by Giotto in the grottoes on the lower level.

Much of the artistic glory belongs to architect-sculptor Bernini: He designed the huge semicircular colonnades that surround the piazza in front of the basilica—they reach out like two arms to envelop visitors—and the gilt bronze baldachin, a canopy on tall pillars, which he placed over the papal altar. Don't miss his other works: the breathtaking *Throne of St. Peter in Glory*, with the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove surrounded by angels and gilded rays of light; the tabernacle made of gold, silver and lapis in the prayer room; the equestrian statue of Constantine to the right of the front portico; and the flamboyant monument to Pope Alexander VII—the skeleton as a symbol of death may be a bit much, but the marble "fabric" draped over it seems so real, you expect it to rustle.

Free English-language tours of the Basilica are offered Monday-Friday at 9:45 am and 2:15 pm. Meet in the information office to the left of the Basilica; tours cannot be reserved, so it is advisable to arrive early. Alternatively, the audio guide is very helpful (available at the information desk to the right of the portico's entrance for 5 euros).

When the pope is in residence, he blesses the crowds in Piazza San Pietro at noon on Sunday. Pope Francis has refused to live in the lavish papal apartments overlooking the square, but he still gives his weekly *angelus* blessing from the windows. He lives in the simple Casa Santa Marta on the Vatican grounds where visiting priests and nuns stay. Because of the popularity of Pope Francis, it takes more than a little planning to attend a papal audience, held Wednesday at 10:30 am in Piazza San Pietro (or in the Paul VI Audience Hall in winter). Order free tickets in writing, well in advance (fax 06-6988-5863) for reserved seating. Pick up tickets at the Bronze Door, to the right of Basilica San Pietro. It is best to be in line two hours ahead of the audience to beat the school and tour groups. Standing-room-only access is open on a first-come, first-served basis and is rarely filled, except on special occasions such as Easter and Christmas. Contact your local Catholic priest for more information. The church remains closed during the audience.

Make a separate reservation to visit the Scavi, the excavations of a remarkably intact necropolis underneath St. Peter's. They contain a first-century street with tombs, including the possible burial place of St. Peter himself. The site lies below the basement crypt of the popes. Only a few 90-minute tours run each day, but it's worth trying to reserve a spot. Apply in person or in writing to the Ufficio Scavi at the Arco delle Campane (Arch of the Bells), to the left of the basilica. The Swiss Guards can direct visitors to the office, which is open Monday-Friday 9 am-6 pm. Requests may also be faxed to 06-6987-3017. Tickets are 12 euros (children younger than 16 are not admitted). Phone 06-6988-5318 for more information (reservations cannot be made by phone).

The dress code for all indoor areas at the Vatican is strictly enforced: Both men and women must have their knees and shoulders covered (men should wear long pants). Switch off mobile phones, and expect strict security controls (including metal detectors) and long lines.

The basilica is open daily 7 am-7 pm (till 6 pm in winter). Mass is held by visiting priests Monday-Saturday at 8:30, 10 and 11:30 am, and noon and 5 pm; Sunday at 9, 10:30 and 11 am, and 12:15, 1, 4 and 5:45 pm. Admission to the basilica is free; ascending to the dome is 5 euros by foot or 7 euros for the elevator to the terrace.

## Arch of Constantine

On this triple triumphal arch immediately outside the Colosseum, sculptural friezes commemorate the first Christian emperor's important military victory over Maxentius in AD 312. Many of the sculptures and medallions were taken from earlier monuments. The arch stands at the west side of the Colosseum, where the piazza meets Via di San Gregorio VII. Excavations have uncovered parts of the early Flavian wall, which are visible from the piazza.

## Basilica di San Clemente

Piazza di San Clemente (on Via di San Giovanni, around the corner from the Colosseum)  
Rome, Italy 184

**Phone:** 06-774-0021

<http://www.basilicasanclemente.com>

This Irish Dominican church is a microcosm of Rome, with the many layers of Roman history visible in its structure. At street level is a 12th-century church with Renaissance and baroque additions. Below are excavations of a fourth-century basilica, atop a Roman house from Nero's era and a Mithraic temple from the first century BC. The church also has magnificent mosaics, frescoes and pavements. All in all, it illustrates the evolution of Christian art between the first and 19th centuries. The enclosed medieval courtyard is a quiet oasis from the roaring traffic outside.

The church is open Monday-Saturday 9 am-12:30 pm and 3-6 pm, Sunday noon-6 pm. Enter the street-level church for free, but a visit to the lower levels costs 5 euros.

## Basilica di San Giovanni in Laterano

Piazza San Giovanni in Laterano (east of the Colosseum)  
Rome, Italy

**Phone:** 06-6988-6433

[http://www.vatican.va/various/basiliche/san\\_giovanni/index\\_it.htm](http://www.vatican.va/various/basiliche/san_giovanni/index_it.htm)

Saint John Lateran holds the distinction of being Rome's cathedral, as well as the oldest of the city's five major basilicas. The church—said to have been founded in 313 by Emperor Constantine the Great—has, of course, been rebuilt many times over the centuries, but its fourth-century floor plan is still honored. As the Cathedral of the Bishop of Rome, the church contains the papal throne, and it ranks above all other churches—even above St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican.

Borromini is responsible for much of the interior visible today; the coffered, carved and painted ceiling and the Cosmati mosaic floors are spectacular. Outside, the octagonal baptistery dates from the fourth century. The famous Scala Sancta (sacred steps) are also at this piazza. Some, who still venerate it as the staircase from Pilate's house that Jesus ascended, climb it on their knees, praying at each step. All that remains of the 16th-century Lateran Palace, residence of the popes until 1377, is the staircase and the papal chapel, with precious 13th-century frescoes, at its top. The cloister, all that's left of the Benedictine monastery that serviced the basilica, is also open to the public.

The basilica is open daily 7 am-6:30 pm. The cloister is open 9 am-6 pm. The baptistery is open 7 am-12:30 pm and 4-7:30 pm. The Scala Sancta is open 6:15 am-noon and 3-6:15 pm (3:30-6:45 pm April-September). Admission is free for the basilica and the Scala Sancta (although a donation is expected for those who wish to climb the sacred stairs on their knees), 2 euros for the cloister. Call ahead to book a guided tour, available Monday-Friday 9 am-1 pm.



## Basilica di Santa Maria in Trastevere

Piazza Santa Maria in Trastevere  
Rome, Italy

This 12th-century church, built over a third-century basilica, is believed to be Rome's oldest dedicated Catholic Church (the first in which Mass was openly celebrated) and the first dedicated to the Virgin Mary. It has been adorned with stunning mosaics, 22 Ionic columns taken from the Terme di Caracalla, frescoes and entire chapels from several centuries. The medieval gold mosaic apse depicting the life of the Virgin is particularly impressive.

Monday-Saturday 8:30 am-8:15 pm (extended hours on religious holidays). The church is closed to visitors during services.

## Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore

Via Liberiana 27 (at Piazza Santa Maria Maggiore)  
Rome, Italy

**Phone:** 06-6988-6800

[http://www.vatican.va/various/basiliche/sm\\_maggiore/index\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/various/basiliche/sm_maggiore/index_en.html)

As one of Rome's five major basilicas, this one, between Piazza della Repubblica and Basilica di San Giovanni in Laterano, deserves a look. The original structure dates from the fourth century and is still very visible, but it has had many transformations and additions, including a glorious gold coffered ceiling (made with the first gold shipped over from the New World), 13th-century mosaics and two splendid chapels: Paolina (for Pope Paul V) and Sforza (designed by Michelangelo). It also houses Gian Lorenzo Bernini's tomb, located to the right near the altar.

Daily 7 am-7 pm (extended hours on religious holidays). Audio guide 5 euros.

## Castel Sant'Angelo

Lungotevere Castello 50  
Rome, Italy

**Phone:** 06-681-9111

<http://www.castelsantangelo.com>

This round fortress rises over the banks of the Tiber, a cannonball's shot from the Vatican. Emperor Hadrian built it as his mausoleum between AD 135 and 139. Later it became a papal stronghold, linked since 1277 to the Vatican by a concealed passageway (the *passetto*) in the defensive walls. Strolling around its many levels, ages and stages—both dark and glorious—is fun and informative. The site also includes an interesting museum and a lovely park, which often hosts fairs and exhibitions. The fortifications are famous as the setting for the third act of Puccini's *Tosca*, in which the heroine throws herself over the parapet.

Open daily except Monday 9 am-7:30 pm. Admission fee is 10.50 euros. Guided tours are available upon request.

## Catacombs of San Callisto

Via Appia Antica 110 (take Bus 218 from Piazza San Giovanni in Laterano, a 15-minute ride, or Bus 118 from Circo Massimo)  
Rome, Italy

**Phone:** 06-513-0151



<http://www.catacombe.roma.it>

These five floors of intricate passageways were the first official cemetery of the Roman church between the second and eighth centuries. Guided tours include a look at early Christian frescoes and imagery (but no bones—the remains were either stolen or long since transferred to the Pantheon).

Open daily except Wednesday 9 am-noon and 2-5 pm. Closed February. 8 euros.

### Chiesa di Santa Maria in Cosmedin

Piazza della Bocca della Verita 18 (between the Circo Massimo and the Tiber)  
Rome, Italy

This basilica is famous for *La Bocca della Verita* (the Mouth of Truth). Once a Roman sewer cover, this huge marble disk is now embedded in the portico wall of the church. According to tradition, the mouth will bite off a liar's hand, but it's more likely that, in medieval times, a man with a sword on the other side helped the "miracle" along. The church itself is often overlooked, but its early medieval architecture, frescoes, mosaic floors and Masonic imagery are well worth a look.

Daily 9:30 am-4:50 pm.

### Chiesa di Santa Maria Sopra Minerva

Piazza della Minerva (near the Pantheon)  
Rome, Italy

<http://www.basilicaminerva.it>

Rome's only significant Gothic church (the facade dates from Renaissance times), this was built on top of a Roman temple to the goddess of wisdom. Inside, stunning lapis-and-gold ceiling mosaics glimmer between its intersecting Gothic arches. The interior shelters the tomb of St. Catherine of Siena and *The Risen Christ* statue by Michelangelo. Many other artistic treasures are difficult to see in the dim lighting, so take a couple of 0.50-euro coins for the timed lights (one coin buys one minute of visibility). Bernini's playful elephant sculpture, which holds up Rome's smallest obelisk, is the centerpiece of the piazza outside.

Daily 8 am-7 pm.

### Chiesa di Sant'Andrea al Quirinale

Via del Quirinale 29  
Rome, Italy

**Phone:** 06-474-4872

<http://www.gesuitialquirinale.it>

After you've seen the splash Bernini made at St. Peter's, stop at this church to see what he could achieve on a smaller scale (Bernini considered it his only perfect work). It's an oval structure with the altar on the long side, close to every seat. The martyred St. Andrew, who appears in the painted altarpiece and in a stucco sculpture above it, seems to look up toward the symbol of the Holy Spirit. The daylight streaming through the clerestory windows plays off the gilding, making the dome glow.

Open daily except Tuesday 8:30 am-noon and 3:30-7 pm, Sunday 9 am-noon and 4-7 pm (usually closed in August).

## Chiesa di Sant'Ignazio di Loyola

Piazza de Sant'Ignazio (on Via del Seminario)  
Rome, Italy

Jesuits commissioned this church at the height of the baroque period, but their funds were exhausted before the dome's completion. Instead, they painted the ceilings with striking trompe l'oeil, inducing centuries of neck-strain as visitors gape. Andrea Pozzo's *Triumph of St. Ignatius* is a masterpiece of light and perspective, creating a perfect two-dimensional impression of a dome.

Daily 7 am-12:30 pm and 4-7:45 pm, with the exclusion of when masses are being held (11:30 am daily and 6 pm Monday-Saturday).

## Chiesa Santa Maria della Concezione de Cappuccini

Via Veneto 27  
Rome, Italy

**Phone:** 06-488-3138

<http://www.cappucciniviaveneto.it>

Don't miss the church itself (which is technically called Santa Maria Immacolata), with its painting of St. Michael and the devil, but the big draw there is the adjoining crypts. The five rooms are filled with intricate ornamentation, mosaics and sculptures, all made with the bones of Capuchin friars who served the church over the centuries. It's a spooky but fascinating sight.

Open daily 9 am-7 pm. Admission to museum and crypt is 6 euros.

## Circo Massimo

Via del Circo Massimo (between Palatine and Aventine hills)  
Rome, Italy

The Circus Maximus was built in 600 BC. One of the largest structures ever dedicated to entertainment, it could hold an audience of 385,000. The long, oval field hosted chariot races and contests between gladiators and wild beasts. Today, with the exception of some crumbling ruins at the south end, all that remains is a large park—the ancient track now trod only by joggers and courting couples—so you'll have to use your imagination and recollections of *Ben Hur* to piece it back together. It is often used for large concerts, markets, sporting events and important political protests. It is also a popular place for Romans to go jogging or walk their dogs. Extensive restorations in 2011 greatly improved the venue. The Palatine Hill provides an emperor's-eye view of the ruin.

## Colosseo

Piazza del Colosseo (at the southern end of Via dei Fori Imperiali)  
Rome, Italy

**Phone:** 06-3996-7700

<http://www.pierreci.it/home-page/en/museums-and-monuments/colosseo.aspx>

Originally called the Flavian Amphitheater and the site of gladiatorial combat, the Colosseum is the most frequently evoked symbol of Rome. Begun in AD 72 by Emperor Vespasian, it was finished eight years later by his son Titus and could seat 80,000 spectators. Unfortunately, various popes quarried its marble, so this majestic building is more dilapidated than it should be. Even so, its size and history are still quite breathtaking. Underground dungeons opened to visitors for the first time in October 2010, and an upper area that had been closed since the 1970s reopened. Plays, concerts and demonstrations are staged in

and around the Colosseum throughout the year. A 25-million-euro donation from a businessman is being used to renovate the site; updates began in December 2013 and are expected to last until 2016. The renovations may cause some inconvenience to visitors but a cleaner Colosseum should be well worth it.

Daily 8:30 am till one hour before sunset. Tours in English (45 minutes long, five tours offered daily), audio tours and guided archaeological tours are available. 8 euros guided tour, 5.50 euros audio tour. Admission 12 euros (the same ticket gains you entrance to a small museum, as well as to the nearby Palatine Hill—save time by buying the ticket there), with an additional 1.50 euros for preregistration (skip the long line).

## Foro di Traiano

Via IV Novembre 94 (the entrance is north of the column)  
Rome, Italy

<http://mercatiditraiano.it>

Trajan's Markets, Forum and Column are part of the Imperial forums, now separated from the Roman Forum by the intrusive Via dei Fori Imperiali. The unmistakable semicircular shape of the markets was determined by Quirinal Hill, which was cut away so that the emperor could build his complex near the Roman Forum. Trajan's Column marks the height of the original hill; its scrolling friezes tell of his victories over the Dacians (in modern-day Romania). Visitors are allowed to roam the ancient street of the forum. An exhibit hall inside the forum has regular art exhibits, many dealing with Imperial Rome. Nearby forums include the Forum of Nerva, the Forum of Julius Caesar and the Forum of Augustus.

Open daily except Monday 9 am-7 pm. 11 euros, or 12 euros for tickets booked online. Tickets can be booked online through.

## Foro Romano

Largo Romolo e Remo (at Via dei Fori Imperiali)  
Rome, Italy

**Phone:** 06-3996-7700

<http://www.pierreci.it/home-page/en/museums-and-monuments/foro-romano.aspx>

Once the political and religious epicenter of the Western world, the Forum today appears as fragmented columns and ancient streets. However, even in ruins, it's a testament to Roman and, indeed, all Western civilization. The best view is from the Capitoline at night, thanks to skillfully placed lighting. Within the Forum are the Sacred Way, the Via Trionfale (an avenue where victorious generals paraded with their soldiers and prisoners) and the ancient Senate House, among a great clutter of basilicas, temples, monuments, arches and stray cats. On the south side of the Forum is the Palatine Museum.

The ruins are open daily 8:30 am until one hour before sunset. Audio tours are available for 5 euros. Nightly tours are offered June to mid-September (check dates at the information desks and ask for "Roma sotto stelle," or "Rome under the stars"). Combination ticket with the Palatino and the Colosseum 12 euros.

## Palatino Hill and Museo

Via di San Gregario 30 (near the Arch of Titus in the Forum)  
Rome, Italy

**Phone:** 06-3996-7700

<http://www.coopculture.it/heritage.cfm?id=4>

The Palatine Hill was the site of aristocratic residences for centuries. Among the ruins of private palaces such as the Domus Augustana and the House of Livia, a garden offers shady nooks and spectacular views of the Circo Massimo below. The little museum at the top houses mainly local archaeological finds. A vaulted cavern, discovered in November 2007 when a camera was lowered through a hole in the hill, is believed by some scientists to be a shrine of the Lupercal, the sacred cave where Romulus and Remus are said to have been suckled by a wolf.

Daily 8:30 am-6:15 pm. A one-hour English-language tour departs at noon (4 euros). Admission of 12 euros includes admission to the Colosseum and the Forum (the ticket kiosk lines are usually shorter at Palatine Hill).

## Piazza del Campidoglio

Capitoline Hill (behind Piazza Venezia and the Vittoriano Monument)  
Rome, Italy 186

The historic, spiritual and political center of the city, this hilltop was long known as *caput mundi*, the head of the world. On this spot, Petrarch was crowned poet laureate, Cola di Rienzo was lynched, and, according to legend, Romulus killed his brother Remus. The founding twins are commemorated in a happier moment: A bronze statue shows them as foundling infants suckling a she-wolf (this mythological image is the city's crest). The star in the center of the plaza is the point from which distances to Rome are measured.

Michelangelo designed the current piazza and its monumental approach in 1536, although he only lived long enough to see the Cordonata staircase finished. Many consider the site to be the ideal embodiment of Renaissance architecture, blended with elements of ancient Rome. Guarding the entrance to the piazza are gigantic statues of Castor and Pollux. The circular star set in the pavement focuses attention on the gilded bronze equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius (a copy—the adjacent Capitoline Museums display the original). From the church perched above the piazza, Santa Maria in Ara Coeli, you can get a good view of Rome, and on the road to the right (south) side of the piazza, you'll find one of the best views of the Forum. The piazza also houses the Musei Capitolini and Rome's city hall.

## Piazza del Popolo

Piazza del Popolo (north of the Spanish Steps, near Villa Borghese)  
Rome, Italy 187

This vast, well-designed square greeted 18th-century travelers from the north, together with the Porto del Popolo (the arched gateway leading into the piazza). Today, it borders a popular shopping area. Three major arteries extend from the piazza, giving the area its name, the Tridente. An Egyptian obelisk and a lion fountain stand in the piazza's center. At one end are two baroque churches that seem to match, though a close inspection reveals one to have a round dome and the other, oval. At the other end is a third church, Santa Maria del Popolo, which contains masterpieces representing the full range of the Renaissance: frescoes by Pinturicchio, two remarkable paintings by Caravaggio and the dramatic marble statue *Daniel and the Lion* by Bernini.

## Piazza Navona

Piazza Navona (just west of the Pantheon)  
Rome, Italy

Once the Emperor Domitian's athletic stadium, this lively piazza retains its distinctive shape. Terra-cotta and ocher-stucco buildings flank Borromini's baroque church dedicated to St. Agnes, whose skull is displayed in a small chapel in the back. The star attraction, however, is Bernini's legendary Fountain of

the Four Rivers, with its colossal marble figures—representing the Danube, the Nile, the Ganges and the Rio de la Plata—that writhe and twist, and his Fountain of the Moor. A third fountain has a 19th-century rendering of Neptune. The ancient Romans flooded the square and held mock naval battles there. Today, the Piazza Navona is drier but still entertaining: It's the perfect spot for eating gelato, drinking a *negrito* (a typical Roman cocktail) and people-watching. Street artists, clowns, toy peddlers and vendors crowd the cobblestones. During the Christmas season, there's a fair with numerous stalls dedicated to La Befana, the Italian Christmas witch.

## Piazza Venezia and the Vittoriano

Via del Corso (at the south end, just north of the Foro Romano)  
Rome, Italy

This huge, bustling square unites the city's main arteries. The traffic jam is framed by Palazzo Venezia (from the balcony, Mussolini harangued the crowds below), Palazzo San Marco and the much-maligned Vittoriano Monument. Because the city's third underground line among the buried ruins has been delayed because of budget cuts, you are likely to encounter construction in and around the piazza. When the Piazza Venezia subway station finally opens, it will house many Roman artifacts found during the construction. The multistoried memorial to the Unknown Soldier and Italy's first king, Vittorio Emanuele II (inaugurated in 1911), houses a museum of the Risorgimento—the Italian unification movement. Popularly referred to as the Wedding Cake by foreign visitors, the Romans are less kind and call it the Typewriter. This frilly marble edifice is open to the public. The higher levels and cafe terrace offer great views of the city (considered the best—they're the only vistas that don't include the Vittoriano itself). Near the cafe is the entrance to a glass elevator takes visitors to the highest rooftop for an even better view. A tourist information office is housed around the left side (as you face the front of the monument).

Monday-Thursday 9:30 am-5:45 pm, Friday-Sunday 9:30 am-6:45 pm. Free. Elevator 7 euros.

## Spanish Steps and the Piazza di Spagna

Piazza di Spagna (south of Piazza del Popolo, at the southern cusp of Villa Borghese)  
Rome, Italy

The piazza is the heart of Rome's most fashionable shopping area, familiar to residents and visitors alike because of its grand and distinctive steps. They're a great—if crowded—place to rest and watch street musicians, vendors, lovers and tourists. Just don't picnic on the steps. In 2013, the city of Rome made it illegal to snack on public monuments. Young people gather there to see and be seen, chatting in groups or on their ubiquitous *telefonini* (cell phones). The spectacle is most impressive in spring, when brilliant azaleas line the steps. At the base sits a fountain by Bernini (father and son), and the house (now museum) of 19th-century poet John Keats overlooks the steps. At the top there's a grand view of the city, and just to the right, you will find Palazzetto Zuccari (Via Gregoriana 28), known as The House of Monsters because of the sculptures that adorn the facade.

## Terme di Caracalla

Viale delle Terme di Caracalla 52  
Rome, Italy

**Phone:** 06-3996-7700

<http://archeoroma.beniculturali.it/en/archaeological-site/baths-caracalla>

The ruins of these baths evoke the majesty of ancient times, when Romans bathed, lifted weights, wrestled, had massages and socialized in these baths and saunas. Guided tours explain the extensive, sophisticated heating and plumbing systems, as well as the social function of the vast complex. Call to make a reservation. You can also wander through the beautiful gardens surrounding the ruins.

Open Monday 9 am-2 pm, Tuesday-Sunday 9 am-6:30 pm. The ticket office shuts down an hour before closing. A ticket costs 6 euros and is valid for seven days. An audio guide is available for 5 euros.

## The Pantheon

Piazza della Rotonda 1  
Rome, Italy

**Phone:** 06-6830-0230

<http://www.pantheonroma.com>

This monumental round temple was dedicated to all the Roman gods. It is considered the best-preserved ancient structure in the city. Rebuilt in the second century by Emperor Hadrian, it has the largest (unreinforced) concrete dome ever built, spanning more than 142 ft/43 m in width and height—a perfect sphere in a cylinder with walls nearly 20 ft/6 m thick. Sunlight pours through the oculus in the center of the dome, casting a spotlight inside the temple. Hadrian only entered the building when the spotlight was cast on the entrance. (When a light rain falls, the effect can be equally enchanting; some visitors claim they've seen a rainbow inside.)

Barbarians took the bronze tiles that originally lined the dome. However, it was Pope Barberini who authorized Bernini to remove the massive bronze bas-relief from the portico. Melted down, it became St. Peter's baldachin. The painter Raphael and the first king of Italy, Vittorio Emanuele II, are buried inside, along with hundreds of early Christian martyrs whose remains were transferred from the catacombs in the seventh century, when the pagan temple was dedicated as a church, Santa Maria ad Martyres.

Open Monday-Saturday 9 am-7:30 pm, Sunday 9 am-6 pm, weekday holidays 9 am-1 pm. Masses are usually held Saturday before public holidays at 5 pm, at 10 am on public holidays, and at midnight on Christmas Eve; no visits during religious services. Free.

## Trevi Fountain

Piazza di Trevi (two blocks east of the Corso and Piazza Colonna)  
Rome, Italy

The iconic, highly theatrical fountain is usually thronged with tourist groups repeating the tradition inspired by the 1954 film *Three Coins in the Fountain*, of throwing in a coin before leaving Rome. Turn your back to the fountain, toss a coin over your left shoulder into the water, and your return to the city is assured. Even with the crowds, you should get a good view of the mighty god Neptune riding his winged chariot through gushing waters supplied by the ancient Acqua Vergine aqueduct. Watch out for pickpockets, though. Nicely illuminated at night.

## Neighborhoods & Districts

### Campo Marzio

This part of the historic center contains much that is great about Rome: the Pantheon, Piazza Navona, Campo di Fiori and Via Giulia. Bordered by the Vatican and the Tiber to the west, it's a dense cluster of ruins, churches, monuments, squares, alleys and shops. Rich in sights, much of the area is not the best option for dining ("tourist menus" and solicitors are common, as well as high tariffs for cafe seats). The best bets are on small side streets.

### Jewish Ghetto

This neighborhood—tucked between Via Arenula and Via del Teatro di Marcello and bordered by Largo Argentina—was historically the ghetto of the Roman Jews. Today, its winding narrow streets retain more



of the flavor of medieval Rome than any other part of the city. It also has a stunning synagogue on the bank of the Tiber, the best kosher Italian restaurants in the world (along Via del Portico d'Ottavia) and some of the trendiest nightspots in Rome.

## **L'Aventino**

One of the seven hills on which Rome was founded is now one of the city center's most cosmopolitan residential areas, with fabulous villas and lush gardens. Legend says that Romulus chose the Palatine hill and his twin Remus chose the Aventine hill. Peek through the keyhole at the door to the Knights of Malta to see a perfect view of the dome of St. Peter's basilica, or catch a panoramic view of Trastevere from one of several lookout points. The neighborhood is a great place to stroll during the springtime when the scents of orange blossoms from Giardino degli Aranci and fresh roses from Roseto Comunale rose gardens offer a dizzying olfactory experience.

## **Monti**

Ancient Rome's shantytown (*Suburra*) is now gentrifying under the design of artists, hipsters and up-and-comers buying up once-cheap property. Ethnic restaurants, galleries, bars and funky shops flank its narrow alleys. The main square is often filled to capacity on weekends, when locals go out to visit and sip coffee or wine at the cafes around the perimeter. The area stretches east from the Forum between Via Nazionale and Via Cavour.

## **Parioli**

Sheep pastures were interspersed among the medieval and Renaissance buildings in this area at the beginning of the 20th century. Now it's one of the most expensive and cosmopolitan suburban areas of Rome. Many foreign embassies and consulates are located there, along with some very fine restaurants. It lies just north of Villa Borghese and west of La Sapienza (Rome's central university).

## **Testaccio**

One of the trendiest areas to eat, dance and live is Testaccio, across the Tiber from Trastevere at the bottom of the Aventine hill. The district is marked by a peculiar hill made from the shards of terra-cotta pots that carried wine and oil brought in boats coming down the Tiber from the sea. Merchants will fill their vats with the oil or wine and toss the used pots aside. Old stables and stalls from a Roman slaughterhouse that were built onto the side of the terra-cotta hill have been transformed into nightclubs and restaurants. An exhibit space run by the MACRO Museo D'Arte Contemporanea Roma on the old slaughterhouse grounds hosts fascinating exhibits, including a semipermanent 82-ft-/25-m-tall bamboo climbing structure. The shops and boutiques cater to the residents of a certain class who live on the posh Aventine Hill. The streets are lined with cafes and some of the best restaurants in all of Rome. The area is commonly referred to as the preferred place for Romans to dine.

## **Trastevere**

Literally meaning "across the Tiber," this was Rome's first suburb, and many residents insist it's the "real" Rome. The district is a thriving tangle of charming medieval streets, vibrant outdoor restaurants and trattorias, intimate bars and cafes. Trastevere is home to an array of galleries and artisans' shops, plus the large Sunday flea market, Porta Portese. The Church of Santa Maria dominates the piazza of the same name. The steps of the central fountain there are a good place to watch the area's colorful characters. To the west rises the Gianicolo Hill, which offers magnificent views from a ridgeline park.



## Recreation

Rome's mild climate permits year-round outdoor activity, but the city's recreational pickings are pretty slim. City parks, especially Villa Borghese and Villa Pamphili, are the best spots for walking, running, in-line skating or biking. Tennis and golf are a bit more challenging: They're relatively expensive and inaccessible.

Out of the city, Lago Bracciano and the coastal town of Lido di Ostia are two good spots for watersports, and the thermal spa Terme dei Papi in Viterbo is a favorite getaway for Romans. On Sunday, Via Appia Antica is closed to traffic, and the Appia Antica Park becomes a wonderful place to picnic, stroll among the monuments and bike.

## Shopping

Rome's trendy stores with the latest fashions just might divert you from seeing one more museum. Fans of Prada, Fendi, Ferragamo or Gucci will have plenty to choose from. What's more, those famous brands, which are available around the world, will seem different: Even the designers known for the purity of their lines—Armani, for instance—seem to offer something a little more baroque in Rome. But the true joy of shopping in this city lies in discovering one-of-a-kind items in specialty shops. Hundreds of such stores sell goods, particularly shoes and clothing accessories, that are produced on-site, often using centuries-old techniques.

Beyond the world of high fashion, you can check out the upscale secondhand shops on Via del Governo Vecchio, the artisan studios of Trastevere and the galleries of Monti. Rome also has a handful of markets, each with a distinctive style. The colorful and inviting Campo dei Fiori offers cheeses, spices, some clothing, kitchenware and, of course, flowers (the name means field of flowers). The Sunday flea market at Porta Portese, the largest in Europe, is not for the faint of heart—shoppers are packed in so tightly it becomes an effort just to stop or cross the street. Go early and beware of pickpockets.

Regular shuttle buses at 10 am and 12:30 and 3 pm from Termini train station are available to take shoppers to the Castel Romano Designer Outlet Mall 16 mi/25 km outside the city. The open-air mall has more than 100 boutiques, many Italian luxury brands, offering merchandise at 70% savings. Via Ponte di Piscina Cupa 64, Castel Romano. Phone 06-505-0050. <http://www.mcarthurglen.com/it/castel-romano-designer-outlet>.

Much of Rome—and indeed, Italy—shuts down for several weeks in the summer heat. This period, known as Ferragosto, can stretch from mid-July through August. The one advantage: superb sales beforehand.

**Shopping Hours:** Stores are generally open Monday-Saturday 9 am-1 pm and 4:30-7:30 pm. Most stores are closed all day Sunday, and some take Monday morning off, as well. The exception is the Centro Storico, where a seven-day shopping culture is emerging. In winter, many boutiques have reduced hours, although most open their doors until 8:30 or 9 pm two weeks before Christmas.

## Markets

### Campo dei Fiori

Campo dei Fiori (between the river and Corso Vittorio Emanuele II)  
Rome, Italy 186

At this white-tented market, vendors hawk beautiful flowers, fresh produce, spices and food delicacies, especially cheeses. The best bread-maker in all of Rome, Forno, is located there—try the *pizza bianca*,

considered by Roman cognoscenti to be the best in the city. On Sunday afternoon, artists sell paintings in the square.

Prime market hours are Monday-Saturday 7 am-1:30 pm, when most vendors are set up and ready to sell.

## Porta Portese

Ponte Sublicio (on the west side of the Tiber, spanning a warren of streets and alleys)  
Rome, Italy

Rome's flea market sells practically everything—from a doghouse and an 18th-century sofa to old and new pearls (strung in India) and icons of dubious heritage. Look through tables of used clothing, including the occasional vintage design. As a rule, the best and most interesting finds are in the stalls around Piazza Ippolito Nievo. Bargaining is half the fun—expect high drama when you offer a few euros less. Be extremely wary of pickpockets, because the aisles get crowded.

Open Sunday 7 am-2 pm.

## Via Sannio Market

Via Sannio (near Porta San Giovanni)  
Rome, Italy

This place sells new and secondhand clothes and shoes.

Open Monday-Saturday 9 am-2 pm.

## Shopping Areas

### Galleria Alberto Sordi

Piazza Colonna  
Rome, Italy

**Phone:** 06-6919-0769

<http://www.galleriaalbertosordi.it>

Alberto Sordi was perhaps Italy's most popular comic actor. His death in 2003 led to more than two weeks of national mourning and dozens of monuments and dedications in his honor. The most famous of these was the reopening of the Galleria Colonna, rechristened Galleria Alberto Sordi. This beautiful building houses dozens of shops, a few cafes and Feltrinelli's enormous media shop. The Galleria has become one of the primary cultural focal points for the city, hosting concerts, poetry readings, charity rallies and art exhibitions. It has even replaced the Spanish Steps as the default meeting point for locals.

Open Monday-Thursday 8:30 am-9 pm, Friday and Saturday 8:30 am-10 pm, Sunday 9:30 am-9 pm.

### Via Cola di Rienzo

Via Cola di Rienzo  
Rome, Italy

Starting at Piazza Risorgimento near the Vatican, this long, somewhat unprepossessing street is an excellent shopping area for nearly everything, especially for women's clothing and leather products. It's popular with locals.

## Via del Corso

Via del Corso  
Rome, Italy

This central street, running from Piazza del Popolo to Piazza Venezia, has the best (and some of the most expensive) shopping in Rome. The east side of the street, near Piazza di Spagna, hosts upscale boutiques. Two cross streets, Via Frattina and Via Condotti, are a veritable who's who of designer names (with street vendors selling counterfeit wares right in front of the designers they're imitating). On the west side are more reasonably priced men's and women's clothes (still of exceptional quality). Near the Trevi Fountain, you may even be able to find some bargains, especially in shoes and leather goods.

## Via Nazionale

Via Nazionale  
Rome, Italy

This street, which stretches from Piazza Venezia to Piazza della Repubblica, is lined with small specialty fashion shops known for attractive sale prices in July and January. Most of the best shops are at the end closest to Piazza della Repubblica.

## Dining

### Dining Overview

Each region of Italy boasts its own distinctive cuisine, and because Rome has become home to Italians from all over the country, the city's native, rustic cuisine has been influenced by many different sources. For a true taste of the indigenous *cucina povera* (food of the poor people) be sure to sample the food at a number of humble trattorias, not just the upscale restaurants. Classic dishes include spaghetti carbonara, *bucatini all'amatriciana* (straw-shaped noodles in a tomato and bacon sauce), *l'abbacchio* (roast lamb), *carciofi alla giudia* (deep-fried artichokes) and the most Roman of all: *trippa* (tripe).

Tuscan and Sicilian restaurants usually provide more elegant meals and refined dining. Begin with an antipasto of marinated vegetables, seafood, bruschetta or a selection of meats. Prosciutto *crudo* is often served with melon or figs in the summer. The first course is almost always a pasta dish, such as *penne all'arrabiata* (quills with a chili-tomato sauce), *linguini con vongole veraci* (linguine with clam sauce) or *pasta e fagioli* (short pasta cooked in a thick bean soup). For a second (main) course, try *rombo* (turbot), *spigola* (sea bass) or *straccetti con basilico e parmigiano* (thin-sliced beef topped with fresh rocket lettuce and Parmesan cheese).

Italian meals typically run five courses from antipasti to *dolce* (dessert), followed by coffee and a *digestivo*. Visitors are under no obligation to order all of them. However, two courses is the polite minimum at a busy establishment. Given the leisurely pace of dining, you've "bought the table for the evening"—don't abuse such hospitality by ordering only a salad. Light eaters should try fancier places for lunch—or retreat to a cafe, cafeteria (*tavola calda*), pizzeria or slice shop (*pizza al taglio*). The latter also can provide a great snack on the go; while you're there, sample the *suppli* (deep-fried rice balls with tomato sauce and a molten mozzarella core). Be aware that sitting at a *tavola calda* will increase the price of your meal; order your lunch *portare via* (to take away).

The region's most famous wines are the dry whites—Vini dei Castelli (Frascati, Genzano, Marino and Velletri). To accompany meat dishes, choose a full-bodied dry red from the regions of Tuscany or Piemonte, or one of the reds from up-and-coming wine regions such as Sicily or Umbria. Romans typically order a carafe of house wine (*vino della casa*) usually from the countryside near Rome in the

case of whites and from the adjacent region of Abruzzo for reds—selections are usually decent and reasonably priced. Be forewarned, however: The liter unit is 25% larger than a typical bottle—and public drunkenness is frowned upon (half- and quarter-liters are also available).

The main local beers are Peroni, Moretti and Nastro Azzurro, which are well-made lagers on the lighter side—fans of heavier beers will have to opt for an import. Order *acqua naturale* (flat water) or *frizzante* (sparkling) with each meal. Other nonalcoholic treats include fresh-squeezed juice (*spremuta*) and lemonade (*limonata*).

Italian coffee is ubiquitous—and unmissable. Even those who normally dislike espresso may appreciate the smooth genuine version. Barristi brew dozens of variations of the simple shot (order *un caffè* and not *un espresso* in Rome). At more casual establishments, pay at the register (*la cassa*), and then present the receipt (*gli scontrino*) at the counter, with a small coin (0.10 or 0.20 euros) on top as a tip. Table service can increase the price—by as much as 500% in a tourist hot spot. Also note that locals drink cappuccino only for breakfast—never in the evening or after meals. Gelato, the heavenly Italian ice cream, is appropriate any time of the day or night.

Modern life has trimmed the traditional five meals a day. Italians aren't generally big on breakfast (usually cappuccino with a sugar-glazed croissant or a cream-filled pastry), but brunch is popular. Lunch, around 1 pm, can consist of one course or several (restaurants close 3-7 pm, so don't wait). Dinner can be either a leisurely affair with several courses or just pizza and beer.

Expect to pay within these general guidelines, based on the cost of a three-course dinner for one, not including drinks or tip: \$ = less than 30 euros; \$\$ = 30 euros-45 euros; \$\$\$ = 46 euros-75 euros; and \$\$\$\$ = more than 75 euros.

Tax is almost always included in the price of meals. The bill (*conto*) may feature *pane e coperto* (bread and a cover charge) or *servizio* (service). Tip 5% atop the *coperto* or 10%-12% otherwise (Italians offer less, but tourists are expected to be gracious).

## Local & Regional

### Ambasciata d'Abruzzo

Via Pietro Tacchini 26 (Parioli)  
Rome, Italy

**Phone:** 06-807-8256

<http://www.ambasciatadiabruzzo.com>

This restaurant showcases fare from the mountainous Abruzzo region, east of Rome. The bruschetta appetizers are among the city's best, proving that toast-with-toppings can reach culinary heights. The *maccheroni alla chitarra cacio e pepe* (elbow pasta with sheep's cheese and pepper) is another standout. Porcini mushrooms and truffles feature heavily—never a bad thing.

Open daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

### Ambasciata di Capri

Via E.Q. Visconti 52  
Rome, Italy

**Phone:** 06-332-6812

<http://www.ambasciatadicapri.com>

This wonderful restaurant close to the Vatican serves delicious specialties from the island of Capri, including black ravioli with cuttlefish, and the *pezzogna*, a tender fish that only swims in the waters of the Gulf of Naples. But the dolci make the fame of this restaurant, and rumor has it that owner Mario Tarantino sends a selection of them to the pope once a month. Try the ricotta tart with pears, the tiramisu and the wonderful *pastiera*, a shortcrust cake with ricotta and buffalo-milk cheese.

Open daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$ . Most major credit cards.

## Angelina

Via Poli 27 (near the Trevi Fountain)  
Rome, Italy

This popular restaurant has two locations: a quaint tavern near the Trevi Fountain and a spacious restaurant with a rooftop terrace in Testaccio. Both offer the best Sunday brunch in Rome for 15 euros. The restaurant doesn't close between lunch and dinner, so it is a perfect place to eat a late lunch or early dinner. The atmosphere is casual and relaxed, and the whitewashed decor and green plants make it feel like a country home. The menu offers a dizzying selection of unique takes on traditional Roman fare, from offal to T-bone Florentine steaks. The Testaccio location is at Via Galvani 24 (phone 06-5728-3940).

Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$.

## Checchino dal 1887

Via Monte Testaccio 30  
Rome, Italy

**Phone:** 06-574-3816

<http://www.checcchino-dal-1887.com>

Few restaurants can still claim to preserve—and serve—traditional Roman food as Checchino has been doing since 1887. Its claim to fame is the invention of *la coda alla vaccinara*—a distinctive dish made from less-popular cuts of meat. It carries the official *cucinaromana* designation. Excellent wine list.

Open Tuesday-Saturday for lunch and dinner. Closed in August and for a week around Christmas. Reservations required. No shorts or tank tops allowed. \$\$\$ . Most major credit cards.

## Colline Emiliane

Via degli Avignonesi 22  
Rome, Italy

Try the mouthwatering classic Bolognese dishes in this tiny, but very popular, family-run restaurant just off Bernini's Triton Fountain.

Open Tuesday-Saturday for lunch and dinner, Sunday for lunch only. Reservations required. \$\$\$.

## Felice a Testaccio

Via Mastro Giorgio 29 (Testaccio)  
Rome, Italy

**Phone:** 06-574-6800

<http://www.feliceatestaccio.com>

One of the tastiest and most colorful restaurants in the city center's working-class district. The restaurant was established in 1936 by legendary restaurateur Felice Trivelloni, who was temperamental enough to

deny a second course to diners who didn't finish their first. But not finishing the first is tough: the pasta is to die for—try the simple and addictive Pasta al Felice (ricotta, tomatoes, mint and chili)—and the suckling lamb served in cooler months is unforgettable. Oscar-winning actor Roberto Benigni adored the restaurant so much he wrote a poem in its honor. It's still run by the Trivelloni family.

Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations are required and rarely accepted the day of the meal. \$\$-\$\$\$.  
 Visa and MasterCard accepted.

## Giovanni

Via Marche 64  
 Rome, Italy

**Phone:** 06-482-1834

<http://www.ristorantegiovanni.net>

A kind and efficient family from the Marche region owns this pleasant, comfortable restaurant. It has been tastefully redecorated and brought up to standard for disabled access. The cuisine is delicate and simple. Ask for the traditional *tagliolini al sugo di carne* (house-made pasta with red meat sauce) or the lentil soup. For dessert, savor the *millefoglie* (multilayered, cream-filled puff pastry).

Open Monday-Saturday for lunch and dinner; closed Sunday and in August. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Il Drappo

Vicolo del Malpasso 9 (off Via Giulia)  
 Rome, Italy

**Phone:** 06-687-7365

<http://www.ristoranteildrappo.com>

Long, flowing draperies give this gracious Sardinian restaurant in Centro Storico a homey touch. Try the *zuppa di carciofi* (artichoke soup), *maialino arrosto* (roast suckling pig) or calamari *ripieni* (stuffed baby squid). Top things off with the fruit pie. Dine in Il Drappo's garden or in the air-conditioned dining room.

Open Monday-Saturday for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended for dinner. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## L'Antico Arco

Piazzale Aurelio 7  
 Rome, Italy 152

**Phone:** 06-581-5274

<http://www.anticoarco.it>

This vine-swathed restaurant attracts foodies with its slightly nouvelle flavors, 400 wines and homemade Sicilian *cassata* dessert. The seasonal menu is graced by such delights as *spaghetti cacio e pepe con fiori di zucca crocanti* (spaghetti with aged cheese, pepper and fried zucchini flowers), *carpaccio caldo con i carciofi* (sauteed beef served on a bed of artichokes) and *petti di faraona con tartufi* (quail breasts with shredded truffle and a potato tart). The gracious 18th-century building stands on the hill above Trastevere, next to the renowned Bar Gianicolo and the Porta San Pancrazio, a pink and white triumphal arch.

Open daily for lunch and dinner. Closed two weeks in August. Reservations should be made a week in advance. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

### La Pariolina

Viale Parioli 93  
Rome, Italy

**Phone:** 06-808-6002

<http://www.lapariolina.it>

This modern and stylish eatery specializes in gourmet pizzas—both the Roman thin-crust and the Neapolitan fluffy-crust varieties.

Open daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$.

### La Terazza dell'Eden

Via Ludovisi 49  
Rome, Italy

**Phone:** 06-4781-2752

<http://www.laterrazzadelleden.com>

The understated rooftop restaurant in the stylish Hotel Eden is an island of tranquility between the hustle and bustle of the Spanish Steps and the Via Veneto. Traditional Italian pastas, seafood and meat courses are prepared with a particularly delicate hand. Combined with a spectacular view of the city, La Terazza is a highlight of the Roman dining experience.

Open daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner. \$\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

### Open Colonna

Scalinata di via Milano 9a (Palazzo delle Esposizioni)  
Rome, Italy

**Phone:** 06-4782-2641

<http://www.antonellocolonna.it>

Atop Rome's Palazzo delle Esposizioni off Via Nazionale sits the glass-encased Open Colonna, the Roman location for chef Antonio Colonna, who for years ran one of the most important destination restaurants, a day trip away from Rome. At lunch, the restaurant offers a reasonably priced buffet of well-prepared traditional favorites, and at night the space is transformed into one of the city's most decadent eateries. Reserve at least a week in advance.

Open Tuesday-Friday for lunch and dinner, Saturday and Sunday for brunch only. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

### Piperno

Via Monte de' Cenci 9  
Rome, Italy 186

**Phone:** 06-6880-6629

<http://www.ristorantepiperno.com>

This well-known destination in the old Jewish Quarter is famous for its beautiful *carciofi alla giudia* (deep-fried artichokes) and *fritto misto* (mixed fried meat, fish and vegetables). The wonderful and elegant



cuisine is matched by the historically significant setting, secluded in a little piazza engulfed by the Palazzo Cenci.

Open Tuesday-Saturday for lunch and dinner, Sunday for lunch only. Closed August. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

### Primo al Pigneto

Via del Pigneto 46  
Rome, Italy

**Phone:** 06-701-3827

<http://www.primoalpigneto.it>

From an unlikely location (until recently, Pigneto, just beyond San Giovanni, was an undesirable neighborhood of Rome) emerges one of the city's culinary hot spots, with creative interpretations of classic dishes that change with the seasons. Ask for an outdoor table in the summer to get a feel for the bohemian area.

Open daily except Monday for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

### Ristorante '34'

Via Mario de Fiori 34 (near the Spanish Steps)  
Rome, Italy

**Phone:** 06-679-5091

<http://www.ristoranteal34.it>

This small restaurant is tucked between the shops where big-name designers sell handbags and shoes. It serves up first-rate Roman dishes.

Open daily except Monday for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards

### Taverna Giulia

Vicolo dell'Oro 23  
Rome, Italy

**Phone:** 06-686-9768

<http://www.tavernagiulia.it>

This lovely, comfortable restaurant serves traditional Ligurian food on a quiet street at the north end of beautiful Via Giulia. At the top of the list are the dishes made with Genovese pesto, such as gnocchi and lasagna, as well as the delicate *torta pasqualina*, a vegetable dish with layers of pastry. Creme brulee is a favorite dessert.

Open Monday-Saturday for lunch and dinner. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Security

### Etiquette

Contrary to the relaxed image many have of Italy, the Italian business world emphasizes formality and procedure. Get assistance from a local contact, go through proper channels, and always present yourself and your firm as polished and accomplished.

**Appointments**—Having an intermediary is essential. Without someone to make the appropriate contacts, you'll find it hard to get much done. A go-between can help schedule meetings, which should be set up well in advance. It is very difficult—nearly impossible, in fact—to call on a businessperson unannounced. Confirm your meetings a day or two before they're set to take place. Punctuality is expected throughout the country, but don't be offended if Italian counterparts are not as prompt: Those in the northern part of the country generally are; those in the south are less so.

**Personal Introductions**—Greet others with a handshake, eye contact and a slight nod. Titles are important: Use any professional titles supplied on introduction or, better yet, ask for a list of the participants and their official titles in advance. Use the title and last name—plus the formal third-person address if you speak any Italian—until instructed otherwise. On a social level, Romans often bestow two cheek kisses to friends of friends. Be alert and follow cues.

**Negotiating**—The pace of negotiations is slow, and final decisions are not made by lower-level functionaries. The chain of command in Italian business is both vertical and horizontal, so decision-making can take a long time. Last-minute demands can be made by a person who enters the negotiations late in the game. In fact, this is sometimes used as a negotiating tool. Remain patient and calm at all times.

**Business Entertaining**—Business dinners are common, but will typically involve only a few key players. If you are hosting the dinner, ask your Italian contact whom to invite. Tip the waiter ahead of time and ask that the bill be quietly given to you, should you wish to pay. Otherwise, you will have to request the check; it will not be brought to you automatically.

**Body Language**—Italians typically converse while standing close together. Handshakes can extend longer than in other cultures, and locals tend to gesture when talking. The hand signs are continuous and nuanced, though none are likely to be made by a foreigner inadvertently. More often, visitors start to imitate the gestures without understanding the precise meanings—a practice we'd caution against.

**Gift Giving**—Small but high-quality gifts are appropriate in some situations: Ask your intermediary for advice. Take flowers, chocolates or lavishly wrapped pastries to someone's home. Exercise caution in giving wine: Many Italians are experts; if you're not, select a different gift.

**Conversation**—Very little is off-limits in Italian conversation, but avoid being critical of Italian society and culture, even if your host is. Soccer is a passion and an easy topic (though discussing individual players rather than teams may be safer), as are art, travel and Italian culture. The less-positive side of Italy, including racism charges, Mussolini, World War II, the role of the Church in Italian affairs and the Mafia, is probably better avoided unless you know the other parties well.

## Personal Safety

Rome, like any big city, has its fair share of crime. Fortunately, few incidents involve gangs or violence. Great progress has been made by Rome's mayor to bolster security by installing better lighting and CCTV cameras to diminish petty crime, but it has made those vagrants still out there more aggressive than usual. There are many more police officers patrolling tourist areas than in previous years, but one should still be cautious. The buses that connect to St. Peter's, the Colosseum, the Catacombs and Termini Station are crawling with pickpockets, as are the subway trains. Because of the economic crisis sweeping southern Europe, Rome has been besieged with panhandlers and homeless people. Many are new poor who are desperate and embarrassed to beg for spare change.

Don't tempt thieves with flashy, expensive jewelry, dangling or open purses, easily accessible wallets or unlocked cars. Don't leave handbags or backpacks open, and make sure your most valuable possessions are close to your body or back in the hotel safe. Hold on tightly to purses and briefcases, and avoid the side of the sidewalk nearest traffic (purse snatchers sometimes operate from the backs of motorbikes). Avoid fanny packs. They are the mark of a tourist and attract thieves. One favorite trick is for someone to approach with a clipboard or magazine and thrust it in your face. While you are trying to get them to move away an accomplice can open your pack, remove the contents and zip it up again, and you'll be none the wiser until later on. Keep physical contact with your belongings, even when seated at a cafe table or outdoor restaurant (for example, handbags should loop over an ankle or knee, rather than a chair back).

Be alert. Make eye contact with potential pickpockets. Should an incident begin, shout and point while gripping your belongings. Don't be afraid of causing a scene: Locals and transit workers will quickly come to your defense.

*Note:* Street musicians—many of them classically trained Romanians or self-taught Roma—are largely innocent of such scams. Many support large families. Locals consider it *bella figura* (good style) to donate spare change to talented buskers and sincerely needy beggars.

Be wary of fast-talking "guides" or "hotel representatives" in the train station or at tourist sites. They are either swindlers or serving as a diversion as another crook strips you of your possessions. You can appeal to the police if there is a dispute over the price for any type of service. Changes to the taxi charter have put caps on prices, so be sure you check the printed price list or ask for an estimated price before entering the cab.

A small percentage of Roman soccer fans are apt to become violent, but there is increasing violence by fans of visiting teams, especially England. Be attentive to which team the people around you support. Serious incidents are extremely rare, but it's better to stay on the safe side. Sporting the wrong jersey, or even wearing the wrong colors, can sometimes lead to problems. As a rule, it's advisable to leave the stadium early.

Women may endure more attention than at home. Flattering comments such as "*bellissima*" (most beautiful) are culturally acceptable—touching is not. Scream and slap; most Romans will leap to your aid.

In Rome, there are four different law-enforcement organizations: the city police, *polizia municipale* (in blue and white); the state police, *polizia di stato* (also in blue and white); the paramilitary police, *carabinieri* (in designer black and red); and the finance police, *guardia di finanza* (in brown and green). Although each has a specialization, they all cover the same jurisdiction. Appeal to any of them, regardless of the problem. All four types tend to speak at least basic English and are eager to ensure that tourists are not cheated (after all, tourism is Rome's biggest business). Finally, do not be alarmed by machine guns at the airport or in the hands of traffic cops: The heavy weaponry is routine.

In an emergency, phone 113 for the police, 115 for fire and 118 for medical assistance. For the latest information on travel safety, contact your country's travel-advisory agency.

## Health

Italian health care is part of a socialized medicine system. Italians carry health cards that allow them free health care and subsidized prescription pharmaceuticals. But there are still a number of private care options to support Rome's large expat population, with several United Nations organizations and embassies to the Holy See and the country of Italy. Emergency services are free to residents and nonresidents alike.

No hospitals or clinics accept foreign insurance claims, but most will be able to write a receipt for services that is in compliance with international insurance companies. Walk-in emergency rooms, called Pronto Soccorso, are located in hospitals throughout the city. Patients are treated in order based on the seriousness of the injury or ailment, so it is not uncommon to wait several hours a nonemergency complaint just to get bumped by someone with a broken limb. Some emergency rooms are filthy, and many are understaffed, but health care is generally good.

The Aventino Medical Group (<http://www.aventinomedicalgroup.com>) is a cooperative of English-speaking private doctors who can help in almost any nonemergency situation during regular office hours and who can direct foreign travelers to the best hospital or clinic for emergencies. Phone 06-578-0738.

Medical facilities are generally very good, and the water, although heavily chlorinated with high levels of calcium, is safe to drink. Many locals stick to bottled mineral water, but it's a matter of preference—the tap water is fine. Rome can get particularly hot in summer—carrying a bottle of water can help prevent dehydration. Refills from the street nozzles are perfectly safe, but keep out of the fountains. Also, as everywhere, take your most comfortable pair of walking shoes, as Rome is a city best seen on foot.

Most pharmacies are open Monday-Friday 8:30 am-1 pm and 3:30-7 pm. They rotate night and weekend duty (7 pm-8:30 am), publishing the schedule daily in the local sections of newspapers, such as *Il Messaggero* or *La Repubblica*. Many also post the address of the nearest open pharmacy in the area. During the middle weeks of August, only one pharmacy is generally open in each district.

Pharmacists can sometimes aid travelers with basic prescriptions such as birth-control refills or medicine for conjunctivitis (pink eye); for a minor ailment, ask first before tracking down an English-language doctor. All medicine is given over the counter, so it helps to know the Italian name for your malady.

The two main hospitals in the city center are Policlinico Umberto I, located on Viale del Policlinico close to the Policlinico metro stop on the B line (phone 06-49971; <http://www.policlinicoumberto1.it>), and Ospedale San Giovanni-Addolorata, located on Via dell'Amba Aradam 9 (phone 06-77051; <http://www.hsangiovanni.roma.it>).

For more information, contact your country's health-advisory agency.

## Disabled Advisory

As an ancient city with limited vehicle access, Rome can be difficult for disabled travelers to navigate. Because of city budget cuts, very little has been done in recent years to improve the situation and Italy has been fined by the European Union for noncompliance with measures to serve disabled visitors and residents.

The public-transit system and the train system both have special services for the disabled, but trams are the only sure bet. Otherwise, transportation must be reserved at least 24 hours in advance (a week ahead is best). There is an office at Termini Station, open daily 7 am-9 pm, that offers information on services for the disabled and helps to make special arrangements if contacted in advance. Phone 06-488-1726.

For up-to-date information on accessibility for trams, buses and subways, call ATAC Monday-Saturday 8 am-8 pm. Toll-free 800-154-451. <http://www.trenitalia.it> or <http://www.atac.roma.it>.

Roma per Tutti is a new service aimed at improving access in Rome. The website (only in Italian) has a full list of wheelchair-accessible venues and invites readers to report those which are particularly prohibitive. <http://www.romapertutti.it>.

Clubs and restaurants are also becoming more aware of access issues. Most restaurants do not have handicap-accessible lavatories or adequate space for wheelchairs.

## Facts

### Dos & Don'ts

Do pack a good insect repellent. Large tiger mosquitoes from Asia do not carry diseases, but they do plague the city in the summer months.

Don't bathe in the city's fountains. They are considered monuments, and you will risk being arrested or fined.

Don't snack close to monuments or historical sites in the city center. You could be fined if caught. Police regularly patrol the Spanish Steps to shoo away anyone with food.

Do order a pizza with ham and figs or potatoes and rosemary—popular, traditional Roman snacks.

Don't expect to eat dinner in a local restaurant before 7:30 or 8 pm, and lunch is rarely served before 12:30 or 1 pm.

Do take time to admire the cobbled streets in the city center. Many of the city center's main traffic streets have already been paved with asphalt, but there is little chance they will disappear entirely. Do not steal cobblestones, even if they are stacked up in a pile. You could be fined.

Don't forget to look up when walking down Rome's quaint streets. Many old buildings have remnants of frescoes and original statues on the facades. And you might see wonderful Roman faces people-watching from the windows.

Do spend some time walking along the Via Appia, The Appian Way. There is a section, a short bus journey away from the city center, that has been restored and is virtually a pedestrian zone. This was one of the first of the Roman roads.

Do not trust pedestrian crosswalks. Most Romans ignore them, even when they are below yellow flashing lights. Crossing busy streets in Rome is daunting and dangerous.

Do not expect to hail a taxi from the street. Cabs are found at marked ranks throughout the city.

## Geostats

**Passport/Visa Requirements:** Citizens of Canada and the U.S. need only a passport. Check travel document requirements with your carrier before departing.

**Population:** 2,753,000.

**Languages:** Italian. English is widely spoken—if not perfectly, at least enough to communicate basic information.

**Predominant Religions:** Christian (Roman Catholic).

**Time Zone:** 1 hour ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (+1 GMT). Daylight Saving Time is observed from the last Sunday in March to the last Sunday in October.

**Voltage Requirements:** 220 volts.

**Telephone Codes:** 39, country code; 06, city code;

## Money

### Currency Exchange

Italy uses the euro, pronounced *aer-o*, as its official currency. It is common for store clerks to demand small notes and exact change for purchases. If you don't comply, you may be given all your change in small coins. The euro-to-dollar rate fluctuates constantly, and you will be charged on the day your credit card purchase is redeemed from your bank, not necessarily the day the purchase was made. The best exchange rate is via an ATM with a debit card. Exchange bureaus can be found all over the center of Rome, but most charge a hefty commission. Always ask if posted exchange rates are accurate.

Banks, though ubiquitous, are concentrated on main drags such as the Via Veneto, Piazza San Silvestro and Via del Corso. ATMs, called *bancomats*, are available 24 hours a day outside almost all banks and at many other locations. They are the preferred way of getting cash, because they do not usually add the 2.5%-4% fees that credit cards charge for advances.

Cards with the Cirrus symbol are accepted almost anywhere. To change cash and traveler's checks, banks charge a commission of about 3 euros. Post offices charge a fee of 3.13 euros. Exchange rates are generally better at downtown banks and exchanges (*ufficio di cambio*) than at the airports or hotels. *Cambio* hours are generally 8:30 am-7:30 pm. At the airport, try to avoid changing more money than you may need to get into town. You'll also find 24-hour automated exchange machines dotting the city for extra convenience. One way of avoiding most charges is to get a Visa or MasterCard preloaded with euros. It also minimizes the chance of loss through robbery.

Bank hours are generally Monday-Friday 8:30 am-1:30 pm and 2:30-4 pm (with some variation), but some of the larger banks are open throughout the day. In winter, banks often have reduced hours. *Bancomats* are likely to be out of cash on Sunday nights, so plan ahead.

## Taxes

Hotels in Rome now charge an occupancy tax of 2 euros for one- to three-star hotels and 3 euro for four- or five-star hotels per night.

A value-added tax (VAT, or IVA in Italy), anywhere from 4%-23%, can be refunded to non-European Union visitors. The amount added varies from country to country within the EU, and not all stores participate. Check first or look for the sign in the store window. In addition, only luxury goods—such as clothing and wine—are eligible. Refunds usually amount to about 13%-16% of the purchase price. Make sure you get the paperwork at the store on the day of purchase. Most stores will not provide the necessary document retroactively.

Present three things to the refund officer at the airport before departure: your purchase, the receipt and the customs division's stamped refund form (which must be picked up at the place of purchase). Without these, your refund will be denied. Note that only unused articles are eligible for a refund: If the article looks used, you won't get your money back. If everything is in order, the IVA refund officer will give you a final form to be mailed. (Ideally, jump through all these hoops before checking your bags, and have your purchases in an easy-to-reach place.)

Some larger stores have a streamlined process: They handle most of the paperwork and then mail the refund to you, usually minus a fee. Private IVA refund services, located at the airport, also pay immediately minus a fee, usually a percentage of the refund. This is also possible at refund centers in the shopping district of Rome's Centro Storico and other large Italian cities. The two largest such services are Global Blue and Cashback; you'll see their signs in store windows. For more information, check Global Blue's website, <http://www.globalblue.com>. It provides information, a tax calculator and a location map, showing its refund offices in 34 countries and all major exit points in Italy (airports, harbors and roads).

## Tipping

The culture of tipping in Europe is considerably different from that in North America. For the most part, Italians do not tip, as waiters and housekeeping staff are paid a fair wage. At times a service charge (*servizio*) is tacked onto restaurant bills. Don't confuse this with the cover (*coperta*), which is a charge for bread and table settings. If the service charge is included, a tip is not necessary. If service has been excellent, a tip of 1 euro per person is greatly appreciated and should be given directly to the waitstaff, not tacked on the credit card amount.

Tipping in taxis is increasingly expected because the city of Rome has regulated taxi fares and increased the number of taxi licenses, increasing competition among drivers. Most people add a 5% tip to taxi fares.

## Weather

May and June are the best times to visit, as far as the weather goes. Spring weather can be quite changeable, especially in March and April, with sunny skies in the morning and storms in the afternoon. May and June can be very pleasant, but temperatures often climb above 85 F/30 C in July and August. High humidity (around 85%) causes most locals to flee the city toward the end of summer. Fall remains sunny, with October and November quite mild but sometimes rainy. September-November is a nice time to visit—the weather's good for touring around, and you'll miss the early-summer crowds. Winters are generally mild, with January lows around 40 F/5 C. Rome receives snow about once every five years, and when it does, public transport tends to stop, and getting around the city can be difficult.



## What to Wear

As a rule, Italians are very conscious about clothes and fabric, and they have a highly developed sense of style from a very young age. Casual dress is fine for most occasions, but a suit and tie are recommended for business meetings. Jackets for men and smart attire for women are wise for dining out. The only locals in shorts and T-shirts are construction workers or people playing soccer in the park; women rarely wear shorts. Short shorts or "Daisy Dukes" are never acceptable streetwear. Bare feet are taboo except at the seaside or swimming pools.

When visiting the Vatican or any major cathedral, men should wear long pants and women should wear skirts or long pants. Sleeveless shirts and shorts are not permitted in churches or the Vatican, including the Vatican museums. Use a large scarf to cover exposed shoulders if no other covering is available.

### Valletta, Malta

## Overview

### Introduction

Valletta is Malta's delightful capital city and a World Heritage site. During a visit in 1830, British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli described Valletta as "a city of palaces built by gentlemen, for gentlemen." Indeed, what better place to construct lavish buildings and store valuable objects than in a well-fortified city? Although defense was foremost in their minds, the Knights of Malta couldn't have chosen a more scenic spot for their headquarters: The hilly peninsula between two large natural harbors provides wonderful views in nearly every direction.



Valletta will be the European Capital of Culture in 2018, drawing attention not only to the city itself but to the islands of Malta, which, despite their beauty and proximity to Italy, don't get the attention they deserve.

Across the Grand Harbour from Valletta, on two narrow peninsulas, are the cities of Vittoriosa, Cospicua and Senglea, all of which predate Valletta (but were also heavily bombed during World War II). Locals call them Birgu, Bormla and Isla, respectively, and collectively they're referred to as the *Cottonera* (the Three Cities) because they are all enclosed on the land side by a double line of fortifications.

Of the three, Vittoriosa has the most to offer, including the Church of St. Lawrence, the Maritime Museum, Fort St. Angelo (a key defensive point during the Great Siege of Malta) and the Inquisitor's Palace. The Malta at War Museum documents the challenging ordeal Malta faced during World War II. All three cities have nice waterfronts with cafes and restaurants. Small boats can also be hired to ferry you back to Valletta.

Just outside of the gates of Valletta is the town of Floriana. Valletta's bus terminus is located there, as well as the Argotti Botanic Gardens—a nice place to stroll if you have some extra time.

To the northwest of Valletta, across Marsamxett Harbour, are three sprawling suburbs of interest: Sliema, St. Julian's and Paceville (pronounced *pa-che-ville*). Sliema is good for shopping, and St. Julian's and Paceville constitute Malta's prime nightlife district. In addition to the many bars and nightclubs there, you'll

also find high-end hotels, scores of restaurants and pleasant seaside promenades and yacht harbors. Ferries link Sliema and Valletta, and Sliema is also the departure point for most island cruises.

## Port Information

### Location

The Valletta Waterfront, where cruise ships dock, is one of the nicest European ports. Check out the shops and restaurants at the waterfront or head to the city center, which is close but up a steep hill. You can take an elevator or enjoy the 15-minute scenic walk. Taxis wait at the entrance to the port, but the city is relatively small and easily accessible on foot.

## Mykonos

### Overview

#### Introduction

Set like gems in the sparkling blue Aegean Sea, each of the Cyclades islands has its own character. For Mykonos, the local culture is a mix of the sacred and the profane. This island is the gateway to the neighboring unoccupied island of Delos, the sacred center of the Cyclades.

With almost a million visitors a year, this 30-sq-mi/80-sq-km island gets busy in high season. For those who don't like crowds, spring and fall are the best times to visit.

If your notion of a Greek island is old ladies in black and fishermen mending their nets by the harbor, Mykonos will be an eye-opener. In fact, it will probably surprise even the experienced traveler. Mykonos has more than 400 churches and chapels, as well as several nude beaches and its share of gay striptease and drag shows. Fashion models strut their stuff, and the nightlife can be as wild as anywhere in the world. Prices are high, too, but the food and shopping are better than almost anywhere else in Greece.

Mykonos Town, the capital, is the center of activity on the island. Don't let its reputation for bacchic behavior discourage you from visiting. Go during the daytime if you want to experience a more traditional side of town. Take time to stroll its warrenlike streets, many of which are no wider than a sidewalk. On each side are smooth, whitewashed cubes whose doors and windows are splashed with bright colors. Bougainvilleas, clematis and geraniums cascade from the wooden balconies.

Be sure to peek inside a few of the red-domed chapels scattered around the island. Most are tiny, peaceful places. There are also several small museums that contain some interesting artifacts.

Outside the capital, the beaches are superb, provided you don't mind sharing them with a few thousand other people. Inland are few trees and lots of rocks, so although it's not the most attractive of islands, it does have character.



## Highlights

**Sights**—The island's landmark windmills, especially to watch the sun set; Little Venice at night (it may not be to everyone's tastes, but it's what Mykonos is about); Panayia Paraportiani, for a glimpse of the sacred amongst the profane; Mykonos Town's winding back streets; a short boat ride to the ancient archaeological site on nearby uninhabited Delos island.

**Museums**—The Archaeological Museum of Delos; Delos artifacts at the Archaeological Museum of Mykonos; traditional arts and crafts at the Folklore Museum of Mykonos.

**Memorable Meals**—Tarte tatin at La Maison de Catherine, *tiradito* and new-style sashimi at Matsuhisa; a contemporary take on Greek tavern fare at Bakalo; organic Greek dishes such as water buffalo meatballs at Nice n Easy on Kalo Livadi beach; gourmet seafood by Greek celebrity chef Lefteris Lazarou at White Star in Mykonos Town.

**Late Night**—The spectacular cliff-top setting and pool overlooking the sea at Cavo Paradiso; club-hopping through Mykonos Town's alleys and Little Venice; after-hours beach parties on Paradise or Super Paradise beaches; enjoying the packed party crowd at the island's beach club venues when world-famous DJs spin.

**Especially for Kids**—Miniature lighthouses and model ships at the Aegean Maritime Museum; find Petros the Pelican, the island's fabled resident mascot that struts around the port; ride a horse along some of the most picturesque beaches in the world; rent paddleboats and kayaks; visit Delos where, in Greek mythology, Zeus' twins Artemis and Apollo were born.

## Geography

Mykonos would be an almost circular island if it weren't for the bite-sized bays along the coastline, which give it a ragged butterfly shape. Its area, covered by barren rock and excellent beaches, is less than 30 sq mi/80 sq km. The island has two high points, both called Profitis Ilias, one in the extreme east (1,152 ft/357 m) and the other in the northwest corner (1,221 ft/378 m).

The island is part of the archipelago known as the Cyclades. This name derives from the rough circle the island chain forms around Delos. Mykonos is to the northeast, at around 2 o'clock on the dial. Its capital, Mykonos Town, sits halfway down the island's west coast, looking inward toward some of the other Cycladic islands. The sacred island of Delos, now an archaeological site, is just a mile/kilometer to the southwest.

The focal point of the town is the harbor, with the main square of Platia Mavrogenous (also known as Taxi Square) in the southeast corner. South of the harbor you'll see a line of white windmills, one of the great images of Mykonos, though better viewed from a distance. These structures, no longer in use, were built to capture the prevailing northwest winds for grinding wheat into flour.

South of the windmills is a trendy district called Alefkandhra. This area is also known as Little Venice, because its balconied buildings back onto the water. Alefkandhra gets packed at times because so much of the town's cultural life is squeezed in there—not only within the cafes, tavernas, discos and art galleries, but in the streets as well.

Most of the beaches and small resorts are along the south coast, within fairly easy reach of Mykonos Town. The island's only other major settlement, Ano Mera, is about 5 mi/8 km east of the town. Ano Mera

is a large village hardly touched by tourism. Beyond there the roads peter out, although there are some quiet beaches and coves that can be reached by footpath or by boat.

In the center of the island is a reservoir lake that attracts flocks of migrating birds.

## History

Not much is known about the early history of Mykonos. When recorded history began, it was being used as a stopping-off point for the holy island of Delos. In fact, Mykonos is named after the son of a king of Delos. According to mythology, the island got its rocky shape when Hercules killed several giants there and threw them down, turning them to stone.

During the first millennium, the island was inhabited by seafaring peoples who found their way there from Egypt, Phoenicia, Crete and the Ionian islands. In 1207, the Venetians conquered the island, and in 1537, it came under Turkish rule. It remained under Turkish occupation until 1822, though it retained a certain amount of autonomy, providing ships and sailors to fight against the Turks in the war of independence.

In the 18th and early 19th centuries, pirates plagued the island. In an effort to confuse them in Mykonos Town, the narrow streets were contorted into labyrinthine designs. Visitors have felt the disorienting effects ever since.

The first half of the 20th century saw the island become a popular spot with archaeologists working on nearby Delos. In the 1950s, the first waves of tourists began to arrive, including glamorous names such as Aristotle Onassis and Maria Callas. Since the 1970s, Mykonos has been one of the gay capitals of the Mediterranean, and it remains a part of the island's cultural mix.

## Port Information

### Location

Mykonos is a popular stop for cruise ships sailing the eastern Mediterranean. Most ships now dock at the so-called "new port" of Tourlos, which lies 2 mi/3 km north of Mykonos Town. The majority of cruise companies arrange shuttle buses between Tourlos and town, and in addition there is a (sporadic) public bus service plus a taxi rank. Note that there are limited facilities at Tourlos. Alternatively, some cruise ships anchor offshore, and passengers are taken directly to the "old port" on the waterfront on the edge of Mykonos Town by tender.

### Potpourri

Despite its reputation for nightlife, churches and chapels still outnumber clubs and discos on Mykonos.

Mykonos has about 10,000 residents, yet it attracts almost 800,000 visitors a year.

Jackie Onassis, Grace Kelly, Sophia Loren and Brigitte Bardot put Mykonos on the jet-set circuit during the 1960s; before that, it was a simple Cycladic island with little tourism.

Just about every movie and music star you can imagine has visited the island at some point. Even Rolling Stone Keith Richards stopped rolling long enough to spend some time there. Recent visitors include Shakira, George Michael and Lady Gaga.

Sponges are sold all over Mykonos and are said to have healing qualities. Sponge diving has been practiced in the Aegaen Sea for at least 3,000 years.

The superstition of *kako mati* or simply *mati*, the "evil eye," is still feared as it was 2,000 years ago. A clove of garlic in your pocket will protect you against it. If you happen to be without garlic, mimic spitting three times in the direction of your chest.

Mykonos has been used as a location for various films, ranging from *The Boy on a Dolphin* starring Sofia Loren in 1957, to *Bourne Identity* with Matt Damon in 2000.

Mykonos is named after the grandson of Apollo, Mykons. According to Greek Mythology, Hercules, Poseidon and Zeus fought the Titans on the island.

Mykonos has its own mascot, a white pelican named Petros, who prances around the harbor and loves people. Legend has it he was found injured off the coast and nursed back to health by locals.

## See & Do

### Sightseeing

The narrow streets of Mykonos Town are one of the main attractions, provided you can visit out of season and see them when they're quiet and pretty. Whitewashed walls and blue doors and windows draped with deep pink bougainvillea make up the archetypal Cycladic scene, which you'll see on many postcards. You may also get a glimpse of one of the pink pelicans of Mykonos. The original, Petros, was caught in a fisherman's net in 1955 and became an island mascot.

Visitors congregate in the cafes of Little Venice at the end of the day to watch the spectacular sunset, though the sunset views are actually better from the hill where the windmills sit.

There are a few small museums. The Archaeological Museum, with some finds from Delos, is worth a visit. The Folklore Museum displays Myconian art, ceramics and embroidery. The Aegean Maritime Museum contains some interesting models of ancient sailing vessels. A trip to the neighboring island of Delos is the must-see excursion for those not dedicated to beaches. Try to get there early so you'll have plenty of time to look around the UNESCO World Heritage archaeological site.

In town, Panayia Paraportiani is the prettiest of the island's numerous churches. You will find it near the remains of the castle, at the southwest end of the harbor.

The remains of many churches, chapels and shrines dot the island's landscape. According to traditional lore, fishermen who ran into trouble at sea would pray for their lives to be spared, and those who made it back to land built shrines in gratitude. Many of these tiny, private chapels are near the homes of fishermen.

Across the island is the only other large town, Ano Mera. It is well worth visiting to get a feel for typical Greek daily life. The Monastery of Panayia Tourliani is near the main square, and it's a charming example of a Greek monastery.

## Museums

### Aegean Maritime Museum

Enoplou Dynameon  
Mykonos, Mykonos Island, Cyclades Islands, Greece

**Phone:** 22890-22700

<http://odysseus.culture.gr>

Sometimes called the Nautical Museum, this place covers the history of shipping in the entire Aegean. The museum contains old maps and photos, some beautifully detailed models of ships and even a replica lighthouse in the back garden.

Open daily May-September 10:30 am-1 pm and 6:30-9 pm. 4 euros.

## Archaeological Museum of Delos

Mykonos, Mykonos Island, Cyclades Islands, Greece

**Phone:** 22890-22259

<http://odysseus.culture.gr>

One of the most sacred sites in Greece, this is said to be the island where Leto, lover of Zeus, gave birth to Apollo and Artemis. Its early history is unknown, but it had been inhabited for some time when the Ionian people arrived around 1000 BC. Today it is an open-air museum, with the remains of a theater, houses, temples and mosaics. Its most famous sight is the reproduction of the Lion Terrace, a row of five lions made of marble from Naxos in the late seventh century BC.

Open daily April-October 8 am-8 pm (take one of the boats from Mykonos, which leave the harbor between 8:30 and 11:30 am; you must return on the same boat). Boat trip costs about 16 euros round-trip; boat trip with guided tour ranges 40 euros-50 euros; admission to the site is 8 euros. .

## Archaeological Museum of Mykonos

Enoplou Dynameon, Mykonos Town

Mykonos, Mykonos Island, Cyclades Islands, Greece

**Phone:** 22890-22325

<http://odysseus.culture.gr>

Not large but worth seeing, especially if you plan to visit Delos. Some Delos pottery is on display, and the star attraction is a seventh-century-BC example of a *pithoi* (storage jar) decorated with scenes of the Trojan War. There is also a statue of Hercules.

Open daily except Monday 9 am-4 pm. 2 euros.

## Religious Sites

### Panayia Paraportiani

Mykonos Town

Mykonos, Mykonos Island, Cyclades Islands, Greece

One of the most photographed churches in Greece, this strange-looking building is actually four chapels merged into one. Its history is uncertain, and it is thought to have been built during the 16th and 17th centuries, though local people claim it dates from a much earlier time. The unusual name means "side door," because it is reached by the side door of the medieval fortress to the southwest of the harbor.

Open daily, but hours vary. Free.



## Panayia Tourliani Monastery

Ano Mera (on the main square)  
Mykonos, Mykonos Island, Cyclades Islands, Greece

There has been a monastery on this site since the sixth century, though the current buildings date mainly from the 16th-18th centuries. The monastery is worth the 4.3-mi/7-km trip to the village of Ano Mera. The most striking feature is the altar screen, which contains some unusual icons from the renowned Cretan School of painting. There is also a small museum.

Open daily 9 am-1 pm and 2-7:30 pm. Donations appreciated.

## Shopping

With its bohemian atmosphere, Mykonos is home to almost as many art galleries as nightclubs. Lots of them are congregated in the Little Venice area. Some of the stuff is quite kitsch, but there are plenty of choices, with many galleries devoted to modern Greek artists. You'll find sculptures, glass and metalwork among the paintings.

Jewelry is something else to seek out, though prices are high. You'll pay dearly for designer pieces from Ilias Lalaounis—the name in Greek jewelry.

Note that many shops are closed in winter. In summer, many open late and stay open late. Opening times fluctuate, but most people go shopping in the early evening.

## Dining

### Dining Overview

Mykonos is far more expensive than the average Greek island, but you can find establishments that offer good value. You'll have the opportunity to try some innovative dishes rather than just moussaka or stuffed tomatoes: Some restaurants show a French or fusion influence.

One island specialty is *taramasalata*, the codfish roe. In most of Greece, *taramasalata* is dyed pink, but on Mykonos, it's served white. Try Mykonos sausages, flavored with oregano, pepper, olives and spices, and *louses*, slices of pork marinated in the same blend of spices and then dried, sliced and served as an appetizer.

The best dining is, naturally, in Mykonos Town, and most of the good places are in the old part of town, known as Hora (the Greek name for the upper town, to distinguish it from the harbor area). Elsewhere on the island, you will find restaurants mainly in hotels and tavernas overlooking the popular beaches. (The tavernas may close in the evening and during the off-season.)

As a rule, eating places will be open from about noon until the last customer leaves, and then again in the evening from 6 or 7 until late. Greeks tend to eat late, at 9 pm or after, but restaurants are prepared for the earlier eating habits of visitors.

Expect to pay within these general guidelines, based on the cost of a dinner for one, not including drinks, tax or tip: \$ = less than 15 euros; \$\$ = 15 euros-25 euros; \$\$\$ = 26 euros-40 euros; and \$\$\$\$ = more than 40 euros.



## Local & Regional

### Avli tou Theodori

Platis Gialos Beach  
Mykonos, Mykonos Island, Cyclades Islands, Greece

**Phone:** 22890-78100

<http://www.avlitouthodori.gr>

This minimalist, whitewashed restaurant boasts beachfront dining right off pretty Platis Gialos beach. We love the creative appetizers, which include feta cheese wrapped in phyllo dough covered in a special *rakomelo* (a honey-infused Greek liquor) sauce. The refreshing watermelon and feta salad is a Greek specialty. Main dishes such as the prawns sauteed with eggplant and a sea bass fillet with avocado sauce round out a fantastic meal.

April-October for lunch and dinner. \$\$.

### Nice n Easy

Kalo Livadi Beach  
Mykonos, Mykonos Island, Cyclades Islands, Greece

Located right off Kalo Livadi beach, Nice n Easy offers a substantial menu of Mediterranean and Greek dishes based on all-natural, organic, local ingredients. The large dining patio offers a unique atmosphere, a mix of 50s Hollywood with Cycladic whitewashed elements that blend right in with the tranquil nature of the island's beach scene. Try the water buffalo meatballs courtesy of the restaurant's own organic water buffalo farm in Northern Greece. Delicious main dishes such as the sauteed sea bass and the beef skirt tagliata are presented beautifully.

May-October for lunch and dinner. \$\$.

## Seafood

### Appagio

Ornos Bay  
Mykonos, Mykonos Island, Cyclades Islands, Greece

Offering a panoramic view of the sea at Ornos Bay, Appagio is popular with locals for its Greek seafood selection and more. Served *psarotaverna*, or fish-tavern style, you can choose from a range of grilled fresh fish and dishes such as mussels sauteed in tomato sauce and feta, as well as zucchini stuffed with rice and seafood.

May-November for lunch and dinner. \$\$.

### Niko's Taverna

Old Harbor, Mykonos Town (just inland from the Delos boat dock)  
Mykonos, Mykonos Island, Cyclades Islands, Greece

This is where the famous Mykonos pelicans choose to dine, although you may not wish to share your fresh lobster with them. Fish soup is a specialty in this pleasant, no-frills and always-busy place.

Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$.

## **Security**

### **Etiquette**

The Greeks have a flexible attitude to time. If two friends arrange to meet, one of them might get there an hour later than the other one. Although this is generally not the case in business meetings, understand that it might happen.

Greeks are also very sociable people, and it is common to begin a business meeting with some friendly remarks about family, the weather or the traffic. However, avoid discussions on politics. While most locals will agree within minutes that all politicians are corrupt and Greece is hopelessly in debt, they might not appreciate you breaking the news to them.

Also, Greece is a religious country, and you must take care to respect the religious and moral traditions of the locals. Dress modestly (shoulders and legs should be covered) when entering churches and monasteries.

### **Personal Safety**

Although Greece is, by and large, a very safe country, the pressing crowds on Mykonos can put your valuables at risk, but the island is certainly safer than the Greek mainland. Take the usual precautions: Watch your bag and wallet in crowded places, keep your passport with you and lock the doors and windows of your accommodations. If you need to report a theft at a local police station (phone 22890-22235), expect a time-consuming, bureaucratic procedure and a small fee for a plethora of forms. For less serious incidents, try the Tourist Police (phone 22890-22482) instead.

### **Health**

Tap water in Mykonos is generally safe to drink, but many people prefer to drink bottled water for taste and to preserve the precious natural water. Vaccinations are not required to get in the country, and sanitation is generally good, although perhaps not to U.S. standards.

Take care in summer against the extreme high heat. Wear sunscreen, cover up and drink lots of water. Avoid excessive alcohol intake.

Mykonos Town has an excellent Medical Center (phone 22890-23994) with an English-speaking staff, open daily May-October 24 hours; November-April 8:30 am-9 pm.

The Mykonos Hospital (phone 22890-23994) is also in Mykonos Town and has a 24-hour emergency service.

For minor problems, try one of the pharmacies. Look for the green cross symbol. One of these will always be open, and outside regular hours all pharmacies will inform you where the nearest open pharmacy is. Pharmacy assistants are very well-trained in Greece, and most speak good English.

Note that some medicines are now in short supply, as many international pharmaceutical companies have stopped delivering to Greece because of unpaid bills—bring an ample supply of any prescription drugs you may need during your visit.

## Disabled Advisory

Visitors with physical limitations will find Mykonos—and most Greek islands—difficult. Narrow streets with steps and cobbles do not lend themselves to wheelchairs and walking sticks. People will be helpful, but visitors with mobility problems will not have the easiest of times. Getting on and off ferries to Delos can be done with difficulty, and access to the site on Delos is problematic.

Greek-speaking visitors may want to contact the Athens-based Panhellenic Union of Paraplegic and Physically Challenged. 3-5 Dimitsanis, Moshato, Athens. Phone 210-483-2564. <http://www.pasipka.gr>.

## Facts

### Dos & Don'ts

Do expect to see any and every kind of dress (and not always on women) if you wander around parts of Mykonos Town at night. It's a place where anything goes, especially late at night and into the early hours.

Don't choose a beach at random. Some are gay, some are nudist, some are both, and some are noisy, so ask or look around before settling down.

Do not expect "no smoking" signs to be respected anywhere on Mykonos. The only place on the island where you won't find a smoker is Starbucks.

Don't think you'll have a cheap break on Mykonos—it's expensive.

Do take lots of film or memory cards for your digital camera. Parts of Mykonos are unbelievably photogenic. Do ask for permission, though, before taking a picture of an orthodox priest.

Do not order Turkish coffee on Mykonos (or in Greece, for that matter). The recipe remains the same but it is called an *elliniko* (a Greek) there.

Do try to catch the sunset in Mykonos Town or at Agios Stefanos beach.

Do head to the beaches before 11 am if you want to rent a lounge chair and umbrella during the peak tourist season.

## Geostats

**Passport/Visa Requirements:** Australian, Canadian, U.K. and U.S. citizens need a passport only for tourist or business visits of up to three months. Reconfirm travel document requirements with carrier before departure.

**Population:** 10,134.

**Languages:** Greek.

**Predominant Religions:** Greek Orthodox.

**Time Zone:** 2 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (+2 GMT). Daylight Saving Time is observed from the last Sunday in April through the last Sunday in October.

**Voltage Requirements:** 220 volts. 50 Hz.

**Telephone Codes:** 30, country code; 22890, local code;

## Money

### Currency Exchange

The Greek unit of currency is the euro, in line with many other members of the European Union, though because of the current economic crisis, there is some speculation as to how long Greece will remain in the Eurozone.

There are several banks with currency-exchange facilities and ATMs in Mykonos Town. Credit cards are widely used on the island, but not all bars, tavernas and local shops will take them, so be sure to have cash on hand.

### Taxes

A value added tax (VAT) of 23% is added to most goods and services in Greece, depending on the category and the location. Reduced rates apply to certain essential categories, such as food, medical supplies, fuel and some services.

With a little paperwork, non-EU residents can obtain a VAT refund for purchases greater than 120 euros in a single store. You need to present three things to the VAT refund officer at the airport before departure to get a refund: the article you purchased, the receipt and a refund form (which must be picked up at the place of purchase). If you don't have these three things, then your refund will be denied. Note that only *unused* articles are eligible for a refund: If the article looks used, then you won't get your money back. If everything is in order, the VAT refund officer will give you a final form to be mailed in for your refund. (For your own convenience, see the VAT officer before checking your bags and have your purchases in an easy-to-reach place.)

To get the refund, look for stores displaying a "tax-free shopping" sign. Some larger stores have a streamlined process: They handle most of the paperwork and then mail the refund to you, sometimes minus a fee. Private VAT refund services, located at the airport, will give you an immediate refund minus a fee, which is usually a percentage of the refund.

If you are traveling to other countries in the European Union, you'll have to claim your refunds at your final exit point from the EU. In other words, if you're traveling on to Austria and France and are departing the EU from Paris, you have to claim the VAT refunds from all three countries at the airport in Paris.

Regarding hotels in Greece, the quoted prices always include tax and service charges, so there are no extras to pay.

### Tipping

Tipping in Greece is not a regimented affair. If you work on the basis of a 10% tip, and round it up or down to a convenient, round amount, no one will complain. A service charge is automatically included on restaurant and bar bills, so you don't need to add another one. Many people leave the small change, though, as a direct cash tip to the waiter if the service has been good. Tour guides appreciate tips.

## Weather

Mykonos is a very pleasant place to visit April-October, with temperatures in the 70s F/21-26 C and 80s F/27-31 C, though in August it can edge up into the 90s F/32-27 C and even higher than 100 F/38 C in a hot summer. Little rain falls June-September, although you can still get the odd day here and there. It rains a few days a month in spring and fall, but most rain falls in December and January, when daytime temperatures drop into the 50s F/10-15 C.

*Meltemi* winds, known by the old Greeks as the Etesian northern winds, can bring about harsh sailing conditions, but also provide cooling, low humidity and good visibility. They are particularly fierce on Mykonos and can easily last three to six days. When they become too strong, ferries may no longer operate.

The island's south-coast beaches are reasonably well-sheltered from the summer *meltemi* winds, whereas the north coast is totally exposed.

## What to Wear

In summer, Mykonos is hot, so dress in cool clothing and use lots of sunscreen. It stays hot into the night, and the only reason to cover up in the evenings is to try to discourage any mosquitoes. Although not a big problem, there still are some here and there. In the daytime in spring and autumn, temperatures are pleasantly warm, but take a sweater or light jacket for the evenings.

Like the rest of Greece, Mykonos is generally casual, although there are some nicer restaurants and hotels where you should dress to impress. Ties on men are not expected except at formal business meetings—and even there it isn't universal. Climate usually wins out over convention, and Greeks are so relaxed that you won't get in trouble or feel embarrassed if you make a wrong call.

### Athens, Greece

## Overview

### Introduction

Sights in ancient Greece, and especially Athens, take on a larger importance than in most other places in the world. They are histories of democracy, Western civilization and philosophy firsthand. You can't help but walk around the Parthenon and the rest of the Acropolis and dream about the great ones who have come before you and whose footsteps you're in.



Athens is a must-see on any European tour. The ancient and modern merge in this city in ways that are fascinating and sometimes overwhelming. Pollution wreathes the golden stones of the Acropolis and obscures views of the Saronic Gulf. Cars bleat and belch among ranks of concrete high-rises. But then you turn down a cobbled lane and discover vine-swathed tavernas, tortoises trundling through ancient ruins, and bazaars teeming with dusty treasures. Or perhaps you will encounter a sleek cafe, art gallery or an outdoor cinema that serves ouzo under the stars. Greece's capital has been reinventing itself; the results could not be more charming.

The metro routes are extensive, and the stations dazzle with marble and antiquities. Congested downtown streets have been turned into pedestrian walkways, greatly reducing Athens' notorious smog and noise. Hotels, museums and archaeological sites have been revamped. Gentrified districts—such as Gazi—host cafes, clubs and chic restaurants, which even boast smoke-free sections. Athens' 19th-century Acropolis Museum has been replaced by a fine new Acropolis Museum that has brought 21st-century, high-tech architecture to the city in the form of a stunning exhibition space.

The years since 2010 brought Greece's most severe economic crisis of modern times, together with harsh austerity measures, social unrest and even talk of defaulting and leaving the Eurozone, the 17-nation group of EU countries that use the euro as their common currency. Yet there is a built-in certainty that Greece will ride this storm as it has many others. Greeks are proud of their Olympic history, their renovated capital city and—most of all—their proven ability to surmount obstacles with flying colors. Despite the media images of frequent demonstrations and protest marches, some of which have become violent and lead to scuffles with the police, Athens should remain firmly on the travel map, prized for both its ancient charms and its modern makeover.

## Highlights

**Sights**—The Acropolis; the ancient Agora (marketplace); the Temple of Olympian Zeus; the changing of the evzone guards outside Parliament in Syntagma Square; Lykavittos Hill; a day trip to Cape Sounion for the sunset; if you have time, a one-day cruise around the Saronic Islands.

**Museums**—The Acropolis Museum; the Museum of the Ancient Agora of Athens; the Benaki Museum; the Goulandris Museum of Cycladic and Ancient Greek Art; the National Archaeological Museum.

**Memorable Meals**—The spectacular view of the Acropolis and the creative cuisine at Orizontes Lykavittou; the mind-boggling variety of traditional Greek dishes served at Eleas Gi; modern Greek taverna fare in trendy Gazi; rooftop dining in Thissio; award-winning seafood specialties at Varoulko.

**Late Night**—*Rebetiko* music at Stoa tou Athanaton; outdoor cinemas during summer; Greek and international jazz and blues at Half Note Jazz Club; live-rock acts at the Gagarin 205 Live Music Space; bars and clubs in the Gazi neighborhood; open-air summer dance clubs by the sea; an Athens and Epidaurus Festival performance in the ancient Odeon of Herod Atticus.

**Walks**—Through the Plaka (Old Athens) and the flea market in the Monastiraki area; along the traffic-free "archaeological promenade" Apostolou Pavlou in Thissio.

**Especially for Kids**—The virtual-reality presentations at the Hellenic Cosmos (adults will love it, too); the bird collection at the Attica Zoological Park; the Hellenic Children's Museum in the Plaka; the excellent beach clubs in the southern suburb of Vouliagmeni.

## Geography

Athens sits in a basin in southeastern Greece, closed in by the mountains of Pendeli, Parnitha, Imitos and Egaleo and opening toward the Saronic Gulf to the west.

The Acropolis remains the city's massive, gracious centerpiece. The Plaka area, or Old Athens, lies directly below, and its labyrinth of walkways acts almost as a shield, protecting the sacred hill from the modern city. At the outskirts of the Plaka, to the northeast, is Syntagma Square. The city's business center—with its offices, stores and hotels—begins there as one corner of the commercial triangle (the downtown pedestrian zone). The other two corners of the triangle are roughly Omonia Square (a



somewhat seedy neighborhood) and Monastiraki Square (site of the famous flea market). Ermou Street, the "base" of the triangle, is one of the city's main shopping concourses. Beyond Syntagma lies Kolonaki, an up-market residential district and home to chic boutiques and several foreign embassies, behind which rises Athens' highest peak, Lykavittos Hill.

Most of the major archaeological sites and museums are within a 2.5-mi/4-km radius of Syntagma Square. The neighborhoods of Psiri, Thissio and Gazi to the north and west of the Acropolis have been transformed into trendy entertainment areas with traditional tavernas, elegant gourmet restaurants, fashionable nightspots and art galleries. Farther north along Kifissias Avenue are the upper-class residential suburbs and upscale commercial areas such as Psychico, Filothei, Maroussi, Kifissia and Ekali—favorite locations for foreign embassies, consulates and companies, and for private schools and colleges.

The city extends southwest to the coast, encompassing the sprawling port of Piraeus, and to its south, the upper-class coastal suburbs and beaches of Faliro, Kalamaki, Glyfada, Voula and Vouliagmeni. Just off this coast, 30 minutes to two hours away by ferry, catamaran or hovercraft, are the nearby islands of the Saronic Gulf: Aegina, Poros, Hydra and Spetses.

The Athens Olympic Sports Complex, at the Irini metro stop, was the main site for the 2004 Olympic Games. Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava redesigned the stadium, which continues to host cultural and sporting events.

## History

Once a fortified village entirely contained atop the Acropolis, Athens grew into one of the most powerful city-states in the ancient world. As a successful trading city with its own port, it became Greece's leading metropolis. The fifth century BC ushered in Athens' Golden Age, the classical period that has had such a profound effect on the development of Western thought. The city's government evolved into the world's first democracy. Its leaders rebuilt the city's monuments in marble—the Parthenon, the Erechtheion, the Odeon. Socrates and then Plato shaped the world of philosophy. Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes wrote their seminal dramatic works and saw them performed.

Athens' Golden Age was influential but short-lived. The Peloponnesian War (431-404 BC) against rival Sparta was disastrous. Soon, the powerful Greek city-states fell apart and into the hands of Philip of Macedon, then to his son Alexander the Great. The three centuries following Alexander the Great's death are known as the Hellenistic period, when the arts, literature and science flourished. The Roman Empire took control in 146 BC, but Athens was highly respected and was treated well. Integration into the Byzantine Empire was more radical. Venetians ruled in the 13th century, and the Turks took over in 1453, holding power in Greece until the 19th century.

Greece became an independent country in 1829, and Athens was named the capital in 1833. It was the seat of monarchies and democracies and the scene of uprisings and civil war in the 20th century, as the country struggled to join the ranks of developing nations. Since the country's bid for economic and political stability, the city has become a popular destination, both for its historic sites and its proximity to the Greek islands.



## Port Information

### Location

Cruise ships moor in the terminal at the port of Piraeus, approximately 6 mi/10 km southwest of Athens' city center. With 11 berths (and plans to eventually increase this to 17), the terminal can accommodate even the largest vessels. <http://www.olp.gr>.

Internal shuttle buses deliver passengers from the individual berths to the international-passengers terminal, where facilities include duty-free shops, exchange offices and a bank, and parking for as many as 60 buses, plus a heliport. In 2013, the passenger terminal Themistocles opened with two separate halls for arrivals and departures. Metro Line 1 connects Monastiraki and Omonia Square in central Athens with the harbor, and taxis are cheap and readily available.

### Potpourri

The first modern Olympic Games, held in Athens in 1896, saw 14 nations competing. All 245 athletes were male.

Greece is one of only two countries to have competed in every modern Olympic Games. The other is Australia.

The ubiquitous tomato was only introduced to Greece, in Athens, in 1818.

Greeks are the biggest cheese-eaters in Europe—and most of the cheese they eat is feta.

## See & Do

### Sightseeing

A trip to Athens must start with a visit to the Acropolis. The site, one of the earliest settlements in Greece and the center of Greek genius during the Golden Age, never fails to impress. Exploring it is awe-inspiring for first-time and repeat visitors alike. Among the structures to admire on the Acropolis are the Parthenon, the small Ionian temple of Athena Nike and the Erechtheion Temple. Nearby, the ultramodern Acropolis Museum displays portable objects removed from the site since 1834. (The Elgin Marbles, the most famous artifacts from the Parthenon, remain in London despite Greek pleas to return them.)

An archaeological park surrounds the Acropolis, so take time to appreciate the ruins you'll pass on your climb, including the amphitheaters on the south slope. And be sure to pause to take in the various views of the city.

From the Acropolis, you need walk only a couple of miles/kilometers in any direction to see most of the major archaeological sites and museums in Athens. Start by taking a trip to the top of the Hill of Philopappou for a great view of the city. From there, head north to the Agora, which was the center of ancient Athens' city life. Nearby you will find the Roman Forum and the graceful Tower of the Winds. Continue east through the frenetic-yet-delightful Plaka neighborhood to Hadrian's Arch and the Temple of Zeus. Watch the skirted soldiers (called evzones) perform a changing-of-the-guard ceremony in front of the Parliament in Syntagma Square. Afterward, relax at the Zappeion, a beautiful garden with shaded benches.

Make time to see some of the city's many wonderful museums. The best are the Acropolis Museum and the National Archaeological Museum, filled with an unsurpassed collection of Greek art and artifacts. The Benaki Museum and the Greek Folk Art Museum are two of our favorites. Children, students and senior citizens are eligible for discounts on admission (usually 50%) at most museums and archaeological sites.

If you aren't planning to visit any of the Greek isles on your trip, spend a day at one of the numerous beach clubs in the city's southern suburbs. These clubs have sandy beaches, watersports facilities and a range of other amenities.

Before you set out to see all you can, pick up a free map from the Greek National Tourist Organization at its smart new information center opposite the Acropolis Museum at Dionysiou Areopagitou Street.

Take advantage of the bargain-priced 12-euro multipass that covers entry to the Acropolis, the Agora of Athens, Temple of Olympian Zeus, Roman Forum, Theater of Dionysus, Hadrian's Library and the Kerameikos cemetery.

## Historic Sites

### Acropolis

Athens, Greece

**Phone:** 210-321-4172 (archaeological site)

<http://odysseus.culture.gr>

This hill was a sacred site for ancient Athenians. To reach the plateau, you enter through an immense portal, and at the top are the ruins of three temples built in the fifth century BC. From the top of the Acropolis, you also get a sweeping view of Athens and the Saronic Gulf. Two paths lead up to the Acropolis: One is off Dionysiou Areopagitou Street, and the other is off Theorias Street in Plaka. Wear sturdy shoes and take plenty of water for the ascent, which is steep, slippery and scorching hot midday. The hill is accessible to disabled people with the use of an elevator; ask the guard at the exit of the Acropolis site to escort you to the elevator. (This is a construction-site-style lift that doesn't operate during heavy rain or when strong winds are blowing.)

*Propylaea.* This monumental gateway is your reward for winding your way to the top of the Acropolis. As you enter the small, rectangular hall, stop for a moment to marvel at the six Doric columns. Built of pure marble, this was the first building to combine Ionic and Doric styles.

*Temple of Athena Nike.* Also called the Temple of the Wingless Victory. On the southwest side of the Propylaea, this small temple once contained a sanctuary and an altar for animal sacrifices.

*Parthenon.* The largest building on the Acropolis is one of the world's most awe-inspiring man-made sites. The Parthenon (built by Pericles to honor the goddess of wisdom, Athena, patron of the city) has been the model for thousands of buildings throughout the world. Except for its roof, which was made of wood, the Parthenon was constructed of marble. The temple stood intact for millennia, until the ruling Ottomans used it to store gunpowder, which was ignited by a Venetian bomb in 1687. Most of the artifacts from the temple are housed in the Acropolis Museum nearby.

*Erechtheion.* Ahead and to the left as you face the Parthenon. Built on the site of the legendary contest between Athena and Poseidon, the temple was a shrine to Athena and the twin deity Poseidon-Erechtheus. Its most distinctive feature was the ingenious design of the six support columns on the south side—carved in the shape of maidens, or caryatids. The originals have been replaced by models, but three genuine caryatids are on display in the Acropolis Museum a few yards/meters away.

Open daily 8 am-7 pm May-October, 8 am-5 pm November-April. The Acropolis entrance fee of 12 euros for adults includes the Acropolis archaeological site (plus the Theater of Dionysus, Agora site and museum, Temple of Olympian Zeus, Roman Forum, and the Kerameikos site and museum). .

## Agora

There are two entrances: at 24 Adrianou St. in Monastiraki and at the west end of Polygnotou Street in Plaka Athens, Greece

**Phone:** 210-321-0185

<http://odysseus.culture.gr>

Just below the Acropolis, the Agora (or market) was the commercial and public center of ancient Athens. This is where Socrates spent his days in rational debate and where Western philosophy and politics were born. The site's museum, housed inside the splendidly restored Attalos Arcade, features many of the artifacts found in the area. The Theseion, within the Agora, is the best-preserved ancient temple in Greece. Built in the fifth century BC, it honors Athena and Hephaestus. The American School of Classical Studies excavates the site and offers ample information online (<http://www.ascsa.edu.gr>).

Daily 8 am-3 pm. Admission to the Agora and museum costs 4 euros.

## Areopagus

This low hill, named for the war god Ares, is near the Acropolis. It was the site of the supreme court of ancient Greece, where Orestes, persecuted by the Furies, was tried (and acquitted) after murdering his mother Clytemnestra and where St. Paul addressed the Athenians in AD 51. It's not much to look at now: As you come down from the Acropolis, turn right at the ticket booth. After approximately 150 ft/45 m, you will reach the slippery steps carved into the rock that will take you to the top of the hill.

## Byzantine Churches

Several Byzantine churches, built between the 11th and 12th centuries AD, are scattered around the city. We think the following are worth seeing from the inside as well as the outside:

*Panagia Gorgoepikoos.* The humble Byzantine church standing beside the large Metropolis Cathedral has a much longer history than its majestic neighbor. It was built in the 12th century on the ruins of an ancient temple. The temple and other ancient buildings served as a source of building material when the church was constructed. This explains why the walls incorporate many marble murals, such as the one from the fourth century BC showing the signs of the zodiac. Mitropoleos Square (at the junction of Mitropoleos and Agias Filotheis streets), Plaka.

*Kapnikarea.* Located halfway down Ermou Street from Syntagma Square.

*Agii Apostoli.* In the Agora area south of Stoa of Attalos.

*Agii Theodori.* On the Dragatsaniou Street side of Klathmonos Square on Stadiou Street.

Churches are open to the public when services are being held and a few hours afterward, on Sunday and holidays. Also open for daily prayers 7 am-1 pm and 4-6:30 pm (depending on the whim of the parish priest).

## Hadrian's Arch

Olgas Avenue (at Amalias Avenue)  
Athens, Greece

Standing beside the Temple of Olympian Zeus, this tall marble structure used to be the city gate connecting the original town of Athens (present-day Plaka) with the Roman quarters. It was built in AD 131 to honor the Roman emperor Hadrian.

Free.

## Kerameikos

148 Ermou St.  
Athens, Greece

**Phone:** 210-346-3552

<http://odysseus.culture.gr>

The city's ancient cemetery dates to the fifth century BC. Throughout this site are many beautiful tombstones with depictions of the dead along with mythological scenes. The ancient city walls, the Dipylon Gate and the Sacred Gate can be found near the site. The cemetery is named after the ceramists who for many centuries operated their workshops at this location. The numerous findings of their craft are on display in the small museum.

The archaeological site is open daily 8 am-5 pm May-October, 8 am-3 pm November-April. The museum is closed Monday during winter. Admission 2 euros.

## Lykavittos Hill

The hill is in the center of the city  
Athens, Greece

Lykavittos is the tallest hill in the Athens basin, with an altitude of 968 ft/295 m, and offers sweeping views of the city. It's located in the Kolonaki area of central Athens. In one hour, you can "see" the central landmarks of the city (including the Acropolis and the Olympic Stadium) as well as the coast and surrounding mountains. Coin-operated binoculars are available.

The tiny and quaint orthodox chapel of St. George crowns the hill, which is the highest point in the city. Energetic visitors can walk to the top on a well-trod footpath, and the less adventurous can take a short taxi ride. Or take the *teleferik* (funicular railway), which is a two-minute train ride through a hillside tunnel leading to the top of Lykavittos. The funicular runs every 30 minutes 9 am-2:30 am (though hours can vary wildly from the set times) and departs at the corner of Aristippou and Ploutarchou streets in Kolonaki (tickets 7 euros round-trip).

In addition to the chapel, the Orizontes Lykavittou complex resides on the hill and consists of a gourmet restaurant, bar and outdoor cafe. The Lykavittos Theatre, overlooking the city, is used for open-air concerts and other performances during the summer. Information on the funicular and the Orizontes complex is available by calling 210-722-7065.

## Lysikrates Monument

Epimenidi Street (at Vryonos Street; just east of the Acropolis)  
Athens, Greece

Noted for its six Corinthian columns and marble dome, this monument was built to house the prize awarded to the winners of a drama competition in 334 BC. Later the monument was incorporated into the library of a Capuchin monastery, where it was known as the Lantern of Demosthenes. Lord Byron once stayed at the monastery and is said to have written part of *Childe Harold* while sitting between the monument's columns.

## Odeon of Herod Atticus

Athens, Greece

**Phone:** 210-327-2000

<http://www.greekfestival.gr>

This amphitheater, which is on the south slope of the Acropolis and can be viewed from above, was built next to the Theater of Dionysus by the Roman ruler Herod Atticus in AD 161. Regular tours aren't permitted, but the site hosts performances during the summer Athens and Epidaurus Festival (<http://www.greekfestival.gr>). The seats in the amphitheater are marble, and the stage is built from archaic stone formations. As you take your seat, the lighted Acropolis stands behind you. Tickets are sold 21 days prior to each event and can be purchased online or from the main festival box office at 39 Panepistimiou in the city center, or at the Public and Papatotiriou book stores.

Box office open Monday-Friday 9 am-5 pm, Saturday 9 am-3 pm. .

## Panathinaiko Stadium

Vassilissis Konstantinou and Agras (across from the National Garden)  
Athens, Greece

<http://www.panathenaicstadium.gr>

This all-marble stadium was the site of the first modern Olympics in 1896. It was constructed on the site of the stone original, which was built in 330 BC.

Daily 8 am-5 pm November-February, 8 am-7 pm March-October. 3 euros.

## Philopappou Hill

Dionysiou Aeropagitou (directly across from the Acropolis)  
Athens, Greece

Also known as the Hill of the Muses, this pinnacle offers wonderful views over Athens and the Saronic Gulf on a clear day. It's most beautiful in spring when daffodils and poppies are in full bloom. A monument to the philanthropic Roman Philopappus is on the summit.

## Pnyx

On the west side of Philopappou Hill  
Athens, Greece

One of the city's major heritage sites and the so-called birthplace of democracy. It's a semicircular terrace where ancient Athenians first met in democratic assembly, in 594 BC; it could accommodate 10,000 people.

## Presidential Palace

Irodou Attikou Street  
Athens, Greece

When Greece was ruled by a monarchy, this was the Royal Palace. Now it's used by the president of the Greek Republic to host dignitaries. No tours.

## Roman Forum

Just east of the Ancient Agora  
Athens, Greece

**Phone:** 210-321-6690

<http://odysseus.culture.gr>

The Roman Forum excavations can be seen best from Polignotou Street. On the northeast corner is the Tower of the Winds, built in the first century BC, which served as a sundial, water clock and weather vane.

Daily 8 am-3 pm. 2 euros.

## Syntagma Square

The center of the city and the best spot for new visitors to orient themselves. The Evzones, dressed in traditional garb, guard the monument to the unknown soldier, which stands in the forecourt of the Greek Parliament. The changing-of-the-guard ceremony takes place every hour on the hour. It sounds sedate, until you witness the choreographed high kicks, all executed by soldiers in short, pleated skirts and clogs with pom-poms. In the metro station just beneath Syntagma Square is an exhibition of archaeological finds that were unearthed during the construction of two of the city's metro lines. *Note:* Being in front of the parliament, the square is also the focal point for political protest marches, and is best avoided when these are in progress, as they sometimes culminate in violence and the use of tear gas to disperse the crowds.

## Temple of Olympian Zeus

Vasilissis Olgas Avenue (entrance on Olgas)  
Athens, Greece

**Phone:** 210-922-6330

<http://odysseus.culture.gr>

The ruins of this temple lie just behind Hadrian's Arch to the east of the Acropolis. It was once one of the largest temples in ancient Greece. The construction of this huge marble building began in 515 BC and continued for almost seven centuries. It was eventually completed under the Roman emperor Hadrian in AD 132. Its perimeter included a total of 104 Corinthian columns, with additional columns inside the building that housed a gargantuan gold-and-ivory statue of Zeus.

After the temple's destruction by invaders in the fourth century AD, the marble was removed from the ruins and used as construction material in newer buildings. Now, only some of the temple's columns remain. Their immense height is a testimony to the dimensions of this sanctuary.

Daily 8 am-7:30 pm (closes earlier in winter). 2 euros.

## Theater of Dionysus

Dionysiou Areopagitou Street  
Athens, Greece

**Phone:** 210-322-4625

<http://odysseus.culture.gr>

The oldest Greek theater, built in the fifth century BC, is on the south slope of the Acropolis. It's the first archaeological site you'll see as you walk up Dionysiou Areopagitou Street from Hadrian's Arch. The plays of Aristophanes, Euripides, Aeschylus and Sophocles were first performed there, which makes it the birthplace of drama. The theater held some 17,000 spectators. No guided tours, but a book in English about the theater's history is available for about 9 euros.

Daily 8 am-8 pm April-October, 8 am-3 pm November-March. 2 euros.

## Museums

### Acropolis Museum

2-4 Makrigianni St.  
Athens, Greece

**Phone:** 210-900-0900

<http://www.theacropolismuseum.gr>

This dramatic space, designed by Bernard Tschumi, lies at the base of the Acropolis, next to the Acropolis metro station. A rooftop room invites contemplation of the temple. Glass floors show a glimpse of an archaeological excavation below. Greeks hope one day to display the Parthenon sculptures (also known as the Elgin Marbles, now in the British Museum in London) at this museum. It displays antiquities from the Acropolis, including three of the original sculptures from the Parthenon's pediment and sculptures of humans and animals dating to the sixth century BC that were previously displayed in the old Acropolis Museum which this replaced. There's also a light and airy inexpensive cafe-restaurant with striking views onto the Parthenon.

Open November-March Tuesday-Thursday 9 am-5 pm, Friday 9 am-10 pm, Saturday and Sunday 9 am-8 pm; April-October daily except Monday 8 am-8 pm (Friday till 10 pm). Admission 5 euros.

### Benaki Museum

1 Koumbari St. (at Vassilissis Sofias Avenue)  
Athens, Greece

**Phone:** 210-367-1000

<http://www.benaki.gr>

Stunningly beautiful, this museum displays ancient and modern Greek art, as well as Islamic, Coptic and Byzantine treasures. The Hellenistic gold jewelry and Byzantine shrines are not to be missed. Also displays memorabilia from the War of Independence (1821-31), when the Greeks won their independence after 400 years of Turkish rule.

Wednesday and Friday 9 am-5 pm, Thursday and Saturday 9 am-midnight, Sunday 9 am-3 pm. 7 euros (free on Thursday).



## Byzantine and Christian Museum

22 Vassilissis Sofias Ave.  
Athens, Greece

**Phone:** 213-213-9572

<http://www.byzantinemuseum.gr>

The most important collection of icons and Byzantine art in Greece, housed in the grounds of a Florentine-style villa. Pieces in an underground exhibition space trace the development of Byzantium from early Christianity to the fall of Constantinople.

Daily except Monday 8:30 am-4 pm. 4 euros.

## Goulandris Museum of Cycladic and Ancient Greek Art

4 Neofytou Douka (Vasilissis Sofias Avenue)  
Athens, Greece 10674

**Phone:** 210-722-8321

<http://www.cycladic.gr>

Relics of 5,000 years of Cycladic history. Greece's Cycladic Islands have an ancient history of their own—separate from that of Crete or mainland Greece. Cycladic art consists mostly of small, highly detailed works in white marble, gold and silver. Its angular marble female figurines have inspired many artists of later times.

Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday 10 am-5 pm, Thursday 10 am-8 pm, Sunday 11 am-5 pm. 7 euros (3.50 euros on Monday).

Tuesday-Saturday 10 am-2 pm, Sunday 11 am-2 pm. Closed on Monday, official Greek holidays and the month of August.

## Greek Folk Art Museum

17 Kydathineon  
Athens, Greece

**Phone:** 210-321-3018

<http://www.melt.gr>

Large collection of 18th- and 19th-century Greek embroidery, jewelry, paintings, ceramics, copper pots and domestic articles. Most impressive are the colorful costumes representing the traditions of each of the country's regions.

Daily except Monday 9 am-3 pm. 2 euros.

## Kerameikos Museum

148 Ermou St.  
Athens, Greece

**Phone:** 210-346-3552

<http://odysseus.culture.gr>

Within the Kerameikos Cemetery, the museum displays artifacts from excavations of the cemetery, including some very fine stelae (gravestones). Also among the exhibits are excellent samples of ancient Greek pottery.

May-October daily 8 am-5 pm, November-April daily except Monday 8 am-3 pm. Entrance to archaeological site and museum costs 2 euros.

## Museum of the Ancient Agora of Athens

24 Andrianou St., Monastiraki (second entrance at the west end of Polygnotou Street in Plaka)  
Athens, Greece

**Phone:** 210-321-0185

<http://odysseus.culture.gr>

Housed in the reconstructed Stoa of Attalos (originally an arcade of shops), this great museum contains some 65,000 artifacts from the classical period that have been found in the area, including domestic, everyday objects. The proto-geometrical and geometrical vases are particularly beautiful. Also of interest are potsherds, or pieces of broken pottery, that were used as voting tokens when an ostracism was held. Citizens would scratch the name of a person they wished to expel. The person receiving the highest number of votes was sent into exile for 10 years.

Daily 8 am-3 pm. 4 euros.

## National Archaeological Museum

44 Patision St.  
Athens, Greece

**Phone:** 213-214-4890

<http://www.namuseum.gr>

One of the world's finest and largest collections of ancient Greek art, this is a must-see for visitors, and you are well-advised to return several times to see it all. The museum is huge—plan at least a half-day initially in this elegant 19th-century building. The best-known exhibits include early Cycladic female figurines; the joyful frescoes from Akrotiri (island of Santorini) from the 16th century BC that show boxing boys and an idyllic spring landscape with flowers and swallows; the famous so-called "Gold Mask of Agamemnon" (ca. 1580 BC), which was actually made long before the king's lifetime; the fascinating *kouroi* (statues of youths and maidens) from the seventh to fifth century BC; the impressive classical sculpture of either Poseidon or Zeus (460 BC); and the most famous, the race horse Artemision and his child jockey (140 BC).

Monday 1-8 pm, Tuesday-Sunday 9 am-4 pm. 7 euros.

## National Historical and Ethnological Museum

13 Stadiou Ave.  
Athens, Greece

**Phone:** 210-323-7617

<http://odysseus.culture.gr>

Collection of personal effects and traditional costumes of famous Greeks, including the helmet and sword said to have been used by Lord Byron at Messolonghi. The museum occupies all of Greece's old parliament building.

Daily except Monday 9 am-2 pm. 3 euros (free on Sunday).

## National Museum of Contemporary Art

17-19 Vas. Georgiou B (at Rigillis Street)  
Athens, Greece

**Phone:** 210-924-2111

<http://www.emst.gr>

With the FIX brewery on Syngrou Avenue still being remodeled to house this museum, exhibitions are currently staged at the Athens Conservatory. The permanent collection includes works by a large number of respected contemporary artists, such as George Hadjimichalis, Nan Goldin and Seattle video artist Gary Hill.

Open daily except Monday 11 am-7 pm, until 10 pm on Thursday. 3 euros (free Thursday 5-10 pm).

## War Museum of Greece

Vassilissis Sofias Avenue (at Rizari Street)  
Athens, Greece

**Phone:** 210-725-2975

<http://www.warmuseum.gr>

This museum explores the history of Greek warfare over thousands of years. Exhibits range from prehistoric stone axes and colorful uniforms to fighter planes and heavy artillery. Most interesting are the memorabilia from the Greek War of Independence (1821-31), World War I and World War II.

June-October daily except Monday 9 am-7 pm; November-May Tuesday-Saturday 9 am-5 pm, Sunday 9 am-3 pm. 2 euros.

## Neighborhoods & Districts

### Gazi

The former industrial district west of Monastiraki has evolved into the city's trendiest neighborhood. Small, alternative nightclubs and impressively styled restaurants have taken up residence inside old warehouses and factories. This area took its name from the huge, former gas complex that has been transformed into the Technopolis cultural center.

### Kifissia

The most exclusive residential area of Athens is in the northern suburb of Kifissia, easily accessible by the metro. The district's historic landmark hotels, excellent French restaurants and exclusive boutiques are the best way to spend money in style.

### Monastiraki

The narrow streets between Monastiraki Square, the ancient Agora marketplace and Assomaton Square are the site of the Monastiraki Flea Market. Overlooking Monastiraki Square is the Tzisdarakis Mosque, featuring a splendid pottery collection. A short stroll away, the Central Market on Athinas Street offers an overwhelming variety of seafood, meat and vegetables.

### Piraeus

The industrial town of Piraeus has served as the port of Athens since the fifth century BC. Occupying a peninsula 6 mi/10 km southwest of the city center, it has become part of Athens' growing metropolitan area. Dominated by one of the largest harbors in the Mediterranean, Piraeus retains the charm of a

bygone era in the southern part of the peninsula, featuring two natural harbors (Mikrolimano and Passalimani), a yacht marina and a coastal promenade lined with restaurants and cafes (the classic 1960 film *Never on Sunday* was set in this atmospheric port). Piraeus can be reached easily from Athens. The Metro Line 1 connects Monastiraki and Omonia Square in central Athens with the passenger-ship section of the harbor.

## **Plaka**

Nestled below the northern and eastern slopes of the Acropolis, this is the oldest quarter in Athens. Cars are banned from most of the area because of its narrow and winding streets—but beware of the motorcycles and scooters, which are everywhere. The Plaka is packed with ancient monuments, Byzantine churches, stately 19th-century houses, several museums, tavernas, cafes and a dozen small hotels. There is even a tiny Cycladic village consisting of picturesque whitewashed houses, known as the Anafiotika settlement.

## **Psiri**

Many Athenians head each evening to Psiri, just northwest of Monastiraki. This district used to be a rundown neighborhood, but in the run-up to the 2004 Olympics it was transformed into a popular entertainment destination. In its narrow streets, you can still find numerous traditional tavernas, fashionable bars and art galleries, but it has now been overtaken by Gazi in the “cool” stakes, and some areas have become decidedly seedy.

## **The Apollo Coast**

The Apollo Coast is one of the city's major entertainment districts. It starts in Piraeus and ends at Cape Sounion on the southern tip of the Attica peninsula. The residential suburbs of Palio Faliro, Glyfada and Vouliagmeni are major leisure destinations along the coastal road. They feature a choice of beaches, yacht marinas, restaurants and nightclubs. Glyfada has excellent shopping and a golf course. Vouliagmeni is renowned for its luxurious resort hotels, sophisticated restaurants and sailing clubs.

## **Thissio**

A stone's throw from the Agora is Thissio, one of the oldest neighborhoods of Athens. Beautifully restored mansions now house gourmet restaurants, hot nightspots and cozy cafes. Linger over a cocktail and gaze at the Acropolis—without the tourism barrage of Plaka.

## **Recreation**

Just because Athens is a sprawling, urban city doesn't mean there's nowhere to get in a little recreation. If you're nautically inclined, you can charter yachts easily, and the sea also allows for diving excursions. Within easy reach by car, taxi, cable car (tram) or bus are numerous beaches in the southern suburbs of Palio Faliro, Alimos, Elliniko, Glyfada, Voula, Vouliagmeni and Varkiza. Some of them are freely accessible, such as the ones in Palio Faliro and Glyfada, and others operate as beach clubs and charge admission fees. The drive to the seaside resort of Varkiza, 45 minutes southwest of downtown, offers panoramic views.

## **Shopping**

It's nearly impossible to stroll through the old city without being tempted to buy something. Shops are so tiny that many vendors display their colorful wares outside and along the narrow streets. Much of what you'll see are touristy trinkets made elsewhere, but you'll also find plenty of shops selling gold jewelry with

traditional Greek designs, hand-woven tablecloths and unusual pottery. Shops also sell everything from leather goods and designer labels to religious icons and fine antiques. T-shirt shops are everywhere.

Be aware that vendors in the old city and at the markets are aggressive—once you get inside a shop, it's often difficult to get out without leaving some money behind. But don't forget to bargain in the souvenir shops and the flea market. Museum gift shops are also a good place to look for high-quality souvenirs that are often reproductions of museum pieces.

Don't miss the Monastiraki Flea Market, particularly if you're in town on a Sunday. For high-quality goods, head to Ermou Street off Syntagma Square or to the streets around Kolonaki Square.

**Shopping Hours:** Most shops have hours as follows: Monday, Wednesday and Saturday 9 am-3 pm; Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 9 am-2:30 pm and 5-8:30 pm. All department stores and supermarkets and many larger shops stay open through the day, and some stay open until 6 pm on Saturday. Many shops in the Plaka area are open daily 9 am-9 pm or even later.

## Markets

### Laiki Markets

The name means "people's" or "farmers" market. Each district of Athens plays host to a *laiki* market at least once a week, offering a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables as well as household goods. One of the liveliest markets can be found each Saturday morning on Kallidromiou Street in Exarhia, a 20-minute walk from Syntagma Square.

### Monastiraki Flea Market

The main shopping areas are Pandrossou and Ifaistou streets near the Acropolis  
Athens, Greece

Visitors flock to this market at the edge of the Plaka to sample everything from the modern to the ancient, all in an area of less than 1 sq mi/2.6 sq km. The best time to visit the flea market is Sunday morning. Visitors will find everything from military uniforms to Mickey Mouse clocks to mock Roman helmets in the narrow alleyways and streets. Bargaining is quite acceptable in the individual stalls, so don't settle on the asked-for price.

Daily 9 am-9 pm.

## Shopping Areas

### Attica

9 Panepistimiou  
Athens, Greece

**Phone:** 211-180-2600

<http://www.atticadps.gr>

Close to Syntagma Square, the poshest shopping center in the city has extends over eight floors, selling the most fashionable international brands, especially clothing, accessories, cosmetics and homewares. It's worth a visit just to look at the most beautifully decorated shopping windows of Greece.

Monday-Friday 10 am-9 pm, Saturday 10 am-7 pm.

## Ermou Street

This pedestrian-only street off Syntagma Square shouldn't be missed if shopping is among your travel objectives. It has always been Athens' busiest shopping street and is packed with mid-range clothing, accessory and shoe shops.

## Kolonaki

This fashionable neighborhood at the foot of Lykavittos Hill is the chicest place to shop in Athens. It's teeming with boutiques—Gucci, Lanvin, Bulgari, Lancel, Vuitton. When you need a break from shopping, there are plenty of trendy coffee shops and restaurants around Kolonaki Square.

## The Mall

Athens, Greece

<http://www.themallathens.gr>

Those who like shopping in malls should check out The Mall in the northern suburb of Maroussi, served by Neratziotissa metro station, with 200 shops, more than a dozen eateries and a 15-screen movie theater.

Monday-Friday 10 am-9 pm, Saturday 9 am-8 pm.

## Dining

### Dining Overview

Whether dining at a neighborhood taverna or an elegant restaurant, Greeks take their time over food. The cuisine is delightfully uncomplicated and quite different from what's served in Greek or Cypriot restaurants abroad. Much of the cooking relies on simple seasonings of fresh meat and vegetables.

For breakfast, Greeks rarely eat more than bread or bakery-fresh *tiropites* (flaky cheese-filled pastries). Lunch is served in the late afternoon, generally between 2 and 4 pm, and dinner around 10 or 11 pm. To stave off hunger between meals, they enjoy snacking on souvlaki (garlic-marinated lamb kebabs) or *tiropites* bought from a street vendor.

It's common to make a lunch of *mezedes*, or hors d'oeuvres. Typical dishes include fried meatballs, squash balls, octopus, shrimp, squid, cheese, olives, stuffed grape leaves, *tzatziki* (garlicky yogurt and cucumbers), eggplant dip, small sausages and giant beans. You can find *mezedes* at an *ouzeri* (a bar serving ouzo) or at a *mezedopolio* (a bar serving locally produced wine or beer).

If you're having a full meal, make sure it includes one of the following local specialties: moussaka (lamb and eggplant in bechamel sauce), kebabs, pastitsio (lamb or goat meat with macaroni and tomatoes), *stifado* (braised beef with onions), *paithakia* (grilled lamb or goat chops), *melitzanosalata* (eggplant salad), *revithia soupa* (chickpea soup), spanakopita (spinach pie), *chtapodi* (octopus salad) and *tiropita* (cheese pie). Don't leave Greece without trying baklava and other pastries made from phyllo dough, nuts and honey. Strong Greek coffee (similar to Turkish coffee—but don't tell that to the Greeks) is usually quite good. Ask for it *sketo* (black), *metrio* (semisweet) or *glyko* (sweet).

The traditional alcoholic drinks of Greece are quite distinctive and pack a strong punch. Ouzo, the popular aperitif, is anise-flavored and turns cloudy when mixed with water, as is often done. *Metaxa*, a brandy, is graded in quality and priced according to stars, with three being the cheapest. Retsina is an acquired

taste (imagine a pine tree marinated in wine). *Mavrodaphne* is extremely sweet—it's more like a dessert wine.

There has been a renaissance of the age-old Greek wine-making tradition. The introduction of new vines and the use of better techniques have resulted in some excellent reds and whites on par with the world's best wines.

When selecting a restaurant, know that *estiatorion* are the more expensive conventional restaurants; tavernas are informal, family-run establishments; *psistaria* offer mostly grilled meats; and *psarotaverna* specialize in seafood dishes. Many restaurants close during the summer months or move to another location, usually by the sea.

Expect to pay within these general guidelines, based on the cost of dinner for one, not including drinks, tax or tip: \$ = less than 15 euros; \$\$ = 15 euros-30 euros; \$\$\$ = 31 euros-50 euros; and \$\$\$\$ = more than 50 euros.

## Local & Regional

### Hytra

107-109 Syngrou Ave. (Onassis Cultural Centre)  
Athens, Greece

**Phone:** 210-331-6767

<http://www.hytra.gr>

In a stylish and subdued modern setting, the Michelin-starred young chef Nikos Karathanos celebrates Greek haute cuisine. He transforms wild herbs, fresh vegetables and other humble ingredients into some exceptional dishes. Diners are advised to opt for the multicourse degustation menu, a hard-to-beat value at 62 euros (or 72 euros including two glasses of wine). On the menu, imaginative treatments of classic Greek flavors include smoked ham foam with carpaccio of sea bass, pork with orange-scented celeriac puree, and among the desserts, panna cotta flavored with cardamom and Greek coffee foam.

Tuesday-Saturday for lunch and dinner, Sunday for lunch only. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

### Katsourbos

2 Aminta  
Athens, Greece

**Phone:** 210-722-2167

<http://www.katsourbos.gr>

This exquisite eatery serves authentic Cretan cuisine in a refined dining room with an old tile floor and mismatched wooden tables and chairs. All the dishes are made from fresh produce, much of which is shipped over directly from Crete. Be sure to try the *kolokithokeftedes* (zucchini fritters), and if it's the right time of year, the *stamnagathi* (wild greens particular to the island). The service is pleasantly discreet but friendly. You'll find it just a 10-minute walk south of Kolonaki, making it a good choice for lunch after a morning of museums. In summer it also has outdoor tables on the square across the street.

Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$.



## Melilotos

Kalamiotou 19  
Athens, Greece

**Phone:** 210-322-2458

<http://www.melilotos.gr>

A fine choice for lunch in the city center, close to Syntagma Square, Melilotos is popular with local office workers, it has a menu that changes daily—expect colorful creative dishes such as baked salmon with lentil and tomato salad, or chicken stuffed with figs and served with aromatic rice.

Monday-Saturday lunch only.

## Milos

46 Vassilissis Sophias Ave. (at the Hilton)  
Athens, Greece

**Phone:** 210-724-4400

<http://milos.ca/restaurants/athens>

Following the success of the Milos restaurants in New York and Montreal, the Athens branch opened at the Hilton to great acclaim (the chain has since expanded to Las Vegas and Miami). Diners select their fish at a catch-of-the-day counter and usually ask that it be grilled or baked within a salt crust. Other seafood specialties include lobster salad, squid stuffed with four types of Greek cheese, and fried eel with capers and vine sprouts. Lamb chops and sirloin steaks are also on the menu. Next to the open-plan kitchen is the chef's table for up to 10 people. For these guests, the chefs prepare cooked-to-order dishes—even if they are not on the menu. In addition, a contingent of housewives cooks regional Greek specialties. Some dishes, such as wild goat with rare vegetables, and rooster with fresh pasta, must be ordered a day ahead. The comprehensive wine list includes both Greek and international selections.

Monday-Saturday for lunch and dinner, Sunday for lunch only. \$\$\$\$.

## Orizontes Lykavittou

Lykavittos Hill  
Athens, Greece

**Phone:** 210-722-7065

<http://www.orizonteslycabettus.gr>

One of the city's most dramatic vistas can be found at Orizontes, which sits atop Lykavittos, the tallest hill in Athens. This restaurant and cafe has great views of the Acropolis and the seashores and offers a modern take on Greek and Mediterranean cuisine.

Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Sholarhio

14 Tripodon St.  
Athens, Greece

**Phone:** 210-324-7605

<http://www.sholarhio.gr>

This humble establishment doesn't even have a menu: Just pick *mezedes* from the server's tray. Wash down batter-fried eggplant, flaming sausages and marinated peppers with a bottle of Mythos beer or jug of local wine.

Daily for lunch and dinner. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

### **Sigalas-Bairaktaris**

2 Monastiraki Square  
Athens, Greece

This Athenian institution, in business for more than 100 years, serves basic Greek staples, notably souvlaki and kebab, but people go as much for the buzz as for the food. Check the dishes in the cabinet and enjoy seeing the waiters bustle around.

Daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner. \$. No credit cards.

### **Strofi**

25 Robertou Galli St.  
Athens, Greece

**Phone:** 210-921-4130

<http://www.strofi.gr>

Known primarily for its superb view of the Acropolis, this place is well worth a stop. Founded in 1975 but totally refurbished in 2010, it now has a chic white modern minimalist look. It's also a decent choice for carefully-presented traditional Greek cooking if you have only one night in the city. Be aware that you have to climb two flights of stairs to reach the stunning roof terrace.

Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

### **To Kouti**

23 Adrianou St.  
Athens, Greece 10555

Located next to the Agora, you'll find this romantic hangout attracts the intellectual elite who appreciate its modern wood-and-slate interior. To Kouti, named for its "little box" shape, offers an unobstructed view of the Acropolis from the second floor. Try to go when the moon is rising. The menu features colorful, creative dishes with the abundant use of fresh herbs and spices.

Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

### **Trapezaria**

Theodorou Negri 1 (Makrigianni)  
Athens, Greece

**Phone:** 210-921-3500

<http://www.trapezaria.gr>

In a refurbished warehouse with a polished pine floor and industrial-chic decor, just off Syngrou Avenue, this restaurant opened in November 2011. Owner-chef Dimitris Panagiotopoulos changes the menu with the seasons, using fresh local produce to create innovative Mediterranean dishes such as mushrooms baked with goat's cheese and black sesame seeds, followed by veal with figs and asparagus sauteed with butter roasted almonds. It's packed with locals most evenings.

Monday-Saturday for lunch and dinner, Sunday for lunch only. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$.

## Tzitzikas kai Mermigas

12-14 Mitropoleos, Syntagma  
Athens, Greece

With an interior decorated to look like an old-fashioned grocery store, the "Grasshopper and the Ant" serves Greek dishes with a modern twist. Upon arrival, you'll be given *tsipoura* (a potent spirit), olives and the menu. Memorable dishes include the sublime chicken with *mastic*, and the chocolate-covered profiteroles. It's hugely popular with locals and visitors alike, so you may have to wait for a table.

Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$.

## Vlassis

15 Meandrou St.  
Athens, Greece

**Phone:** 210-725-6335

<http://www.vlassisrestaurant.gr>

This popular taverna is truly a family affair. Regulars have been dining there for more than a decade on dishes such as squid stewed with spinach and cabbage or eggplant with mild peppers. The down-home desserts are great, too, from strained yogurt with quince to freshly made halvah. Picking your favorite dishes couldn't be easier—just chose from the big wooden tray the waiter will put under your nose. It's hard to get a table, so book early.

October-May; Monday-Saturday for lunch and dinner, Sunday for lunch only. Closed 10-30 August. \$\$.

## Security

### Etiquette

Although many laud Greece as the birthplace of democracy, the country's heritage as a place of trade and business is also rich. Visitors from North America will find most of the country's practices and customs to be familiar.

**Appointments**—Set your appointments at least a couple of weeks in advance, if possible. Punctuality is expected, but not strictly adhered to. As a guest, you should be on time, although your Greek counterpart may be less so. Reconfirm your appointments a couple of days beforehand.

**Personal Introductions**—A handshake and a brief nod are the typical greeting. First meetings are formal, using the last name of the new acquaintance.

**Negotiating**—Emphasis is placed on the value of senior statesmen and advisers. Negotiating styles tend to be similar to those in other parts of Europe and North America, if a bit slower than in northern Europe. Personal feelings and subjective criteria can be as important as objective facts to a Greek businessperson.

**Business Entertaining**—Greeks are as likely to gather over a cup of coffee as they are a meal. If eating is on the agenda, expect it to be a communal affair with large dishes that are shared by everyone at the table. The host, whoever issued the invitation, divides the bill equally or simply pays it. However destitute,

he or she may become quite offended if guests proffer euros. Wine is common at lunch and dinner. Draining your glass dry is considered gauche. Leave your glass more than half-full to indicate you've had enough.

**Body Language**—Avoid using head gestures or interpreting them. Traditionally, the Greek head gesture for "no" is an upward nod of the head and a raised eyebrow, which looks much like the gesture for "yes" in many other countries. The Greek gesture for yes can be similarly confusing. These days, many in Greece tend to use more standard head gestures, but you can never be sure. Try to get a verbal answer to avoid confusion. Do not use the "OK" gesture with the thumb and index finger forming a circle, as this will be interpreted as an insult. The "thumbs-up" gesture may be used to signal "OK." Cheek kisses are a common greeting and goodbye among acquaintances.

**Evil Eye**—Country superstitions still linger in the capital. Don't coo over an infant or praise anything excessively, as this could draw evil spirits, according to local tradition still observed by older people. Greeks counteract the risk by spitting on the object or (more hygienically) just saying *ftou-ftou-ftou*. Cobalt charms, usually a flat, staring eye, ward away the bad luck.

**Gift Giving**—Gifts are appreciated, but avoid gifts that are merely opportunities to expose your company's logo. Flowers or a bottle of wine or spirit are a good gift to take to a home, if invited.

**Conversation**—Greeks are effusive and their conversation lively. Remember that Greeks are sensitive about Macedonia: They refer to the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia as Skopje (after its capital), and use the name Macedonia exclusively for the region of Macedonia in northern Greece. Also know that Greeks have always objected to the succession of occupiers that have at one time or another intruded in Greek affairs.

Visitors may be startled by bold inquiries about their marital status, weight, ethnicity, salary and home value: This is typical talk in Athens, as are lengthy descriptions of physical ailments.

## Personal Safety

The crime rate in Athens is relatively low. You can walk safely down almost any street, day or night. But take precautions and avoid strolling in the Omonia Square area as well as in districts north and west of the square late at night. If you are unfortunate enough to be riding a trolley or subway at rush hour, make sure your wallet or handbag is secure. Ladies should also avoid holding their handbags with the street-side hand as there have been incidents of bikers snatching them. Such petty theft is on the rise, unfortunately (as are instances of rape and disorderliness on the islands, generally carried out by drunken foreign visitors).

Do avoid the small Platia Vathis northwest of Omonia Place, which is a nightly meeting point for drug dealers. Male singles should avoid touts who invite them into a local bar close to Syntagma Square. The friendly man disappears after a few drinks and leaves the tourist with a hefty bill to pay.

Strikes and demonstrations occasionally choke downtown traffic and can get violent in the Syntagma Square area (in front of the parliament), with protestors throwing stones and molotovs, and the police responding with tear gas and batons. Although animosity toward U.S. foreign policy has run high, visitors from the U.S. haven't usually been harassed. Current hostility is directed more toward the European Union, and the austerity measures it imposed on Greece to protect the euro from collapse.

The grungy student area of Exarhia has become the stage of ongoing confrontations between the police and students, since the police shooting of a 15-year-old boy there in December 2008. However, this does not cause a threat to visitors.

## Health

Sanitation standards in Athens are generally similar to those in Western Europe. Medical facilities also are acceptable, though visitors should note that some medicines are now in short supply, as many international pharmaceutical companies have stopped delivering to Greece because of unpaid bills—bring an ample supply of any prescription drugs you may need. Tap water is safe to drink, but it's so heavily chlorinated that most travelers prefer bottled water. We suggest you stick to prepackaged drinks—but dispose of the plastic bottles properly. (Bottled water and other drinks are so popular that disposing of the containers has become a problem, particularly on the islands.)

Snacks sold by street vendors are generally safe to eat. If you're out and need a restroom, look for either a hotel, restaurant or cafe. The air in Athens can be very polluted and may aggravate existing respiratory ailments. Antihistamines are recommended for those with allergies. Remember to pack a comfortable pair of walking shoes. Sunscreen and a hat are a must May-October. To avoid sunstroke, drink plenty of water.

If you're in need of medical care, your hotel concierge should be able to contact a doctor for you. Hospitals and pharmacies stay open additional hours on a rotating basis (phone 1434 for information about which hospitals and pharmacies are on duty). Call the Tourist Police (phone 171), ambulance service (phone 166) or check the long-established weekly English-language newspaper, *Athens News*, published every Friday (<http://www.athensnews.gr>) to find out which are open after-hours and all night. Otherwise, your hotel reception should be able to supply a recommendation. Most pharmacies post a list in the window with the addresses of the closest pharmacies that are open after-hours. Newspaper kiosks often sell paracetamol (aspirin is virtually impossible to find now in Greece) and condoms.

## Disabled Advisory

Visitors with physical limitations will find it difficult to get around Athens. Improvements such as wheelchair ramps have been built on street curbs and at some hotels, but at present, no special information or access maps are available for disabled travelers. Some information is available from the Tourist Police, who speak English (phone 171). Greek-speaking visitors may want to contact the Panhellenic Union of Paraplegic and Physically Challenged, 3-5 Dimitsanis, Moshato, Athens. Phone 210-483-2564. <http://www.pasipka.gr>.

The airport, metro stations and former Olympic venues are user-friendly, but overall, the city rates poorly for disabled access. The city is working to make improvements to sidewalks, taxis, buses, stores, pharmacies, restaurants, bars and clubs for visitors in wheelchairs.

A privately run Web site details tours and facilities currently available for wheelchair users. <http://www.greecetravel.com/handicapped>.

## Facts

### Dos & Don'ts

Do dress conservatively when visiting monasteries or churches: No bare arms or legs.

Don't wear swimwear anywhere other than on the beach. The Greeks believe that this is where it belongs, and rightly so.

Do not buy "old" icons—they are usually fakes, and the export of real ones is strictly forbidden and will be punished.

Don't stare at people too much, as many Greeks still believe in the power of the evil eye.

Don't be surprised to see people smoking despite the nationwide smoking ban—Greeks have refused en masse to observe this law.

Don't book "Athens by Night" tours touted by hotels and travel agencies in Athens. They are never worth the money.

Do visit the museums at noontime in summer. Most have cool cafes and offer a welcome break from the oppressive heat.

Don't flush paper down the toilets. The Greek plumbing system has narrow drains, and visitors are requested to put waste paper in the plastic bins provided in all WCs. If you fail to do this, you risk blocked drains and flooded restrooms.

### Geostats

**Passport/Visa Requirements:** Canadian and U.S. citizens need passports but not visas for a stay of up to three months. Reconfirm travel document requirements with your carrier before departing.

**Population:** 789,166.

**Languages:** Greek. Most Greeks speak at least one foreign language, and it's rare to find someone connected with tourism who doesn't speak basic English.

**Predominant Religions:** Christian (Greek Orthodox).

**Time Zone:** 2 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (+2 GMT). Daylight Saving Time is observed from the last Sunday in March through the last Sunday in October.

**Voltage Requirements:** 220 volts.

**Telephone Codes:** 30, country code; 210,city code;

## Money

### Currency Exchange

The Greek currency is the euro, in line with many other members of the European Union. The euro is still considered a stable currency, despite its recent and ongoing financial crisis.

ATMs, which tend to offer the most favorable exchange rates, are located throughout Athens. Syntagma Square has the highest concentration of banks (and ATMs) as well as exchange bureaus.

### Taxes

All consumer purchase prices include value-added tax (called FPA, the Greek equivalent of VAT), currently 23% on almost all goods and services. This is also true for hotel prices, which include taxes and service charges. There is no hotel tax that is added on top of the quoted price.

Nonresidents of the European Union are eligible for a refund of the FPA on purchases larger than 120 euros in a single store on a single purchase. Fill out a simple form in the store and then get it export-validated at the customs office in the airport. Hundreds of shops in Athens display the "Tax-Free Shopping" sign and participate in the FPA refund.

### Tipping

All restaurant bills include any service charge. Additional tipping is not expected, but customers do sometimes leave up to 10% of the total bill if they feel like rewarding very good service. Tip a concierge or hotel receptionist about 3 euros (or more, depending on services rendered) at checkout. Guides expect at least 2 euros. Tip doormen 1 or 2 euros. Barbers and beauticians expect a 10% tip, and taxi drivers usually keep any small change due a passenger.

### Weather

Athens enjoys relatively mild winters and lovely, temperate autumns and springs. The hot summers, although dry, can be oppressive at their heights. Average temperatures are 89 F/32 C. The *meltemi*, or summer winds, can help break the heat. Rainfall is heaviest in December and January, when temperatures average 55 F/13 C. The best times to visit are mid-May to mid-June and mid-September to October. The climate is pleasant, and sunshine is plentiful.

### What to Wear

Dress for men and women is smart casual in summer. To blend in with local residents, women should wear skirts and slacks, and men should wear long pants. It's acceptable for women to wear shorts in the summer but not when visiting churches or monasteries. Women should wear conservative dresses or skirts (no slacks are permitted) and modest blouses (no cleavage, and backs should be covered up to the shoulder blades) when visiting a church.

Typical business attire for men is a suit and tie, though smart trousers and an open-necked shirt are acceptable during the hottest months (June-August). Women should dress smartly; skirts and trousers are acceptable.



**Kusadasi, Turkey****Overview****Introduction**

The hectic port town of Kusadasi (pronounced *cusha-daser*) makes a popular base for visits to Ephesus, especially with those on package holidays for whom hundreds of identical high-rise hotels were built in the 1980s-90s.

Today the port plays host to numerous cruise ships throughout summer, which means that the shops in the center are often frantically busy for a few hours in the middle of the day. Their prices inevitably reflect the presence of a captive clientele with little time to compare.

Kusadasi is one of Turkey's megaresorts and is particularly popular with visitors from Northern Europe who throng its lively Bar Street in summer. At first glance, little remains of Scala Nuova, the town that stood there in the Middle Ages. However, near the port stands a massive 17th-century *caravanserai* that, today, plays host to "Turkish Night" entertainment.

Kusadasi will not appeal to everyone, mainly because it is so built up and dedicated to tourism. However, it does make a good base for exploring other nearby sites, including the ruins at Priene, Miletus and Didyma. Local travel agencies also sell tours to the Travertines at Pamukkale, although this makes for a very long day out.

Not far away, just offshore and connected by a causeway, is the small castle on Guvercin Adasi (Pigeon Island), after which the town was named (Kusadasi means *bird island* in Turkish). The Old Bazaar area also contains a 17th-century mosque and hammam (Turkish bath), as well as some old Ottoman houses. More can be found up the steep hills above the port in an area that is starting to be gentrified.

**Highlights**

**Sights**—Ephesus Archaeological Site; Isa Bey Cami in Selcuk; Basilica of St. John in Selcuk.

**Museums**—Ephesus Museum in Selcuk.

**Memorable Meals**—Degirmen Restaurant; Cabare Restaurant and Eski Ev in Selcuk; Artemis Restaurant in Sirince.

**Late Night**—Sir Winston House and Kusadasi Turkish Night in Kusadasi.

**Walks**—Dilek Milli Park (National Park) near Kusadasi.



## Geography

Kusadasi is about 13 mi/22 km southwest of Selcuk and Ephesus on the Aegean coast facing the Greek island of Samos.

The town spreads inland from the port with much of the older part uphill. A pair of causeways running offshore link it to Guvercin Adasi (Pigeon Island) and Yilanci Burnu (Snake Headland), and Ladies Beach (Kadinlar Denizi) can be found in a suburb 2 mi/2.5 km to the south.

## Port Information

### Location

Kusadasi is now a popular port of call for luxury cruise liners, and its population swells from 50,000 to half a million between May and October.

The town is also the port where Aegean cruise liners drop anchor for their day visits to Ephesus.

Known officially as Ege Ports-The Port of Kusadasi, the modern facility can berth four large vessels, or four smaller vessels and two large vessels, at once.

Inside the passenger terminal, duty-free shopping, first aid, Internet access, and booths for travel operators abound.

## See & Do

### Sightseeing

### Historic Sites

#### Guvercin Adasi (Pigeon Island)

Town center  
Kusadasi, Turkey

The island after which Kusadasi (Bird Island) is named is little more than an islet attached to the mainland via a causeway and completely ringed by the walls of a castle that dates from Byzantine times. The surviving walls mainly date from a medieval Genoese rebuild, but they were restrengthened in the 1830s when an attack from Greece was feared. Unfortunately, the keep inside the castle is kept locked for no apparent reason, and the cafes that used to dot the grounds have been removed, so there's nothing more to do than take a quick stroll around the walls, admire the views from the ramparts and then return to the mainland.

Open during daylight hours. Free.

#### Oguz Mehmet Pasa Kervansarayi

Barbaros Hayrettin Bulvari  
Kusadasi, Turkey

An unmissable landmark close to Kusadasi harbor, this vast stone *caravanserai* is now rather crassly reused as a carpet-shop-cum-restaurant. Built in 1618, it was one of a string of havens where merchants traveling the silk roads with their animals could stay for free for three days at a time. Typically bedrooms

were provided on the upper floor of a *caravanserai*, overlooking a courtyard, with stabling for the animals on the ground floor.

Open 24 hours. Free.

## Old Town Tanneries

Ataturk Bulvari  
Kusadasi, Turkey

What used to be the smelly, dirty part of Kusadasi where skins were tanned in Ottoman times has now been completely renovated to provide a smart new part of town aiming for a slightly more sophisticated take on tourism. A small leather museum plays homage to the area's origins although most of the site has been turned over to retail and catering.

Open 24 hours. Free.

## Shopping

It cannot really be said that there is much in the way of exciting shopping to be found in Kusadasi, although it is chock-a-block with leather and jewelry shops aimed (and priced) at cruise passengers.

The Old Bazaar area of Kusadasi can be a fun place to hunt for clothes, shoes and handbags, although real bargains are few and far between. Note that although bargaining (*pazarlık* in Turkish) has virtually died out in the majority of Turkey's tourist areas such as this, you may still be able to negotiate a cheaper price; in many carpet, jewelry and leather shops, it would be a costly mistake to pay the first price asked.

In contrast, in the more upmarket Scala Nuova shopping harbor attached to the port, most of the shops have fixed prices.

Kusadasi is so full of shops that the markets may not seem so important, but there are fruit and vegetable markets every Tuesday and Friday, as well as a general market of more interest to visitors every Wednesday.

**Shopping Hours:** In general, shops in Kusadasi are open daily in tourist season from early in the morning until late evening. Things don't wind down completely until around midnight mid-June to mid-September. In Selcuk, some shops close on Sunday, but they stay open in Sirince to attract the weekend trade.

## Shopping Areas

### Scala Nuova

Kusadasi Harbor  
Kusadasi, Turkey

The shopping mall attached to Kusadasi Harbor is not especially large, and much of the space available is taken up by restaurants and cafes. However, it is the place to go for brand-name shopping and fixed prices. Some people will feel more comfortable shopping in surroundings that seem more familiar than the narrow streets of the Old Bazaar. Afterward, relax with a coffee at a Starbucks cafe that has a great view of Pigeon Island.

## Specialty Stores

## Yemenici Hayri Usta

7 Eylül Sokak (Old Bazaar)  
Kusadasi, Turkey

**Phone:** 0532-300-2738

<http://www.yemenicihayriusta.com.tr>

Not so long ago, the making of flat leather "Yemeni" shoes in Gaziantep in the southeast of Turkey was a dying craft, but the past few years have seen not just a revival, but also the migration of some of the Yemeni makers to other parts of the country. The fact that colorful examples of shoes and boots made in the traditional style featured in the film *Troy* and in one of the *Harry Potter* films has only added to the cache attached to the Yemenis, whose makers are gradually widening their repertoire to include more modern styles. It's worth tracking down this tiny shoe shop in the Old Bazaar area where you can watch the shoes being handmade in the traditional way. Inevitably, prices have risen as they have become more fashionable. However, they still represent great value for the money.

Daily 9 am-10 pm, with shorter hours in winter.

## Dining

### Dining Overview

Unfortunately, fine dining is not really a feature of this part of Turkey. There are plenty of restaurants in Kusadasi, but with a clientele largely made up of tourists, few of them rise much above average in quality. On the plus side, prices are kept low by the intense competition.

Recent years have seen an attempt to provide a slightly more sophisticated dining scene with chain cafes opening in the Scuola Nova harbor and some classier restaurants in the Setur Marina.

Most of Turkey's staple dishes such as *doner kebab*, Adana kebab, *kofte* (meatballs) and *pide* (Turkish pizza) are readily available. Restaurants also dish up Northern European favorites such as fish-and-chips and full English breakfasts. In places such as Ladies Beach, these are the choices that dominate most menus.

Beside the harbor and fish market, there are several well-established fish restaurants that are fairly reliable, although it's always important to check prices and the weight of portions carefully before ordering.

One local dish worth looking out for is *cop sis* (pronounced *chop shish*), which consists of small pieces of lamb grilled on skewers. Another is *keskek*, a dish made from mutton and ground wheat that have been pounded into a paste and that probably has its origins in central Asia.

Vegetarians will struggle a bit to find suitable dishes, although *kasarli domatesli pide* (cheese and tomato pizza) or *peynirli gozleme* (cheese pancake) are two safe options that are fairly readily available. Strict vegetarians need to be aware that even something as seemingly safe as lentil soup may have been cooked using lard. The village of Kirazilkoy, near Kusadasi, has been building a reputation for organic produce.

Cafes and restaurants are heavily concentrated in the pedestrianized streets backing onto the harbor where they compete for space with the souvenir shops.

Turkey levies "sin" taxes on alcohol, so even a single glass of wine or raki, the local aniseed liquor, can push up the price of a meal considerably.

Smoking is not allowed inside any Turkish restaurants.

Expect to pay within these general guidelines, based on the cost of dinner for one, not including drinks, tip or tax: \$ = less than TL15; \$\$ = TL15-TL30; \$\$\$ = TL31-TL50; \$\$\$\$ = more than TL50.

## Local & Regional

### Antepli Restaurant

Ege Vista Alis-Veris Merkezi No. 4/4, Akyar mevki  
Kusadasi, Turkey 09400

**Phone:** 256-618-3344

<http://www.antepli.com.tr>

This family-run restaurant serves a variety of southeastern Turkish platters.

### Degirmen Restaurant

Davutlar Yolu  
Kusadasi, Turkey

**Phone:** 0256-681-2148

<http://www.degirmenltd.com>

A cavernous restaurant set in extensive gardens, the Degirmen (Mill) is well worth the 3-mi/4-km drive south from the center of Kusadasi, especially if you have children who will enjoy the collection of animals and birds. Inside, the decor pays homage to the heritage of the Aegean coast, with all sorts of ethnographic bric-a-brac dotted about and felt rugs on the floor. The extensive menu features a range of mezes (starters) and kebabs as well as *keskek*, a local delicacy that is not always easy to track down elsewhere.

Open daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$\$ . Most major credit cards.

### Erzincan Restaurant

Camikebir Mah 7 Eylul Sok No. 09 (Old Town)  
Kusadasi, Turkey 09400

This place near the harbor offers authentic Turkish cuisine.

### Saray Restaurant

Bozkurt Sokak No. 25  
Kusadasi, Turkey

**Phone:** 544-921-6224

<http://www.sarayrestaurant.com>

Authentic Turkish cuisine in the heart of the old town.

## Seafood

### Mezgit Restaurant

Ataturk Bulvari No. 86 (opposite Setur Marina)  
Kusadasi, Turkey

**Phone:** 256-618-2808

<http://www.mezgitrestaurant.com>

This is a good spot for fresh local seafood.

### Toros Restaurant

Balikhane Yani (near the Fish Market, Kusadasi harbor)  
Kusadasi, Turkey

**Phone:** 0256-614-1144

<http://www.kusadasitorosrestaurant.com>

This long-lived (1894) fish restaurant can be found right beside the harbor, across the square from the fish market, which should surely guarantee the freshest fish around. The view of the harbor is sometimes obscured by large boats moored there, but it's always interesting and lively. The Toros has been going too long to waste time cheating its customers, but to be on the safe side, always check the price of fish (and the size of the portion) before ordering, as the price of fish is one of the few food items that is not regulated by the government. Remember that the price of even a glass of wine can push the price up considerably.

Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$\$ . Most major credit cards.

## Security

### Etiquette

Although Turkey is generally a conservative country, the Selcuk-Kusadasi area has had such long experience with tourism that most locals are used to and tolerant of the idiosyncracies of their foreign guests. Still, when visiting a mosque, it is vital to remove one's shoes before stepping on any carpeted area. Women should cover their heads, and men and women should cover their shoulders and legs. People at prayer rarely appreciate cameras stuck in their faces, nor do they much care for mobile phones trilling away.

If invited into someone's house, it is also normal to remove shoes at the door—the hostess will normally come rushing with slippers. Taking a small gift (not wine) is appreciated, but not essential. In general it's best to dress conservatively. Men should not sit next to female members of the household unless expressly invited to do so.

Both Selcuk and Kusadasi are towns where walking around in swimwear is inappropriate, even in the height of summer.

### Personal Safety

Turkey has never been a particularly high-risk country for foreign visitors, and few people who go there ever experience problems. But it never pays to be careless, and it makes sense to keep a close eye on valuable items such as passports, electronics and digital cameras. Most hotels will happily look after such

items for you if you ask. Such problems as there are usually spring from an excess of alcohol, especially in Kusadasi.

## Health

No vaccinations are required for a visit to Turkey, and in general, there are few serious risks to health, especially in this part of the country. The greatest threat is the sun—visitors to Ephesus are advised to wear a hat and carry plenty of water, as there is virtually no shade at the site.

Tap water is officially safe to drink. However, it doesn't always taste especially good, and to guard against the slight risk of an upset stomach, it makes sense to stick with bottled water, which is cheap and ubiquitous. On the whole, there shouldn't be any problems with food either. However, newcomers to the country do sometimes experience mild stomach upset resulting from the change of diet, which may include more oil than they are used to. Normally, such problems clear up quickly within a day or so. If they persist, hotel staff will be able to direct guests to the nearest doctor. Many drugs that are only available by prescription in other countries can still be bought over the counter in Turkey.

Both Selcuk and Kusadasi have public hospitals (*devlet hastanesi*) for emergencies (*acil*). Those with insurance are probably better off attending a private hospital (*ozel hastanesi*), if only to avoid queues. Hoteliers will be able to recommend the best ones.

These days, private hospitals in particular assume that foreigners have travel insurance and hike their prices accordingly. This means that those without insurance will probably find themselves paying much more than Turks for the same services.

## Disabled Advisory

As a whole, Turkey is not the easiest country for disabled visitors to navigate, with inconsistent pavements and unexpected obstacles a hazard even for the able-bodied. However, much of the center of Selcuk has been built flat, making it one of the more disabled-friendly towns. Otherwise, steps are often a problem.

Ephesus itself is relatively flat and easy to get around. The Isa Bey Cami, however, has steps up to the entrance, and the Basilica of St. John is up an uneven slope.

## Facts

### Dos & Don'ts

Don't worry if you can't pronounce the Turkish for "thank you," which is the tricky *tesekkür ederim*. Instead, try saying *merci* like the French, and you'll be understood.

Don't visit the hammam (Turkish bath) unless you're up for a severe pummeling.

Don't say anything derogatory about Ataturk, the founding father of the Turkish Republic—to denigrate him is a criminal offense.

Do try a Maras *dondurması*, an ice cream so thick that it can be cut with a knife and fork. Its homeland is in eastern Turkey rather than the Aegean, but these days it's sold throughout the country by salesmen who put on a good show with their colorful costumes and clanging bells.



Do remove your shoes if you visit someone in their home. They will probably provide slippers for you.

Do also remove your shoes before stepping onto the carpeted area of a mosque. Women must also cover their heads.

Do learn about the 1923 population exchange between Turkey and Greece—it explains quite a lot about the local history and architecture.

## Geostats

**Passport/Visa Requirements:** Passports, visas and proof of onward passage are needed by citizens of Canada and the U.S. Visas may also be arranged online at <https://www.evisa.gov.tr>. However, online visas seem to be valid for entry to Turkey via Istanbul and Ankara, *not* via Izmir or Bodrum. We recommend that you check carefully with your travel adviser before traveling.

U.S. and Canadian travelers who arrive in Turkey by cruise ship and sleep on the boat are usually allowed to enter Turkey without a visa for 72 hours. Oftentimes, the cruise liner will arrange for a "blanket" visa to cover your time in port, although this visa won't cover you if you choose to stay over in Istanbul. We recommend that cruise passengers double-check visa requirements with their cruise company and/or the Turkish embassy or consulate in their area. Reconfirm travel document and visa requirements with your carrier before departure.

**Population:** 76,500.

**Predominant Religions:** Islam.

**Time Zone:** 2 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (+2 GMT). Daylight Saving Time is observed in March.

**Voltage Requirements:** 220 volts.

**Telephone Codes:** 256, city code;

## Money

### Currency Exchange

The Turkish lira (TL) is made up of 100 kuras. For the past decade the currency has been fairly stable, a reflection of Turkey's booming economy. However, over the past few years, the lira has devalued by more than 20%. Not surprisingly, many hotels, restaurants and shops in tourist areas also accept U.S. dollars, euros and any other currencies a tourist may have with them. In the Kusadasi and Selcuk areas, even local buses and taxis may accept payment in U.S. dollars (although probably at unfavorable exchange rates).

ATMs dispensing dollars and euros are so readily available that it no longer makes much sense to carry traveler's checks. Indeed, it may be very difficult to change them. To the contrary prepaid cash cards (usually called cash passports) are increasingly accepted by hotels and restaurants. Most shops, hotels and restaurants accept major credit cards (except American Express, which is rarely accepted), but it's wise to double-check in advance.

Turkey has a low level of street crime and identity theft. However, it is wise to be careful when using ATMs, especially late at night. Be aware of anyone following you or trying to read your PIN, and be wary

of accepting unsolicited "help" in using the machines, which are programmed in English as well as Turkish.

The quickest way to change money is usually through a currency exchange office (*doviz*). Most advertise that they don't charge commission, but their rates are rarely as good as those on offer in the bank or post office where, on the other hand, it is usually necessary to queue. Hotels often offer exchange facilities to their guests, but at very unfavorable rates.

## **Taxes**

Turkish Value Added Tax (KDV—*Katma Deger Vergisi*) is levied at 18% on most items, but is always included in the price.

Foreign visitors who are buying big-ticket items in Turkey are usually eligible for a refund of the tax paid. Shops that participate in the tax-back program sometimes put a decal in their window and will be able to supply the necessary receipts and paperwork that must be shown at the airport as you leave the country.

There are hefty levies on alcohol and petrol which help to explain their high cost.

## **Tipping**

In restaurants, a tip of at least 10% is appreciated but check the bill to make service isn't already included. Hotel staff also appreciates a tip, and there may be a box for tips at the reception desk.

Normally taxi fares are rounded up or down to the nearest lira.

## **Weather**

By far the best times to visit the area are spring (April-June) and autumn (late September and October), when the sun shines almost every day, but not at temperatures likely to induce sunstroke or heat exhaustion. July and August can be wearing, with temperatures rising to the high 80s F/30s C every day (although there is little humidity on the Aegean coast). Winters are comparatively mild, with little snow even in a particularly cold year, although there can be a lot of rain.

Those who dislike crowds may have to weigh the colder weather and risk of rain against the fact that the crowds will be less oppressive in winter, especially at Ephesus.

## **What to Wear**

Most visitors to Turkey go in the summer when the Aegean coast is reliably sunny almost every day. Consequently, it's only really necessary to pack light summer clothing with perhaps a light rain jacket in case of showers and one sweater for the odd chilly evening, especially March-May and in late September and October. Even though Turkey is a Muslim country where conservative dress is appreciated, people living along the Aegean are accustomed to foreigners—and increasingly Turks—in shorts and T-shirts, and these are only likely to cause offense inside mosques.

When visiting the ruins of Ephesus, it's wise to wear a hat, as there is little shade. It goes without saying that plenty of sunblock is also a good idea. Although some visitors wear hiking boots around the site, sandals should be perfectly adequate provided they have a good grip, as the ancient marble streets can be slippery.

**Istanbul, Turkey****Overview****Introduction**

For the better part of two millennia, Istanbul, Turkey, has been one of the greatest cities in the world, and it remains one of the most vibrant and magical places in Europe and the Middle East. It is not the capital of Turkey—that honor was bestowed on Ankara in the 1920s—but Istanbul is the country's largest city, its main commercial, historical and cultural center and the heart of its tourism industry.



Istanbul's centuries of empire have left an extraordinary collection of palaces, churches, mosques and markets from every period of history. Its unique position as a city that straddles two continents, Europe and Asia, has given Istanbul an unmistakably cosmopolitan atmosphere. Alongside all the life and color of the Middle East, Istanbul has a high standard of living with many of the accoutrements of a European capital, such as luxurious shopping malls and upscale international restaurants.

But Istanbul's charm is that despite its great history, it has not become a static museum-city like its historic rival, Venice. Istanbul is very much a living city, and although its traffic jams, air pollution and high-rise buildings lack the grace of its venerable landmarks, they're proof that Istanbul remains the hub of Turkey, a vital metropolis that's made up of more than ancient palaces and smoky bazaars.

**Highlights**

**Sights**—The ancient grandeur of Aya Sofya (Hagia Sophia); the Ottoman architectural masterpiece Sultan Ahmet Camii (the Blue Mosque); the lavish home of the sultans, Topkapi Palace; the newer but no less lavish Dolmabahce Sarayi (Dolmabahce Palace); the color and bustle of Kapali Carsi (Grand Bazaar); the Byzantine mosaics of Kariye Camii (the Church of the Holy Savior in Chora).

**Museums**—The tiles and artifacts of the Arkeoloji Muzesi (the Archaeological Museum); contemporary Turkish art and traveling exhibitions at the Istanbul Modern; Orientalist paintings of Istanbul and top-notch international artists at the Pera Museum; Ottoman paintings, calligraphy and decorative arts in a waterfront mansion at the Sakip Sabanci Muzesi; stunning Ottoman caiques and other maritime artifacts at the Deniz Muzesi (Naval Museum); a Nobel Prize-winner's eclectic and poignant passion project at the Masumiyet Muzesi (Museum of Innocence).

**Memorable Meals**—Delicious food and an amazing view at Mikla, on the top floor of the Marmara Pera Hotel; innovative young chefs putting a fresh twist on Turkish food at Lokanta Maya or Yeni Lokanta; the timeless tradition of Turkish coffee and dessert at Divan; authentic regional Anatolian flavors at Ciya; mezes and raki along lively Nevizade Sokak.

**Late Night**—Live music at Babylon or Peyote; hobnobbing with the beautiful people by the waters of the Bosphorus at the chic nightclubs Reina or Anjelique; bar-hopping on Kadikoy's casually hip Kadife Sokak, better known as Barlar Sokak (Bar Street).

**Walks**—A weekend stroll through Ortakoy and its waterside cafes; a walk along the Bosphorus from trendy Bebek to the huge Ottoman castle at Rumeli Hisari; a turn along Divan Yolu, from the Grand Bazaar to Sultanahmet Square; an evening walk along jam-packed, energetic Istiklal Caddesi.

**Especially for Kids**—Bird's-eye views of the city's major monuments in miniature at Miniaturk; a cruise or ferry ride along the Bosphorus Strait; vintage planes, trains and automobiles on the Golden Horn at the Rahmi M. Koc Muzesi; seeing beautiful old toys in the Istanbul Oyuncak Muzesi (Istanbul Toy Museum); exploring the underwater world at the Istanbul Akvaryum.

## Geography

The Bosphorus Strait divides the city into two sections, one in Europe and one in Asia. The European side of Istanbul is divided again by the Golden Horn, a 4-mi/7-km inlet from the sea that is spanned by four bridges, including one metro bridge and one with tram and pedestrian access.

On the southern side of the Golden Horn is the Old City, which in ancient times constituted the entirety of Byzantium. It is there that most of the Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman monuments are found. The Old City has several districts. Sultanahmet lies on the eastern edge, along the Bosphorus and the Sea of Marmara, and is the site of many of Istanbul's most famous attractions. Beyazit is to the west (inland) from Sultanahmet, and Sirkeci/Eminonu is to the north, along the waters of the Golden Horn.

Just across the Golden Horn is Beyoglu, which includes the old European quarter of Galata, and commercial districts that once were enclaves for Greeks, Genoese, Armenians and Jews. At the northern end of Beyoglu is Taksim, where many of Istanbul's largest hotels and convention centers are located. Beyond Taksim are the tony shopping streets of Nisantasi and Tesvikiye. Running along the north coastline of the Bosphorus are a string of Imperial palaces, such as the Dolmabahce and Beylerbeyi (on the Asian side), and waterside suburbs including Ortakoy, Arnavutkoy and Bebek.

The Asian side of the city is not as crowded with tourists and has a more relaxed atmosphere. Kadikoy and Uskudar are the most touristed parts of Asian Istanbul; Kadikoy is young, trendy and good for shopping, whereas Uskudar is a conservative suburb full of Ottoman mosques. Bagdat Caddesi, the Madison Avenue of the Asian side of Istanbul, is a popular hangout for Turks, with wide sidewalks that are lined with upscale shopping, coffee shops and restaurants.

## History

The city's roots can be traced to the mid-seventh century BC when, according to legend, a Greek explorer named Byzas was told by the Oracle at Delphi to sail up the Bosphorus and found a city. The city-state of Byzantium was the result, and throughout the next 1,000 years, it became an important center of trade and commerce. In the early fourth century, Emperor Constantine made it the new capital of the Eastern Roman Empire, renaming it Constantinople. Like Rome, the new capital was built on seven hills, but unlike Rome, Constantinople was protected by water on two sides, making it easier to defend.

As the Western Roman Empire fell to successive waves of barbarian invasions in the fifth and sixth centuries, the eastern half, known as the Byzantine Empire, remained to become Rome's successor. For the next 1,000 years, the empire's fortunes waxed and waned. In 1453, the city finally fell to the Ottoman Turks, led by Mehmet II ("the Conqueror"), after a hard-fought siege. Mehmet renamed the city Istanbul and began at once to rebuild and repopulate it. Greeks, Armenians and Spanish Jews were encouraged to immigrate there. Successive sultans used wealth gained in further conquests to fund the construction of impressive palaces, mosques and bazaars.

As the Ottoman Empire grew to include all of the Middle East, North Africa and much of the Balkans, Istanbul became a melting pot of nationalities. Yet, in the 17th century, what was once among the most powerful and cosmopolitan cities on Earth began a slow decline. By the 1800s, Istanbul had lost most of

its former glory. A nationalist movement began gaining steam in the late 19th century, culminating in the overthrow of the sultan in 1922 and the establishment of the Turkish Republic.

After the War of Independence, the nationalist leader Mustafa Kemal Atatürk created a new capital in Ankara, a small provincial town in central Anatolia. Istanbul remained the nation's cultural and commercial center, however. Atatürk's ambitious modernization plans began a large-scale transformation of Turkish life, and the city embarked on its sometimes bumpy ride toward industrialization and secularization. In 1980, the Turkish government fell to the third of a series of military coups, but power was ceded to an elected democracy a few years later.

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, in power for 11 years as prime minister before being elected president in 2014, was the first leader in more than a decade to govern without coalition parties; he initially moved quickly to promote Turkey's application to join the European Union, but progress in these talks has reached a near-stalemate because of the ongoing conflict over Cyprus, concern about the pace of Turkey's reforms and opposition from key EU countries such as France and Germany. Domestic politics and ongoing regional strife have since dominated Turkey's agenda, leaving relations with Europe on the backburner.

## Port Information

### Location

Most cruise ships dock at Karakoy, in the heart of the city close to Eminonu, near the Spice Bazaar and the Galata Bridge, which marks the entry to the Golden Horn. The passenger terminal there has been modernized in recent years but is still short on amenities, containing only a sleepy tourist office. The customs and immigration formalities work efficiently enough, though, and there are bright yellow taxis available right outside.

The neighboring area has undergone a striking transformation, however. Where once there were only a few restaurants and eateries close by (including the famous sweet-shop Karakoy Gulluoglu and nearby Namli Gurme, a gourmet deli known for its Turkish breakfasts), the backstreets just a stone's throw away are now one of the city's hippest destinations, packed with young Istanbulites eating, drinking and gallery hopping.

With its view across the Golden Horn to the palaces and mosques of Sultanahmet, the Karakoy dock is also a short walk to the Karakoy tram stop, which provides efficient transportation to the Old City and parts farther afield, to the Tunel funicular up to lively Istiklal Caddesi and to the Galata Bridge, which leads to the bustling Eminonu district.

### Potpourri

The Emperor Napoleon is supposed to have said: "If the world was a single country, Istanbul would be its capital."

Istanbul's stray dogs have been a fixture of the city since ancient times. The Byzantine author Procopius describes them in his scandal-mongering *Anecdota*, or *Secret History*, a scurrilous account of the reign of Emperor Justinian and his wife, Theodora.

The Basilica Cistern, near Aya Sofya, is one of 17 major cisterns that dot the Old City. Istanbul's cisterns were once fed by a complex of aqueducts more than 37 mi/60 km long. Some of the best-preserved aqueducts stand on the edge of the Belgrade Forest near Kemerburgaz.

It's not just Venice that has a Biennale—Istanbul has one, too. It takes place every two years and brings together the best of modern art from all over the world, strikingly displayed in a variety of buildings, from old tobacco and customs warehouses to crumbling hamams and long-shuttered schoolhouses. The Istanbul arts community comes alive with parties and sponsored events to celebrate the Biennale.

Although the Turks conquered the city in 1453, Istanbul remained a mostly Christian city until well into the 1920s, when many Armenians and Greeks were forced to leave. Most of the remaining Greeks left in the 1950s, '60s and '70s, although today a few are returning.

Because of rural migration, Istanbul's population has grown dramatically, from 800,000 in the early 1950s to an estimated 14 million in the metropolitan area today.

See emeralds the size of a child's fist in the display areas of the Topkapi Palace. They were once personal belongings of the sultans. Even if emeralds aren't your preferred gem, their beauty—and size—will capture the imagination.

These days, Istanbul is a hot destination where everybody who is anybody eventually shows up. Celebrity sightings have included Daniel Craig and Rachel Weisz, in town for the filming of his latest James Bond film, *Skyfall*; pop star Rihanna out on a shopping spree; top model Gisele Bündchen launching a new fashion line; and Madonna dining at the Suada Club.

## See & Do

### Sightseeing

Exploring all of the city's vast offerings could take many days, if not weeks, so it's best to be selective. Fortunately, many of Istanbul's best sights are grouped near one another.

Begin in Sultanahmet, in the heart of the Old City. The four must-sees in this quarter are practically side by side: Aya Sofya (or Hagia Sophia, the Church of Holy Wisdom), Sultan Ahmet Camii (the Blue Mosque), the Yerebatan Sarayı (Basilica Cistern) and the Topkapi Palace. Plan on more than a single day for this quartet. You can easily spend an entire day in and around the Topkapi Palace alone, seeing, among other things, the Treasury, the Hall of Holy Relics and the Harem. Also nearby is the Arkeoloji Müzesi (Archaeological Museum). The site of the Roman Hippodrome runs along one side of the Sultan Ahmet Camii.

Another whole day could be spent exploring the Kapalı Carsi (Grand Bazaar), which is in Beyazit next to one of the main buildings of Istanbul University. It's considered among the most extraordinary bazaar quarters in the world, and is certainly one of the oldest and largest. Although it still stocks some exotic goods in its dustier back corners, these days most of the merchandise is aimed squarely at tourists, and it's one of the last places in the city where merchants still expect to haggle right down to the last lira. It's well marked and easy to find—although just as easy to get lost in.

Overlooking the waterfront at Eminonu is the Egyptian Bazaar (Misir Carsi), commonly known as the Spice Bazaar. Most people love a trip there to see the wooden kiosks of spices, sweets and other delicacies. However, more usual tourist souvenirs are starting to fill many of the shops. Walk around the outside parts of the market to see a variety of cheeses, fruit and vegetables, and even leeches on sale to the locals.

Take a little time to venture northwest of Sultanahmet to see the Kariye Camii (Church of the Holy Savior in Chora) and its superb Byzantine mosaics, as well as the nearby Byzantine city walls. A bit farther



afield, in the Besiktas area on the European shore of the Bosphorus, is Dolmabahce Palace. Although far less old than many of Istanbul's other landmarks, this opulent palace is a masterpiece of 19th-century kitsch. It has more than 280 rooms, some 40 halls and six hamam complexes. Most are open to the public on guided tours. Its extensive gardens look out over the Bosphorus.

When you need a break from walking, take a gentle boat ride down the Bosphorus, which will show you another side of Istanbul and its environs: waterside suburbs and grand residences with waterfront entrances. You'll also get to see the impressive Istanbul skyline with its many mosques and a growing number of skyscrapers. On your return trip, watch for the dozens of locals fishing from the Galata Bridge.

Consider investing in the Museum Pass Istanbul. Valid for three consecutive days (72 hours), it costs 85 TL and gives admission to Topkapi Palace and the Harem, Aya Sofya, Istanbul Archaeological Museum, the Chora Church and other attractions (including the Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum, which is currently closed for renovations). The main advantage is not so much saving money (though the admission fees can add up without it) as being able to avoid standing in the long ticket queues in summer. The pass also offers discounts at assorted other venues about town. A five-day card is available for 115 TL. <http://www.muzekart.com/en/museum-pass>.

## Historic Sites

It should be noted that when entering a mosque, everyone must remove their shoes and cover their shoulders and legs. Women must cover their heads with a scarf.

### Aya Sofya

Aya Sofya Meydani  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-522-1750

<http://ayasofyamuzesi.gov.tr>

Also known as Hagia Sophia, this structure is an immense, domed place of worship that remains one of the architectural marvels of all time. Its dome was the largest unsupported stone dome in the world until the 15th century, when it was surpassed by the Duomo in Florence, Italy. The original church on the site was built in AD 360, but the current version was the work of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian in 537. In 1453, after the Ottoman conquest, the magnificent building was changed into a mosque and remained one until 1931. In 1935 it was turned into a museum. Today, the museum contains wonderful Byzantine mosaics that have been recovered and restored since they were plastered over during the Ottoman period.

Among the many things to admire are the early Byzantine frieze of sheep that belonged to the original church; an angel mosaic only uncovered in 2009; and a mosaic of the Empress Zoe and the last of her three husbands in an upstairs gallery. Behind Aya Sofya stands the baptistery, with walk-in font, that now serves as the tomb of two Ottoman sultans. Also there is the mausoleum of Selim II, completed in 1577, which is beautifully decorated with Iznik tiles. Aya Sofya has withstood many earthquakes over the past 14 centuries. You'll see earthquake meters fitted into the walls at various points. Because of the tremendous amount of historical, architectural and religious significance of Aya Sofya, taking a guided or audio tour is highly recommended.

Daily except Monday 9 am-5 pm (until 7 pm in summer); last entry one hour before closing. 30 TL.



## Beylerbeyi Sarayi

Abdullah Aga Caddesi  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0216-321-9320

<http://www.millisaraylar.gov.tr>

On the Asian shore of the Bosphorus stands what was once the Ottoman sultan's summer palace, where some important guests were lodged. The palace and its decor, which date from the mid-19th century, may seem overblown, but its waterside quay and gardens are inviting on a hot day, and its location underneath the first Bosphorus Bridge is dramatic. Note that the upper gardens are currently closed for extensive renovation.

Open 9:30 am-5 pm for guided tours only; closed Monday and Thursday. 20 TL, plus extra fee for cameras (no flash allowed inside).

## Church of St. Stephen of the Bulgars

Mursel Pasa Caddesi 85  
Istanbul, Turkey

Located in a small, attractive park along the west bank of the Golden Horn, the Church of St. Stephen of the Bulgars is a spiky Victorian Gothic church that would not look out of place in a New England university town. The city's Bulgarian community, which had broken away from the Greek Orthodox church in 1871, ordered the church to be constructed in Vienna entirely of cast iron. It was then disassembled and shipped on barges down the Danube to its new site on the Golden Horn, where it was bolted together. The church is still used by the Bulgarian community for religious services, and several of the fathers of the local Bulgarian Orthodox Church are buried there. *Note:* The church is currently closed for renovations, with no announced reopening date.

## City Walls

As visitors enter Sultanahmet from Ataturk International Airport, one of the first historic sights they'll glimpse is the break in the Byzantine city walls that once ringed the old city and protected it from invaders. Today these walls—and the towers and gates along them—still survive, albeit in varying states of repair. It is possible to walk all the way along them, from beside the Marmara Sea at Mermerkule to the Golden Horn at Ayvansaray; expect the walk to take best part of a day. If you only have time to take a look at a bit of the walls, the two most interesting sections are at Yedikule, where you can visit a fortress that once served as a prison, and at Ayvansaray, where some of the more recent of the towers still stand virtually intact (though currently hard to access because of extensive redevelopment work in the surrounding neighborhood). It's best to walk the walls with a friend, and be warned that some stretches follow a busy main road or require a bit of scrambling.

## Dolmabahce Sarayi

Dolmabahce Caddesi (along the Bosphorus)  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-236-9000

<http://www.millisaraylar.gov.tr>

Designed for Sultan Abdulmecit and completed in 1856, Dolmabahce Palace is among the most extraordinary residences of Europe. Although the Ottoman Empire was already in decline at the time of its construction, no expense was spared, thanks in part to loans from Continental bankers that ultimately bankrupted the Ottoman treasury. The architect for the palace had cut his teeth designing sets for

operettas in Paris: The result is a camp pastiche of a European palace that some may find overblown rather than beautiful. The palace measures 484,376 sq ft/45,000 sq m with 285 rooms, 44 reception rooms and six hamams.

You can visit the palace only by taking one of two guided tours. One covers the men's section (*selamlık*), staterooms and the vast ceremonial hall, and the other visits the harem section, including the living quarters of the sultan. If you can take only one tour, visit the fabulous ceremonial hall—designed to hold 2,500 people—and note the superb decoration of the dome and the English chandelier. Also check out the main bathroom, or *hamam*, the walls of which are fitted with splendid Egyptian alabaster and solid silver taps.

Attentive visitors will notice that all the clocks in the palace read 9:05 am at all times. This is because Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey, died in his bedroom in the palace at 9:05 am on 10 November 1938. On Tuesday during the summer, the Turkish army band, dressed in the costumes of the famous Janissaries, performs traditional music outside the Imperial Gate.

Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday-Sunday 9 am-4 pm. Admission to the whole palace is 40 TL; *selamlık* alone is 30 TL.

## Galata Kulesi

Galata Meydani  
Istanbul, Turkey

Built in 1348 by the Genoese to protect their trading enclave, the Galata Tower stands 205 ft/62 m high, crowned and fortified by a conical "witch's hat" roof. It's one of the most distinctive sights of Istanbul's skyline and offers one of the best views of the city, with a panorama stretching across to the Princes' Islands. During the Ottoman Empire, this structure was used as a watchtower, but today it is a tourist attraction with a restaurant and nightclub on the eighth and ninth floors. An elevator is available for those who don't want to climb the narrow spiral staircase.

Open daily 9 am-8 pm (restaurant and nightclub 8 pm-12:30 am); call for dinner reservations and Harem show schedules. Admission 13 TL.

## Hidiv Kasri

Cubuklu Korusu Cubuklu Yolu 32  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0216-413-9253

<http://www.hidivkasri.com>

High above the Bosphorus at Kanlıca, the Hidiv Kasri (the Khedive's villa) was built as a summer home for the Egyptian Khedive, or ruler, in the 19th century. It stands on 270 acres/109 hectares overlooking the Bosphorus Strait, and boasts beautiful art-nouveau details. There's a restaurant on-site. The grounds are a wonderful place to drink tea on hot days.

Daily 9 am-11 pm. Free.

## Hippodrome

Atmeydani (in front of the Sultan Ahmet Camii)  
Istanbul, Turkey

Beside the Sultan Ahmet (Blue) Mosque, the Hippodrome was once the hub of Byzantine cultural life. Today the only remaining parts of this ancient arena are a fine pair of granite obelisks brought from Egypt and a column depicting entwined snakes that was brought from Greece and dates from the fifth century BC. The Hippodrome was the site of horse and chariot races from Byzantine times up to the early Ottoman period. It was later used for annual processions of the city's guilds.

Free.

## Kariye Camii

Kariye Camii Sokak 26  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-631-9241

<http://muze.gov.tr/chora>

Better known as the Church of the Holy Savior in Chora, this externally unassuming, late-Byzantine church is famous for its mosaics, which are among the finest surviving works of Byzantine art in the world. Originally constructed in the fourth century, it was rebuilt by Theodore Melitoches, the Byzantine Grand Logothete (or Imperial Chancellor), at the beginning of the 14th century. It's now a museum well worth a visit, especially for its wonderfully preserved mosaic and fresco cycles depicting the life of the Virgin Mary, the Passion and the Last Judgment. Above the doorway is a portrait of Melitoches himself, presenting the church to the Virgin enthroned. The church represents the final flowering of Byzantine art before the empire entered its death throes, and the mosaic figures also show the influence of early Renaissance art. *Note:* The entrance section is currently undergoing renovation work.

Daily except Wednesday 9 am-4:30 pm (until 7 pm in summer). Admission 15 TL.

## Rumeli Hisari

Yahya Kemal Caddesi 42, Rumelihisari  
Istanbul, Turkey

The "Castle of Europe" is a spectacular waterside fortress built by Mehmet the Conqueror in 1452 as he prepared to seize Constantinople from the Byzantines. The grounds are well worth exploring.

Daily except Wednesday 9:30 am-6 pm. 10 TL.

## Rustem Pasa Camii

Hasircilar Caddesi 90  
Istanbul, Turkey

Tucked away in the maze of streets near the Spice Bazaar is this wonderful mosque built by the great Ottoman architect Sinan in 1560. The walls, both inside and out, are encased in glorious Iznik tiles, some painted in a striking tomato-red hue.

Open daily to visitors except during prayer times.

## Suleymaniye Camii

Prof. Siddik Sami Onar Caddesi (just north of Istanbul University)  
Istanbul, Turkey

This hilltop mosque is one of the masterpieces of Sinan, the Ottoman Empire's greatest architect. It is the second largest mosque in Istanbul and was constructed in the 1550s on the orders of Suleyman the Magnificent, the empire's greatest sultan. In addition to the magnificent mosque, the Suleymaniye complex includes a library, hospital and soup kitchens that fed thousands of the city's poor, regardless of their religion. (Ironically, the street between the mosque and the charitable buildings once held cafes that sold both opium and hashish, earning it the moniker "Addict's Alley.") The tombs of Suleyman, his wife Roxelana, his daughter Mihrimah and his two successors, Suleyman II and Ahmet II, are in the grounds of the mosque, and the tomb of Sinan himself is just outside its walls. Recently restored, the mosque's central prayer hall, a huge, domed rectangle, is truly awe-inspiring.

Open daily except during prayer times. Free.

## Sultan Ahmet Camii

Sultan Ahmet Meydani  
Istanbul, Turkey

Familiarly known as the Blue Mosque, this famous mosque is one of the world's most beautiful. Built on the orders of Sultan Ahmet I (1603-17) and designed by imperial architect Mehmet Aga, it gets its name from the blue Iznik tiles that cover its interior walls. From the time it was built, the mosque was at the center of controversy because it had six towering minarets—most mosques have two or four—and was therefore considered sacrilegious by some who saw it as rivaling the Haram Mosque in Mecca. It is busy with worshippers at prayer times, but visitors can enter when services are not being held. More than 250 windows let subdued light into the mosque, though most of the original 17th-century stained glass is no longer in place.

Open daily except during prayer times. Free.

## Topkapi Palace

Bab-i Humayun Caddesi  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-512-0480

<http://www.topkapisarayi.gov.tr>

A little more than a decade after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453, Mehmet II ordered the construction of the immense and fittingly regal Topkapi Palace in an area between Aya Sofya and a point facing the Bosphorus. On the site of the old Byzantine Imperial Palace, the Ottoman palace is a sprawling series of pavilions within four courtyards. Completed in 1478, Topkapi was the primary residence for the Ottoman Sultans for nearly 400 years of their 624-year reign. Topkapi was opened to the public as a museum in 1924, giving the world insight into the opulence and lifestyle of the Ottomans.

Each section of the museum is a separate delight. You will see kitchens that catered to thousands, as well as a particularly fine collection of Chinese porcelain that the sultan took great delight in collecting. Other sections feature costumes, arms, armor, religious relics and exquisitely wrought miniatures—both Persian and Turkish. (The royal collection contains 13,000 works, only a tiny fraction of which is on display.) The interior array of throne rooms, dining halls, bedrooms, mosques, dormitories, libraries and stables appear strangely haphazard to a Western visitor, but the palace's lack of monumentalism and the casual arrangement of rooms give it a unique charm.

The most interesting part of the palace, which requires a separate ticket, is the harem, a maze of enchanting rooms where the sultan's 400 wives and concubines used to live. In the Fourth Court, don't miss the tulip garden, marble pool and circumcision room. The Imperial Treasury contains some of the most opulent specimens from the Ottoman jewel collection. The Konyali restaurant past the final courtyard is always crowded but offers splendid views. We recommend a minimum of three hours to visit (and you can easily spend much longer than that).

Open daily except Tuesday 9 am-5 pm (until 7 pm in summer; harem hours are 10 am-4 pm, till 5 pm in summer). Admission 25 TL for the main palace and 15 TL for the harem. The Aya Irini, a Byzantine church on the palace grounds, can be visited for an additional 20 TL (open 9 am-5 pm).

## Yerebatan Sarayi

Yerebatan Caddesi 13  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-522-1259

<http://www.yerebatan.com>

This "underground palace" (as its name means in Turkish), also known as the Basilica Cistern, is an immense subterranean reservoir that long ago provided water to the Grand Palace of the Byzantines and, later, the Ottomans' Topkapi Palace. The Ottomans, in fact, didn't discover the cistern until a century after the conquest of Constantinople, when it was revealed that people could collect water by lowering buckets through holes in their basements. In 1987, after years of restoration, Yerebatan Sarayi was reopened to the public.

It is a breathtaking example of Byzantine design, with some 300 columns more than 25 ft/8 m high supporting the cistern's roof. Two columns in one corner rest on bases shaped like Medusa heads, which were, like all the cistern's mismatched columns, taken from other structures. Concerts are occasionally held inside the cisterns.

Daily 9 am-5:30 pm (till 6:30 pm in summer). Admission 20 TL.

## Yildiz Parki

Ciragan Caddesi  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-258-9453 (Malta pavilion) or 0212-259-4570 (museum and chalet)

<http://yildizsarayi.com.tr>

Yildiz Park's Yildiz Palace and Yildiz Chalet are a set of royal enclaves from the Ottoman era located in the Besiktas neighborhood of Istanbul. Yildiz Palace was the last Sultan's palace to be built. It is really a group of pavilions and villas built by Sultan Abdulhamit II, who was paranoid about a sea-based attack on the Dolmabahce Palace. The buildings include the Yildiz Palace Museum, housed in the former palace carpentry workshop; the Cihannuma Kosku, a garden pavilion with a Bosphorus view; and the Yildiz Palace Theater, built in Western style in 1889 by Abdulhamit.

Yildiz Chalet, the jewel of the park, was designed in three stages and styles. It has served as guest quarters for such visiting dignitaries as Kaiser Wilhelm II, Winston Churchill, Charles de Gaulle and the Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu. Slightly less impressive are the elegant Malta and Cadir pavilions, which were built during the reign of Abdul Aziz (1861-76). Both served as prisons at one point; it seems far more appropriate that the Malta Pavilion now houses a restaurant. The circular lake on the palace grounds has an island that, in Ottoman days, housed tigers, lions, giraffes and zebras.

Park and pavilions open daily 9 am-5:30 pm (10 am-9 pm in summer). Yildiz Palace Museum open daily except Tuesday 10 am-4:30 pm (till 7 pm in summer). Yildiz Chalet open Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday-Sunday 9 am-5 pm. Park and pavilions free; palace admission 10 TL, chalet admission 10 TL.

## Museums

### Arkeoloji Muzesi

Osman Hamdi Bey Yokusu  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-520-7740

<http://www.istanbularkeoloji.gov.tr>

Situated in the First Court of Topkapi Palace, the Archaeological Museum has one of the world's richest collections of classical artifacts—the Sumerian, Assyrian and Hittite exhibits are rare and impressive. Dozens of galleries also hold Greek, Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman tiles, ceramics, mosaics and other treasures (some objects aren't very well-displayed, and the galleries are not always open). Among the highlights are the Treaty of Kadesh, said to be the world's earliest surviving peace treaty, and a carved sarcophagus from Sidon, Lebanon, that is decorated with carvings of Alexander the Great. There's also an educational section especially for children.

Daily except Monday 9 am-5 pm (till 7 pm in summer); last ticket sales 30-60 minutes before closing. Admission 15 TL, including the Museum of the Ancient Orient and the Tiled Kiosk. Admission is free for those with disabilities and children younger than age 12.

### Askeri Muzesi

Vali Konagi Caddesi (0.5 mi/0.8 km from Taksim Square)  
Istanbul, Turkey

This museum is dedicated to 1,000 years of Turkish military history. Even if you aren't interested in military things, the Military Museum is still interesting for its fantastic collection of embroidered tents used by the Ottoman army when it was on the move. What's more, if you visit around 3 pm, you will be able to watch the Ottoman Mehter Band going through its paces—a colorful and rousing spectacle.

Wednesday-Sunday 9 am-5 pm. Admission 5 TL.

### Buyuksaray Mozaik Muzesi

Torun Sokak  
Istanbul, Turkey

Every so often, odd traces of the Byzantine emperors' palaces come to light when building work is going on in Sultanahmet. Perhaps the finest surviving reminder is the spectacular mosaic of hunting scenes in the Great Palace Mosaic Museum, near the Arasta Bazaar (below the Blue Mosque). The mosaic dates from around AD 500.

Daily except Monday 9 am-5 pm (till 7 pm in summer). Admission 10 TL.

### Deniz Muzesi

Hayrettin Iskelesi Sokak (near the Besiktas Ferry)  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-327-4345

<http://www.denizmuzeleri.tsk.tr/idmk>

Established in 1897, the Naval Museum on the shores of the Bosphorus at Besiktas has been extensively renovated to better showcase its collection of maritime artifacts—chief among which are the sleek boats (caiques) that once ferried the sultans and other notables along the waters. The museum also contains a piece of the chain the Byzantines placed across the Bosphorus in their efforts to thwart Ottoman ships from attacking the capital.

Daily except Monday 9 am-5 pm (Friday and Saturday 10 am-6 pm in summer). Admission 6 TL.

## Istanbul Modern

Meclis-i Mebusan Caddesi, Antrepo 4, Salipazari  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-334-7300

<http://www.istanbulmodern.org>

This exciting museum dedicated to contemporary Turkish art is housed in a converted warehouse on the Bosphorus in the Tophane neighborhood. The museum has an impressive permanent collection of paintings by contemporary Turkish artists, as well as temporary exhibits, a dedicated photography gallery, a library, cinema and new media. It's worth seeing for the location alone.

Daily except Monday 10 am-6 pm (till 8 pm on Thursday). Closed on New Year's Day and religious holidays. Regular admission 17 TL adults, 14 TL for groups, 9 TL for students and seniors, free for children younger than 12 and disabled visitors.

## Istanbul Oyuncak Muzesi

Omerpasa Caddesi Dr. Zeki Zeren Sokak 15 (near Bagdat Caddesi on the Asian side of the city)  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0216-359-4550 or 0216-359-4551

<http://www.istanbuloyuncakmuzesi.com>

Located in a historical townhouse that once belonged to the family of the founder of the museum, the Istanbul Toy Museum delights not only children but adult visitors, too. There are about 4,000 exhibits on display from founder Sunay Akin's 7,000-piece collection, featuring antique dolls (including one made in the U.S. in the 1820s), a miniature French violin believed to date from 1817 and a set of 19th-century marbles. Each room of this unique museum resembles a theater stage, designed by a famous theatrical-set designer.

Daily except Monday 9:30 am-6 pm. Closed religious holidays. Admission 10 TL adults, 7 TL students.

## Masumiyet Muzesi

Cukurcuma Caddesi, Dalgic Cikmazi 2  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-252-9738

<http://www.masumiyetmuzesi.org>

Orhan Pamuk's Museum of Innocence, a physical representation of his award-winning novel of the same name, opened in 2012 in Cukurcuma to great fanfare. You are better off thinking of this "museum" as a work of art full of glass cases symbolizing the chapters of the book, although it does also contain some of the book's manuscript pages.



Open daily except Monday 10 am-6 pm (till 9 pm on Thursday).

### **Panoramik 1453 Tarihi Muzesi**

Topkapi Gate, Zeytinburnu (of the old city walls)  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-415-1453

<http://www.panoramikmuze.com>

A great place to take children to help them imagine the Conquest of Constantinople, the Panorama 1453 History Museum houses a 360-degree painting of the momentous day when the Ottomans broke through the city walls, complete with deafening soundtrack. Unfortunately, all the other information panels are provided in Turkish only.

Daily 8 am-6 pm. Admission 10 TL.

### **Pera Museum**

Mesrutiyet Caddesi 65  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-334-9900

<http://www.peramuzesi.org.tr>

Home to an eccentric private collection of Turkish art, including a fascinating exhibit of weights and measures from Anatolia (more interesting than it sounds). Its crowning glory is *The Tortoise Trainer* by Ottoman painter Osman Hamdi Bey. Upstairs are excellent rotating exhibitions of Turkish and international art. Multipurpose space is reserved for functions, including private events, and the lower level of the museum serves as an educational center and cinema.

Tuesday-Saturday 10 am-7 pm (Friday till 10 pm), Sunday noon-6 pm. Admission 15 TL adults, 12 TL groups, 8 TL students, free for children younger than 12 and disabled visitors. Free admission on Friday 6-10 pm.

### **Rahmi M. Koc Muzesi**

Haskoy Caddesi 5  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-369-6600

<http://www.rmk-museum.org.tr>

The wealthy industrialist Rahmi Koc has given his name to Turkey's first industrial museum, housed in what was once a shipyard on the northern shore of the Golden Horn. This museum is great for kids because you can see some old Ottoman caiques (long, narrow wooden boats), Sultan Abdul Aziz's glorious railway coach, several reconstructed shops and a large collection of vintage cars, among other things. You can also go inside the submarine TCG *Ulucalireis* and visit a small planetarium.

Tuesday-Friday 10 am-5 pm, Saturday and Sunday 10 am-6 pm (till 8 pm in summer). Admission 12.50 TL (museum) and 7 TL (submarine) adults; 6 TL (museum) and 5 TL (submarine) students and children; 2 TL for the planetarium. Children younger than age 8 are not permitted in the submarine.

## Sadberk Hanim Muzesi

Buyukdere Piyasa Caddesi 27-29, Sariyer  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-242-3813

<http://www.sadberkhanimmuzesi.org.tr>

If you have time to travel up the Bosphorus on the European side as far as Sariyer, you will be able to visit this small but inviting privately owned museum that is housed in one of the old 19th-century *yalis* (waterside mansions). There are two sections to the museum, one focused on archaeology, the other on ethnography. The latter contains fine collections of Turkish textiles as well as dioramas of major events in Ottoman life, such as marriage and circumcision.

Open daily except Wednesday 10 am-5 pm. Admission 7 TL adults, 2 TL students and children.

## Sakip Sabanci Muzesi

Sakip Sabanci Caddesi 42  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-277-2200

<http://www.sakipsabancimuzesi.org>

One of Istanbul's most interesting private museums, the Sabanci boasts a definitive collection of Turkish early-modern art as well as five centuries' worth of calligraphy. The collection is housed in an old Ottoman mansion and an avant-garde new wing, both set amid attractive gardens overlooking the Bosphorus. This is one of Istanbul's primary venues for big international art exhibitions by artists such as Monet and Picasso.

Open daily except Monday 10 am-6 pm (till 8 pm on Wednesday). Admission 15 TL adults, 12 TL groups, 8 TL students and teachers, free for seniors, disabled visitors and children younger than 14. On Wednesday admission is free for all visitors.

## SALT

Istiklal Caddesi 136  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-377-4200

<http://saltonline.org>

Two recent additions to Istanbul's stock of attractions are the SALT galleries, one of them in Karakoy in the building that once housed the Ottoman Bank (there's a small banking museum in the basement), the other in one of the 19th-century apartment blocks on Istiklal Caddesi in Beyoglu. The Karakoy branch is mainly of interest to specialist students of art and design, although it does have a restaurant with a fine view of the Golden Horn (Bankalar Caddesi 11, phone 0212-334-2200). The branch in Beyoglu hosts changing exhibits of mainly avant-garde art and also has a walk-in cinema that screens films and hosts talks about art, design and social issues on a continuous basis.

Open Tuesday-Saturday noon-8 pm, Sunday noon-6 pm. Free.

## Turk ve Islam Eserleri Muzesi

At Meydani Sokak 46  
Istanbul, Turkey

The name translates as the Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum. Located the Hippodrome in the Ibrahim Pasa Palace, former home of one of Suleyman the Magnificent's grand viziers, it contains artifacts ranging from the earliest period of Islam through modern times. The collection started in the 19th century and now has more than 40,000 items, including beautifully displayed Islamic sculptures, works of art, silks and carpets. Strolling among the rooms of the museum, you'll pass through different eras of historical and geographical significance in the Islamic world. *Note:* The museum is currently closed for renovations.

## Neighborhoods & Districts

### Beyoglu

Beyoglu  
Istanbul, Turkey

Located on the other side of the Golden Horn from Eminonu and the Old City, now-fashionable Beyoglu has seen its fortunes rise, fall and rise again over the centuries. For much of its history, this area was the European quarter of Istanbul; in the 1800s, it became home to grand foreign embassies, ornate luxury hotels and fancy boulevards. When Ataturk moved the Turkish capital to Ankara in the 1920s, the embassies moved, too, and the neighborhood slowly fell into disrepair and seediness. However, in 1990, the government began a renovation and clean-up project. Many of the grand buildings have been restored.

The main artery is Istiklal Caddesi, a wide pedestrian boulevard running from just north of Galata Tower to Taksim Square, a major transit hub and meeting point. Lively at almost all hours, the street contains all kinds of clothing stores, good restaurants in all price brackets and movie theaters. The various side streets are worth checking out, too. One particularly famed street is Cicek Pasaj, a glass-ceilinged alley of restaurants and cafes modeled after a Parisian arcade. Behind it is Nevizade Sokak, a street full of small restaurants whose tables spill onto the pavement, which is a great place for a night out. These days the trendiest part of Beyoglu is around Galata Tower, where many small boutiques and cafes have opened.

Just behind Istiklal are the famous Pera Palace Hotel, where Agatha Christie wrote *Murder on the Orient Express*, the tony Mikla restaurant in the Marmara Pera hotel and the former Deniz Palas—now the headquarters of the Istanbul Culture and Arts Foundation (IKSV) and home to its performance venue, Salon IKSV. East of Istiklal Caddesi is "French Street" (Cezayir/Algeria Street), an attempt to re-create a slice of Parisian street life in Istanbul. It's not particularly authentic, but it's lined with cafes and bars and is a happening place to visit.

### Ortakoy

Ortakoy  
Istanbul, Turkey

This popular area runs along the Bosphorus, north of central Istanbul. Located at the foot of the Bosphorus Bridge, Ortakoy has upscale modern apartments interspersed with small, old houses. The narrow streets are home to churches, synagogues and mosques, including the famous Ortakoy mosque, as well as art galleries, boutiques, and stylish cafes, restaurants and bars where the young and trendy meet. Ortakoy Square, the heart of the district, is where you will find the greatest concentration of nightspots and traditional Turkish cafes, as well as fast-food vendors selling *gozleme* (a type of Turkish crepe) and baked potatoes (*kumpir*) stuffed with every possible topping, from sausage to cabbage to corn.

On weekends, the square is home to a charming handicrafts market. Many fine hotels and some of the city's best seafood restaurants are there, too. At the Ortakoy waterfront, you can hire small boats to take you for a short Bosphorus trip. At quiet times of day, Ortakoy is just a 10-minute cab ride from Taksim, although on weekends this popular district turns into a traffic bottleneck (many taxis take detours to avoid Ortakoy on busy nights).

## Uskudar and Kadikoy

Uskudar and Kadikoy  
Istanbul, Turkey

The Asian (Anatolian) side of Istanbul was home to the city's first settlers (in the eighth century BC) and formed the starting point for the trade routes to Asia. It has a relaxed pace and a more down-home feel than its European counterpart. Uskudar, to the north, has several impressive mosques, including the Atik Valide Mosque, one of the most extensive religious complexes in all of Istanbul (it is currently undergoing extensive renovations that will last until at least 2015), and the Selimiye Barracks, where Florence Nightingale set up her first hospital during the Crimean War. *Note:* Because the facility is still under military control, would-be visitors must apply ahead of time to the Army protocol office (phone 0216-310-7929 or fax 0216-553-1009); you'll be required to fax a copy of your passport 48 hours in advance. Cameras and cell phones are not allowed inside.

Farther south along the coast is Kadikoy. One of the main drags there is Sogukcesme Caddesi, which has a number of shops and a few malls. The narrow side streets contain bookshops, antiques shops and some old Greek and Armenian churches. Nearby you will find Kadife Sokak, popularly known as "Barlar Sokak," which is full of lively bars and restaurants, as is the more chic Moda neighborhood adjoining Kadikoy. Southeast of Kadikoy is Bagdat Caddesi, one of Istanbul's best-known shopping boulevards, although not one of its most beautiful or historically interesting. Most of the world's top clothing brands are sold along that street, as well as the finest in furniture, decorative art, paintings and antiques.

Kadikoy is a great place to go in search of cafes and restaurants as well as to browse the lively market. Within walking distance of Kadikoy is the stately Haydarpasa railway station, built by German engineers in 1906 at the behest of Kaiser Wilhelm II.

Both Uskudar and Kadikoy are accessible by frequent ferries that leave from Eminonu (near Sirkeci train station), on the European side. Uskudar and Kadikoy are also accessible by ferry from Kabatas, Karakoy and Besiktas.

## Parks & Gardens

### Emirgan Park

Emirgan Korusu Sokak, Emirgan, Sariyer (off Sakip Sabanci Caddesi)  
Istanbul, Turkey

Best known for the Istanbul Tulip Festival in April, when it's covered with a rainbow array of flowers, this hilly park overlooking the Bosphorus is worth a visit any time of year. One of the largest public parks in Istanbul, it features plentiful picnicking areas, an assortment of cafes and restaurants, extensive children's play areas and even a jogging track.

## Gulhane Park

Alemdar Caddesi  
Istanbul, Turkey

For a break from the hustle and bustle of Sultanahmet, escape into Gulhane Park, at the foot of the Topkapi Palace hill, which was once part of the gardens of the Byzantine and Ottoman emperors. Enclosed by Byzantine palace walls, the park is a tranquil refuge of giant plane trees and quiet, dusty paths where the screech of parakeets is an unexpected backdrop. There, too, is the Museum of the History of Islamic Science and Technology, its contents mainly replicas but beautifully displayed.

Museum open daily except Tuesday 9 am-5 pm. Museum admission 10 TL.

## Recreation

Although there are plenty of activities to enjoy in and around Istanbul, most visitors are far too taken up with sightseeing to take advantage of them, especially as most require that you travel to the farther reaches of this vast city. Still, if you do have time on your hands, options include fishing, tennis, hiking and bowling.

## Nightlife

When it comes to nightlife, things tend to get going fairly late in Istanbul. Many bars don't fill up until midnight, and a lot of patrons stay well past 3 am. Beyoglu is the liveliest district in town, with a wide range of bars, dance clubs and other hangouts. Unaccompanied men will find that some bars have security at the door that will not let them in. Unaccompanied women, however, have carte blanche everywhere—though they may also be subjected to unwanted attention.

There is an excellent selection of live music in Istanbul, as well as plenty of disco and techno clubs. In addition, many restaurants and cafes have music, which they crank up after midnight. Such places allow you to combine dinner and dancing without changing location.

For a more sedate experience, the bars at upscale hotels in Istanbul are generally comfortable, and many are popular with both Turks and foreign visitors. They can give you the chance to meet Istanbul natives while enjoying the ease of ordering from an English-speaking staff.

## Shopping

Do not for any reason miss the fabled bazaars of Istanbul, especially the immense Kapali Carsi, or Grand Bazaar (also called the Covered Bazaar). Contained within a labyrinth of roofed passages, this market hosts more than 4,000 shops selling practically everything that Turkey produces. Unfortunately, a trip down the aisles of shopkeepers may feel like you're running the gauntlet—Turkish shopkeepers can be extremely persistent salespeople who will always come up with a reason for you to look at and buy their goods. Never feel obligated to buy something you don't really want, no matter the pressure.

Next to the Grand Bazaar is the pretty Sahaflar Carsisi (Second-Hand Book Bazaar), once the haunt of second-hand book dealers as the name suggests, but now primarily a sales outlet for university textbooks and some tourist literature.

The Misir Carsisi, also known as the Spice or Egyptian Bazaar, in Eminonu, is housed in a beautiful domed building dating from 1660. Although more general tourist souvenirs are starting to creep into the shops, this is still a great place to stock up on herbs and spices, assorted teas and Iranian caviar.

Istanbul also has a number of street markets, such as the Wednesday Market (next to the Fatih Mosque), a neighborhood gathering with lots of fresh produce, household goods and flowers, and the Ortakoy Handicrafts Market, which takes place on weekends. There's also a good antiques market on Sunday in a parking garage on Lale Sahin Sokak in Bomonti, a 10-15 minute walk from the Osmanbey metro station. (The same space hosts an organic-food market on Saturday.) For most visitors the easiest street market to explore is the one held in Sultanahmet every Wednesday.

Antiques and carpet sellers are also legendary—and numerous. They will offer you a chance to refine your bargaining skills—or at least enjoy the obligatory free cup of tea. Jewelry, handicrafts, pottery, metal, glassware and leather goods are also abundant, so always be sure to check the competition's prices: A free cup of tea rarely serves as a remedy for buyer's remorse.

When shopping in the Grand Bazaar you will still need to bargain for your purchases. Begin by offering around 50%-60% of the asking price. Once you've haggled for an item, it is considered extremely rude if you don't buy it, assuming your price has been met. Most shops elsewhere offer their goods at fixed prices unless you are buying in bulk.

**Shopping Hours:** Shopping malls and department stores are usually open daily 10 am-10 pm. The Grand Bazaar and the Spice Bazaar are open Monday-Saturday 9 am-7 pm. Sunday trading is less predictable. Shops that cater specifically to tourists tend to stay open until the last potential customer has disappeared.

## Department Stores

### Beymen Nisantasi

Abdi Ipekci Caddesi 23  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-373-4800

<http://www.beymen.com.tr>

A landmark store on the busy Abdi Ipekci Caddesi, Beymens stocks fashions for both men and women by leading designers such as Dolce & Gabbana and Prada. It even has its own much-sought-after fashion line. It also has locations in the Akmerkez, Istinye Park and Zorlu Center shopping malls.

Open Monday-Saturday 10 am-8 pm, Sunday noon-8 pm.

## Galleries

### Galeri Artist Cukurcuma

Aga Kulhani Sokak 10/A  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-251-9163

<http://artistcukurcuma.com>

Located in quarter of Beyoglu where you will find local contemporary artists' works on display, this 800-sq-ft/74-sq-m, boutique-style gallery presents the works of solo and group artists. It also provides consultative services to collectors.

Open Monday-Saturday 11 am-7 pm.

## Markets

### Arasta Bazaar

Tavukhane Sokak  
Istanbul, Turkey

<http://www.arastabazaar.com>

Situated behind Sultan Ahmet Camii (the Blue Mosque), the Arasta Bazaar is a quieter, more upscale version of its big brother, the Grand Bazaar. Good buys include hand-made towels, handbags and slippers made of old kilims, leather bags, Iznik tiles and silver jewelry.

Daily 9 am-7 pm (later in summer).

### Kapali Carsi

Carsikapi Caddesi  
Istanbul, Turkey

<http://www.kapalicarsi.org.tr>

As much a sightseeing experience as a shopping outing, the Grand Bazaar is a must-see, even if you never buy a thing. The oldest part of the bazaar, built in the form of a vaulted caravanserai, was erected in 1461 during the rule of Sultan Mehmet II. Various sections now contain cafes, bookstalls and shops selling all kinds of carpets (a specialty), jewelry, leather, copper, pipes and works of art. You'll invariably be offered coffee, tea or other refreshments, but these should be politely refused unless you plan on buying something. Be prepared to bargain and expect to put up with a hectic atmosphere and some aggressive salespeople. (There are some less chaotic shops located outside the bazaar on Nurosmaniye Caddesi. They're reputable but expensive, and they lack the color of the bazaar itself.)

Monday-Saturday 9 am-7 pm. Occasionally open on Sunday in summer; closes for some public holidays.

### Misir Carsisi

Cami Meydani Sokak  
Istanbul, Turkey

The Spice Bazaar, also called the Egyptian Market, was established in the early 1600s when Istanbul was the last Asian leg of the trade route from China. These days, it's located behind a square that faces the ferry terminal at Eminonu and is crowded with merchants selling food, dried fruits and spices of all sorts. You'll also find plenty of honey, sweets, nuts, olives, dried beef, household wares and even Turkish aphrodisiacs. To the left of the bazaar is the colorful flower and pet market (look out for the leeches); to its right is the fruit, vegetable and cheese market.

Monday-Saturday 9 am-6:30 pm.

## Shopping Areas

### Akmerkez

Nispetiye Caddesi  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-282-0170

<http://www.akmerkez.com.tr>



The first major shopping mall in Turkey, upscale Akmerkez matches the standards of the best in Europe. The stores carry everything from Bulgari-quality jewelry to famous-name designer brands—look for such Turkish labels as Vakko and Beymen. Some excellent restaurants are also part of the complex.

Daily 10 am-10 pm.

## Cevahir

Buyukdere Caddesi 22  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-368-6900

<http://www.istanbulcevahir.com>

If you'd prefer to shop alongside ordinary middle-income Turks, then this vast complex on three floors is typical of the malls found all over Turkey. It's accessible from the Metro at Sisli/Mecidiyekoy.

## Istinye Park

Istinye Bayiri Caddesi  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-345-5555

<http://www.istinyepark.com>

Boasting nearly 300 shops, including Armani, Prada, Moschino and Gucci, and Istanbul's first IMAX theater, this high-end mall is also a popular meeting place because of its extensive selection of eateries, including an indoor farmers' market. It is not especially easy to get to by public transport.

## Kanyon

Kanyon Alisveris Merkezi, Buyukdere Caddesi 185 (beside the Levent Metro stop)  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-353-5300

<http://www.kanyon.com.tr>

A giant, modern, indoor-outdoor mall development in the Levent business district, Kanyon has all the usual upscale stores, plus some surprisingly good restaurants in its food court (we recommend Konyali, Kitchenette and Num Num). In winter months, there's a small but popular ice rink set up in the open-air courtyard area.

## Dining

### Dining Overview

Though it may not be Turkey's political capital, Istanbul beats Ankara hands down when it comes to dining choices, with restaurants dishing up samples of the best cuisine from all four corners of the country, if you know where to look. All around town are kebab houses and informal *lokantas* that serve popular local dishes such as *kofte* (grilled lamb meatballs), *pide* (a slab of thin dough covered with various ingredients including cheese and salami) and home-style soups, stuffed vegetables and stews. A traditional favorite is *lahmacun*—minced meat, onions and tomato sauce baked on paper-thin bread.

Visitors should also be sure to try one or more of Istanbul's fine seafood restaurants, the best of which tend to be found—appropriately—along the Bosphorus, generally in outlying areas such as Arnavutkoy,

Bebek and Kurucesme, past the first Bosphorus Bridge. (It pays to be a bit careful with your bill at these restaurants—inflated prices and billing errors are not unknown.)

Also good—and more accessible for people staying in Sultanahmet—are the fish restaurants in the Kumkapi district of the Old City, which are popular for outdoor dining. A number of these restaurants enliven the atmosphere with Turkish music and/or belly dancers. They do a brisk business in summer, so reservations are rarely taken. Check prices carefully before ordering anything. A little farther west from Kumkapi, Samatya (Kocamustafapas) is also starting to get in on the outdoor fish restaurant action.

The most concentrated dining area is Beyoglu, particularly between Tunel and Taksim squares. This area offers everything from swanky rooftop fusion restaurants to crowded pavement eateries where diners jostle along shared tables—although there are fewer of these than there used to be after a government-sanctioned crackdown on outdoor seating.

Wherever you're eating, most Turkish meals begin with a selection of mezes (appetizers), which come in dozens of varieties with new ones being concocted all the time. The best-known are dolmas (stuffed grape leaves), but also popular are fried mussels, stuffed vegetables (often eggplant or peppers), and a variety of vegetables and greens cooked in olive oil. Next come *ara sicak* (hot starters) such as *borek*, flaky pastries generally filled with cheese, meat, spinach or potatoes.

A common accompaniment to any meal is raki, a potent clear liqueur that's flavored with aniseed (dilute it with some water, which will turn it a milky color).

Traditional desserts include fresh fruit, syrup-soaked pastries and milk puddings. *Helva* (sometimes, but not always, made from crushed sesame seeds) is also an authentic Turkish delight.

Breakfast is typically served 7-10 am and lunch noon-2 pm. Dinner usually carries on well into the evening, especially in summer. Don't plan on eating before 8 pm—most restaurants don't get busy until 9 pm or later. The late hours are well-matched to the Turkish custom of making dinner an extended form of entertainment, fueled by musicians, many plates of mezes, and lots of wine, Efes beer and raki.

The one thing that sometimes surprises visitors to the city is the relative shortage of restaurants serving ethnic cuisine. The situation is slowly improving, especially when it comes to Italian and Japanese restaurants, but it is much easier to find fusion menus mixing Turkish mezes with pastas than to find genuinely international establishments.

Expect to pay within these general guidelines, based on the cost of dinner for one, not including drinks, tip or tax: \$ = less than 25 TL; \$\$ = 25 TL-50 TL; \$\$\$ = 51 TL-70 TL; \$\$\$\$ = more than 70 TL.

## Local & Regional

### Asitane

Kariye Camii Sokak 6 (in the Kariye Hotel)  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-635-7997

<http://www.asitanerestaurant.com>

Right next to Kariye Camii, this charming little restaurant is in a restored Ottoman town house. The excellent traditional Ottoman cuisine (based on recipes used for the circumcision party of Suleyman the Magnificent's son) is best consumed in the restaurant's rose garden. One downside: It gets crowded with tourists in summer.

Daily for lunch and dinner until midnight. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Ciya

Caferaga Mahalle, Guneslibahce Sokak 43  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0216-330-3190

<http://www.ciya.com.tr>

This casual, highly rated eatery boasts an extensive variety of kebabs, but the real culinary stars are the unusual, ever-changing array of stews (such as one with meat, chestnuts and quince) and mezes from around the country displayed at the entrance. Two additional locations grouped near the original on Guneslibahce Sokak.

\$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Develi Kebap and Baklava

Gumusyuzuk Sokak 7  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-529-0833

<http://www.develikebap.com>

This family-owned kebab restaurant has been in business since 1912 and has six locations (Samatya, two in Kalamis, Etiler, Atasehir and Florya). Kebabs are the most popular menu item, although there are plenty of other choices, as well. The Samatya branch overlooks a lively square often used by Turkish television producers. The Kalamis location has lovely outdoor seating, as it is located on the marina. There is both a meat and fish restaurant at this location (you must specify which you would like when making your reservation). It has several house specialties.

Open daily for lunch and dinner, Sunday for breakfast also. \$\$-\$\$\$\$.

## Feriye Lokantasi

Ciragan Caddesi 40 (next to Ciragan Palace Hotel)  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-227-2216

<http://www.feriye.com>

Housed in a former Ottoman palace, this is one of Istanbul's best and most upscale Turkish restaurants. The location is excellent, the terrace has a splendid view of the Bosphorus, and the desserts are masterpieces.

Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations required. \$\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Hamdi Et Lokantasi

Tahmis Caddesi, Kalcin Sokak 17 (300 ft/90 m to the right of the Spice Bazaar)  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-528-0390

<http://www.hamdi.com.tr>

The entrance may not look like much, but trust us, Hamdi is one of the best places in town for traditional Turkish food, especially kebabs and other meat dishes. Take the elevator to the top floor for a great view

over the Golden Horn and settle in for some serious eating. If you're lost with the menu, ask the maitre d' to simply feed you, and the plates will just keep coming (however, ask them to stop if you're receiving too much food). We recommend the salted goat cheese in warm water and the mini *lahmacuns* (tiny pizzas), plus the yogurt kebab and the traditional sweets, especially the baklava. In good weather, make a reservation for a table on the terrace for the best view. However, bear in mind that even if you make a reservation for a terrace table, there is no guarantee that you will get it.

Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Lokanta Maya

Kemankes Caddesi 35  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-252-6884

<http://www.lokantamaya.com>

Just across the road from Istanbul Port in increasingly fashionable Karakoy, Lokanta Maya is a petite and stylish restaurant that brings the fresh tastes of the Aegean to Istanbul, mashing it up with the odd addition from overseas, such as the excellent apple crumble.

Reservations recommended. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Malta Kosku

Yildiz Park  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-258-9453

<http://www.beltur.com.tr/malta-kosku.asp>

One of the restored pavilions of the Yildiz Palace is now an excellent restaurant, with sweeping views over the palace's lovely gardens and the Bosphorus beyond. The buffet lunches are popular, as is the lavish breakfast buffet on Saturday and Sunday, and the place gets crowded in summer.

Daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Matbah

Caferiye Sokak 6  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-514-6151

<http://www.matbahrestaurant.com>

With a perfect location right beside Aya Sofya and overlooking the Sinan-designed, multidomed Caferaga Medresesi, Matbah is the restaurant of the Ottoman Hotel Imperial and serves fine Ottoman cuisine on a roof terrace in summer and a conservatory-style restaurant in winter. The selection of mezes (starters) is excellent.

Open daily. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Nevizade Sokak

Nevizade Sokak  
Istanbul, Turkey

Not just a restaurant, but a whole street full of them. Located behind the Balik (Fish) Bazaar just off Istiklal Caddesi, on summer nights Nevizade is filled with diners drinking, philosophizing and flirting over mezes. It's bohemian Istanbul at its best—perhaps not the finest dining in town, but maybe the most fun. There's not much to choose from among the various restaurants—just squeeze in wherever there's space. Choose from the plates of mezes the server brings you and wash it all down with local wine or raki.

\$\$-\$\$\$.

### Pandeli Restaurant

Misir Carsisi 1 (in the Egyptian Bazaar building)  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-527-3909

<http://www.pandeli.com.tr>

A genuine slice of old Istanbul. Service can be patchy at this old-fashioned restaurant in the upper gallery of the spice market, but the food is *ancien cuisine*—it's traditional, a little on the heavy side and elaborately served. Imagine Agatha Christie deboning a sea bass in the corner: She was a devotee of Pandeli's.

Monday-Saturday for lunch only (till 3:30 pm). \$\$\$.

### Peymane

Bogaskesen Caddesi 65/1 Tophane  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-293-3136

<http://www.peyman.com>

An adorable, bistro-style restaurant that serves Turkish food. Despite the pretty curtains in the windows, it is easy to miss the small, 60-seat, storefront restaurant. The plus side: There is a fantastic outdoor eating area that is hidden in the back of the restaurant. In the summer months, ask the staff if you can be seated outside. Watch the drink prices, as they can inflate the bill significantly.

\$\$-\$\$\$.

### Tugra Restaurant

Ciragan Palace, Kempinski  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-236-7333

<http://www.kempinski.com/en/istanbul/ciragan-palace/dining/restaurants/tugra>

One of Istanbul's premier venues for Ottoman cuisine with an unrivaled menu of specialties, Tugra is frequented by the moneyed residents of Istanbul as well as visitors to the city. It is housed in a suite at the glorious Ciragan Palace and has an outstanding view of the Bosphorus.

Open daily for dinner. \$\$\$\$.

### Yeni Lokanta

Kumbaraci Yokusu 66 (near Tunel)  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-292-2550

<http://www.lokantayeni.com>

One of the new wave of restaurants putting a fresh twist on Turkish cuisine, Yeni Lokanta has an attractive, intimate dining space, top-notch cocktails, and knowledgeable service to go along with its well-executed food. The various mezes and the fish cooked in raki are particularly recommended.

Open for dinner only Monday-Saturday. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$.

## Continental

### Otto

Sofyali Sokak 22A, Asmalimescit  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-252-5188

<http://www.ottotr.org/tr>

This is a young and trendy restaurant and bar that values the quality of its music scene almost as much as its menu. There is a second location in Cihangir with a large garden seating area.

Open daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$.

### Ulus 29

Adnan Saygun Caddesi 7/1 (in Ulus Park)  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-358-2929

<http://www.group-29.com>

A spectacular hilltop view of the Bosphorus and some of the finest Turkish and international cuisine in the city. Excellent service and a good selection of top-end Turkish wines. Book early in summer to get one of the popular tables on the terrace. After midnight, the adjoining nightclub is favored by young and attractive international types.

Monday-Friday for lunch and dinner, Saturday and Sunday for dinner only. Reservations required. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Seafood

### Balikci Sabahattin

Seyit Hasankuyu Sokak 1  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-458-1824

<http://www.balikcisabahattin.com>

Housed in a restored Ottoman house in Sultanahmet, the Balikci Sabahattin caters to many tourists and a well-heeled clientele that loves its range of mezes and fresh seafood. Be sure to have the crunchy salad bowl and melt-in-the-mouth salted sardines and baked shrimp.

Daily for lunch and dinner (open till 1 am). \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Cinaralti Restaurant

Iskele Meydani 28  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-227-3381

<http://www.cinaralti.com>

One of the best of the many small seafood restaurants in the narrow streets of Ortakoy, by the first Bosphorus bridge. Fish appetizers are its specialty.

Daily for lunch, dinner and late night. Reservations recommended for Friday and Saturday nights. \$\$-\$\$\$.  
Most major credit cards.

## Eftalya Balikci

1 Caddesi 32  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-287-2520

<http://www.eftalya.net>

Located off the beaten path for most tourists, Eftalya Balikci is a favorite with locals. A large white structure with an elegant decor facing the Bosphorus, this restaurant is a staple for seafood lovers. A second location is in the Suadiye neighborhood of Kadikoy on the Asian side of the city.

Open daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$.

## G Balik

Suada Club Galatasaray Adasi  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-263-6556

[http://www.suadaclub.com.tr/g\\_balik.html](http://www.suadaclub.com.tr/g_balik.html)

This *balik* (fish) restaurant is inside Suada Club on Galatasaray Adasi. A small boat waits to run you across to the island. The atmosphere is wonderful with a spectacular view of the Bosphorus. The menu consists of a wide array of appetizers, both Turkish meze and Western fare. Main courses are almost all freshly caught, local fish prepared to your liking.

Reservations recommended. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$.

## Kadi Nimet Balicilik

Tarihi Balicilar Carsisi, Serasker Caddesi 10/A  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0216-348-7389

<http://kadinimet.com>

This Kadikoy classic proves that not all fish restaurants need be expensive or located in remote spots. The fish there comes straight from the surrounding market stalls—you'll need to keep your eyes peeled to spot the place in amongst them.

\$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.



## Mavi Balik

Muallim Naci Caddesi 64/A  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-265-5480

<http://www.mavibalik.com>

One of Istanbul's oldest seafood restaurants, Mavi Balik is right on the Bosphorus and has a large shaded terrace for summer dining. Grilled calamari and sea bass are specialties, although meat dishes are also served.

Daily for lunch and dinner (till midnight). Reservations required in summer. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

## Set Balik

Haydar Aliyev Caddesi 18  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Phone:** 0212-262-0411

<http://setbaliklokantasi.net>

This longtime Istanbul favorite distinguishes itself from other Istanbul seafood restaurants with inventive preparations such as fish kebabs, fish *borek* (savory pastry) and sea bass schnitzel, plus a good range of mezes.

Daily for lunch and dinner (till midnight). \$\$-\$\$\$

## Security

### Etiquette

Turkey's culture matches its geography—in between the traditions of the Middle East and the practices of western Europe and North America. As such, it's easily the most accommodating Islamic country for visitors from the West, though the country's customs and religion will require you to take care in the way you present yourself, especially in a business context.

**Appointments**—An intermediary who can introduce you to Turkish firms will be of great assistance (especially in scheduling meetings). Appointments should be made well in advance. Punctuality is expected—although even the Turks joke about "Turkish time" (tardiness).

**Personal Introductions**—A handshake is the normal form of greeting, although people you have only met once or twice may greet you with a kiss on each cheek. Maintain eye contact but not too intensely. It is customary to address the eldest person first. As part of the many changes that swept the country in the 20th century, many Turks adopted Western-style surnames. Nevertheless, you'll usually hear Turks addressing or referring to each other by their first name followed by the honorific *bey* or *hanım* (for example, a man named Mustafa Koruturk will be addressed as "Mustafa Bey", while a woman named Ayse Yilmaz will be addressed as "Ayse Hanım"). If the person has a professional title, such as "Professor," use that alone, without a surname.

**Negotiating**—Turkish businesspeople operate to a great extent on their sense of you as an individual. As a result, a lot of time will be spent on "small talk" before any business is discussed. Even after you've begun discussing the substantive matters, expect the pace of negotiations to be slow relative to other countries in Europe and North America. Be aware that Turkish society has historically been heavily

focused on the family and the relationships immediately surrounding the individual. Great deference is shown to the more elderly or senior members of an organization or family. In business, these senior members are often the decision-makers.

**Business Entertaining**—The Turkish people take great pride in their hospitality, and entertaining often takes place in restaurants. Allow your Turkish acquaintances to be the first to broach business at such gatherings. It is customary for the host to pay for the guest.

**Body Language**—Turkey is an Islamic country, though it is less rigid than many others in following traditional Islamic customs. Use only your right hand when greeting someone, when accepting and offering items and when eating. Avoid sitting in any manner that permits the sole of your shoe or foot to be seen; it's considered an insult. It is also rude to point, especially with your foot. Even though a nod means *yes*, Turks indicate *no* by raising and tilting their heads backward slightly and perhaps making a "tsk" sound with their mouth. Do not cross your arms when in conversation with another, nor should you keep your hands in your pockets. Public displays of affection between the sexes are frowned upon in more conservative parts of the city. Most Turks are understanding of *yabancı* (foreign) errors, however, and many of these rules are far less rigidly adhered to than they used to be except in very conservative circles.

**Gift Giving**—Gifts are not always given, but they are appreciated. You should give gifts of alcohol only if you know that your acquaintance drinks—the traditional Muslim prohibition against alcohol is not observed as strictly in Turkey as it is elsewhere in the Islamic world, but there are still many people who don't drink.

**Conversation**—The Turkish people are fine conversationalists and will display an interest in you as an individual. Sports, travel, and Turkish culture and history are welcome topics. Politics—particularly in relation to Cyprus, Greece, the Kurds and Armenia—can be troublesome. Be careful not to say anything that is dismissive or critical of Islam, Atatürk or Turkey in general. Women in particular may be surprised at how rarely they are asked about their work, with all initial conversation focused on family relationships.

**Other Information**—Women should dress modestly, avoiding low-cut tops or short skirts, although you shouldn't be surprised to see young Turkish women so attired. It is not necessary to cover your head, arms and shoulders unless you are visiting a mosque or other holy site. Generally, the more modestly you dress, the less unwanted attention you will attract. Be aware that when entering someone's home you are generally expected to remove your shoes and, in some cases, wear slippers reserved for guests. Smoking is still a national pastime, even though it has been prohibited in almost all indoor locations, including bars and restaurants. In private homes, it is polite to ask for permission before smoking. You should also ask permission before taking photographs of people or of mosques. Be careful not to take photographs of (or even near) military installations; multilingual signs are always posted with this warning.

## Personal Safety

In general, Istanbul is very safe for visitors, and there's a heavy police presence in the city. Check your country's foreign ministry travel advisories before you go for information on Turkey's sporadic outbreaks of political violence. For the most part, these should not affect tourists, but it would be wise to stay away from large demonstrations around Taksim Square and in such areas as Besiktas and Kadikoy during particularly troubled times.

Pickpockets and bag snatchers can be active, especially around tourist areas and the Tunel and Galata areas of Beyoglu, and on crowded public transport: Carry your possessions in such a way as to minimize

temptation. Avoid parks and deserted streets at night. Be cautious of strangers who attempt to befriend you and invite you to have a drink or a meal—travelers have been drugged and then robbed after accepting such offers.

A particularly prevalent scam preys on foreign men, especially those who are solo and/or drunk, in the Beyoglu area: An English-speaking Turkish man offers to show the visitor some nightlife and introduce him to local women. After a few drinks at a bar or nightclub, the gullible tourist is then presented with an outrageous bill for hundreds of liras and may be subjected to intimidation or physical force if he refuses to pay.

Unaccompanied women may receive unwanted attention from men: The best response is no response at all.

Probably the biggest danger in Istanbul is traffic and aggressive drivers. Be careful when crossing the street and don't assume drivers will stop for a crosswalk, or even a traffic light.

For more information, contact your country's travel-advisory agency.

## Health

Tap water in Istanbul is generally safe to drink in terms of bacteria, though it is heavily chlorinated and doesn't always taste wonderful. You're probably better with bottled water, which is widely available, and drunk by many Turks. Larger restaurants almost always use bottled water; you can request it specifically in smaller eateries. Food is generally safe to eat as most restaurants have their own strict hygiene rules. In general, food hygiene standards in Istanbul are higher than in many Mediterranean cities such as Rome, Nice or Tel Aviv.

No vaccinations are required to enter Turkey, although you might consider getting a hepatitis A vaccine. Be sure to consult your doctor prior to your trip.

Be advised that many doctors in Turkey do not speak English, particularly in state hospitals. Medical problems should therefore be addressed to either the American Hospital (Guzelbahce Sokak 20, Nisantasi; phone 0212-444-3777; <http://www.amerikanhastanesi.org>), which has English-speaking staff, or to the Acibadem hospital group, which is also reliable in terms of quality of care and ability to deal with foreigners. Acibadem has locations around the city, including in Fulya (Besiktas), Kadikoy and Maslak (phone 0444-5544; <http://www.acibadem.com.tr/danisma>). Many upscale hotels have an English-speaking doctor on call 24 hours a day. As a foreigner, you will be assumed to have travel insurance and will probably be charged a higher price than if you were a local.

In addition to filling prescriptions, Turkish pharmacies (*eczane*) are qualified to provide certain basic medical services such as taking blood pressure, giving injections, bandaging minor injuries, and suggesting medicine for common ailments. If you need to visit a pharmacy after normal business hours, there is usually one open in each district. The names and addresses of the nearest pharmacies on 24-hour duty (*nobetçi eczane*) that day are listed on a sign in the window of other pharmacies.

## Disabled Advisory

Istanbul has very few wheelchair-accessible buildings and sites, although the situation is starting to improve. In general, only the airlines and select upscale hotels can be depended on to have ramps or other amenities for disabled travelers. The tram has wheelchair-accessible entrances to its cars (although

it can be difficult reaching the stops), and there are a few dozen disabled-access Renault taxis working with a few of the major hotels.

Although Turks are generally willing to assist handicapped visitors in tough situations, most day-to-day sightseeing and other activities may prove challenging. A few of the major attractions, such as Topkapi Palace, have begun to provide wheelchair access. But in general, Istanbul is a difficult proposition for disabled visitors—as well as being hilly, it's also full of uneven cobblestones, broken pavement, narrow or nonexistent sidewalks, haphazardly parked cars, steep curbstones, jutting pipes, steps and other unanticipated hazards.

## Facts

### Dos & Don'ts

Do praise Turkey (and Istanbul) at every possible instance. Turks are proud of their country and will often ask you if you like it there. Express enthusiasm, and don't join in if they express criticism of the country—they'll be offended if you agree.

Don't be afraid to brush off aggressive vendors or people who pester you on the street. A good firm but polite phrase is "*Yeter! Lutfen!*" (pronounced *ye-ter loot-fen*), or "That's enough, please!"

Do contact a Turkish-speaking person if you have to report a crime at the police station. Almost no Turkish police speak English and, though usually friendly enough, they tend to be rather inefficient. Call your hotel—they'll usually send someone to help you out (don't forget to tip this person).

Don't be afraid to try street food, even *kokorec*, which is grilled sheep intestines. It's better than it sounds, and hygiene standards are actually quite high.

Do remember to look where you're going. Istanbul sidewalks are notorious for manholes and especially dangerous entrances to cellar-level workshops. The architecture above may be magnificent, but stop walking as you look at it or you may fall into a hole.

Do engage with the locals. Most are friendly and happy to chat with tourists.

Do venture off the beaten track if at all possible. Get away from Sultanahmet, however briefly, and you will discover a different Istanbul geared to local rather than tourist needs.

Don't let yourself become obsessed with being ripped off. While some locals will certainly take advantage of visitors, others will go out of their way to be helpful.

## Geostats

**Passport/Visa Requirements:** Passports, visas and proof of onward passage are needed by citizens of Canada and the U.S. Visas may also be arranged online at <https://www.evisa.gov.tr>.

Visa on arrival is no longer available, effective 1 January 2015.

U.S. and Canadian travelers who arrive in Turkey by cruise ship and sleep on the boat are usually allowed to enter Turkey without a visa for 72 hours. Oftentimes, the cruise liner will arrange for a "blanket" visa to cover your time in port, although this visa won't cover you if you choose to stay over in Istanbul. We recommend that cruise passengers double-check visa requirements with their cruise company and/or

the Turkish embassy or consulate in their area. Reconfirm travel document and visa requirements with your carrier before departure.

**Population:** 11,253,297.

**Languages:** Turkish. Some people also speak Kurdish and Arabic, as well as varying degrees of assorted Western languages.

**Predominant Religions:** Islam.

**Time Zone:** 2 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (+2 GMT). Daylight Saving Time is observed from the last Sunday in March to the last Sunday in October.

**Voltage Requirements:** 220 volts.

**Telephone Codes:** 90, country code; 0212, city code for Istanbul Avrupa (European side); 0216, city code for Istanbul Anadolu (Asian side);

## Money

### Currency Exchange

The Turkish lira is made up of 100 kuruş. Its value against the dollar and the euro has dropped fairly significantly in recent years and remains in flux. Many Istanbul hotels prefer to charge in U.S. dollars or euros, as do some upscale restaurants and shops whose clients are mostly foreign. Public transport is charged in Turkish liras. Some taxi drivers will accept foreign currency, although you are unlikely to get a good exchange rate.

ATMs are the best way to obtain Turkish currency, and they're found all over the city—there are more than 90 on İstiklal Caddesi alone. Be careful of using an ATM in an isolated area, because they have been the focus of attacks. If possible, use ATMs attached to bank branches as that will make it easier to retrieve your card if the machine "eats" it, which happens occasionally. Almost all accept international Visa, VisaPlus and MasterCard.

If you can't access an ATM, use one of the exchange bureaus (known as *Doviz*), centered around Taksim Square, on İstiklal Street and near the entrance to the Grand Bazaar at Beyazıt Square. To compare bank and exchange-bureau rates, consider both commission and rate. Currency-exchange bureaus claim to be commission-free but tend to offer a poorer rate of exchange. Banks generally charge a commission but offer a better rate. Generally, currency-exchange bureau hours are Monday-Saturday 9 am-6 pm, though it's not hard to find one open outside those hours around Taksim and İstiklal. Banks are open Monday-Friday and often close for an hour-long lunch break around noon or 1 pm.

### Taxes

In Turkey, an 18% value-added tax (referred to as KDV in Turkey) is applied to practically all goods, although this is included in the prices quoted, not added on as an extra. Food, clothes and some other goods are taxed at 8%. Visitors to Turkey can claim their tax money back at the airport or port, as well as at some major shopping malls, if they get a tax-free receipt (*KDV iade özel fatura*) when they purchase goods that cost more than 100 TL. Give the receipt to a customs officer at the prominently marked "Tax Refund" office at the airport or other exit point, and in theory, he or she will give you an immediate cash refund or credit your card with the sum.

Note that you need (in theory) to show the customs officer the items you have bought, which means you should *not* check them at the check-in counter but carry them through to the tax refund office. In practice, though, the officials are lenient if the items are bulky. For more details, see <http://www.globalblue.com/destinations/turkey/tax-free-shopping-in-turkey>.

## Tipping

Tipping is not necessary for taxi drivers, although rounding the fare up is customary. Tip no more than 10% in restaurants except for the highest level of service—and check to be sure a service charge (*servis*) hasn't already been added to your bill. A tip of 10 TL-15 TL is sufficient for a porter. Tour guides will generally expect about 20 TL per person on the tour.

## Weather

The best time to visit Istanbul is April-June, September or October. Temperatures are relatively comfortable then, with average highs of 60-77 F/16-25 C and relatively little rain. Winters rarely get cold enough for much snow, but plenty of rain falls (about 11-13 in/28-33 cm November-January) and the damp air can feel chilly. Summers are hot and humid but not unbearable if you're near the water, though traffic pollution can make July and August unpleasant if you're inland. A sweater or rain jacket is useful year-round.

## What to Wear

Istanbul is a cosmopolitan city, and the range of dress, especially for women, is vast. You'll see everything from women hidden under black chadorlike garments to teenage girls in miniskirts. As a visitor, you don't need to cover yourself from head to toe, but stick to relatively modest attire (no spaghetti straps or bare midriffs). To blend in, men should avoid wearing shorts. At mosques, men and women should dress modestly, with shoulders and legs covered. Women should carry a light scarf to wrap around their heads in case of an unexpected mosque visit, although the popular mosques in the tourist areas may have scarves available.

The climate of Istanbul can be damp and wet in winter. And, as in any maritime city, the weather's prone to sudden changes. Be sure to pack light woolens for spring and fall trips—the evenings can get cold, especially at waterside restaurants, although many have shawls on hand for their guests. Mosquitoes are not usually a problem in Istanbul, but repellent can be bought in pharmacies and hardware stores.

Men and women traveling on business should pack a suit, although more casual attire may be worn at some offices. Turkish businesspeople and government functionaries generally dress well, and doing the same is a sign of respect.



**Cappadocia, Turkey (Optional post cruise tour)****Overview****Introduction**

Cappadocia is an ancient Christian kingdom, about 100 mi/160 km southeast of Ankara in central Turkey. It sits within an eerie, surrealistic landscape of pinnacles, ravines and carved-rock dwellings, and it's one of the most fascinating places in Turkey. Caves in the region were used as shelters and still contain marvelous frescoes.



Cappadocia encompasses the area bordered by the towns of Avanos on the north, Kayseri on the east, Aksaray on the west and Nigde on the south.

About 15 mi/22 km south of Nevsehir are the underground cities of Kaymakli and Derinkuyu. Spiraling downward for as many as seven stories, these cities housed tens of thousands of people. Essential elements of aboveground civilization, such as the ability to make wine, were retained by the ingenious underground inhabitants.

The Goreme Valley, east of Nevsehir, has churches that were carved out of the rock and decorated with magnificent frescoes, many concentrated within the Goreme Open-Air Museum, a UNESCO World Heritage site. (Even though many of the frescoes have been severely defaced by vandals, it's still one of the major sights of Turkey.) The fascinating Zelve Valley (north of Goreme Valley) has a multilevel monastery and churches carved inside columns of rock (called tuff) that were formed by volcanic ash.

If you're traveling independently, we suggest staying in the centrally located town of Urgup or the villages of Goreme or Uchisar. Allow several days to see the area (be sure to take good walking shoes). Also nearby is the very scenic Ihlara Valley, which has yet more churches with frescoes. Hot-air balloon tours over the area's surreal landscape are wildly popular, if a bit on the pricey side; they generally run early April-late November.

Many travelers visit Cappadocia as part of a larger tour of western Turkey, often supplementing the inter-city bus system with a series of one-way flights.