

insights.

Vischer Merkt Partner
experts in corporate meetings & events

About Istanbul

Istanbul is located in the northwestern part of Turkey and the **only city in the world spanning two continents**, Europe and Asia. Turkey's cultural and financial center is straddling on the *Bosphorus Strait*, which runs from the *Black Sea* through Istanbul and into the inland *Sea of Marmara* on a length of 32 kilometers. It is the **world's narrowest strait** used for international navigation and one of the busiest sea-traffic regions of the world.

Turkey's most populous city is estimated to be between 12 and 19 million people, making it also **one of the largest cities in Europe and the world**. Almost 65% are inhabitants of the Asian side, fulfilling the residential role of the city, but not presenting a lot to see historically. In contrast, the **European side is the commercial and cultural center**, further divided into two districts – the *Old City* and the modern downtown – by a fresh-water estuary, called the *Golden Horn*. The inlet forms one of the **most ample and deep natural harbors in the world** and has been the main port of the city for centuries.

Istanbul can look back to **two millennia of extraordinary history** as the capital of three successive empires: *East Roman*, *Byzantine* and *Imperial Ottoman*, leaving their signs all over the city and giving it its unique character. **Iconic landmarks** such as the *Galata Tower* and the *Blue Mosque*, countless minarets, scattered gracefully over the seven hills, as well as **two massive suspension bridges** – among the largest in the world – add to a **picturesque skyline**.



Ortakoy Mosque at sunset, Istanbul



Panoramic view of the Golden Horn as seen from the Galata Tower, Istanbul



The Turkish megacity is served by more than 300 international airlines offering non-stop flights from and to major cities in Europe, the Near and Middle East, Africa, Southeast Asia, China and the Americas.

The city's main airport *Atatürk International*, lies 24 km west of the heart of *Old Istanbul*. A taxi ride can take anywhere between 20-50 minutes, depending on traffic which can be manic at times. Istanbul's second airport *Sabiha Gökçen* on the Asian side of the city, is popular with charter and low-cost European airlines and located at approximately 70 km east of the city center.

In 2010, Istanbul won the title of "Europe's Leading Destination" at the *World Travel Awards*. It is also **one of the world's major conference destinations** and an increasingly popular choice of the world's leading international associations. No wonder, it ranks high in the *ICCA* 2010 city ranking*, measured by the number of meetings held, climbing remarkable 10 places from 17th in 2009 to 7th in 2010.

*International Congress & Convention Association

| Climate Istanbul | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Temperature air high °C | 8 | 9 | 11 | 16 | 21 | 25 | 28 | 28 | 24 | 20 | 15 | 11 |
| Temperature air low °C | 3 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 12 | 16 | 18 | 19 | 16 | 13 | 9 | 5 |
| Sunshine hours per day | 2.6 | 3.6 | 4.5 | 6.3 | 8.6 | 10.6 | 11.6 | 10.9 | 8.2 | 5.9 | 3.7 | 2.8 |
| Rain days (>0.1 mm) | 12 | 11 | 10 | 8 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 11 | 14 |

Hotels

Istanbul is a **city on the rise**: named *European Capital of Culture* in 2010, the metropolis has managed to further enhance its importance as a **global destination for business and leisure guests**. The city's large and varied hotel landscape comprises **74 five-star** and **107 four-star properties**, including all leading international brands. To cope with the rising number of visitors, nearly **40 new hotel projects** will be completed over the next couple of years with openings by top groups such as *Hilton, Le Méridien, Raffles, Shangri-La* and *Wyndham*, just to name a few.

Hotels are everywhere throughout the city: in the *Conference Valley*, the *Business & Financial District*, the *Historic Peninsula* and near the *Airport & Exhibition District*. However, to avoid the notorious Istanbul traffic jams, we recommend hotels either within **walking distance from major attractions and venues** or located close to the sea to be able to **use (private) boats, undoubtedly a quicker way to get to some areas**.



Grand Ballroom, Four Seasons Bosphorus, Istanbul

Our recommendations for larger meetings

Conrad Istanbul: <http://conradhotels1.hilton.com>
5-star deluxe hotel, declared "*Turkey's Leading Business Hotel*" by WTA** in 2009. Close to the main business district, it combines traditional luxury with *Byzantine* and *Ottoman*-influenced design, displayed in all its 590 bedrooms and 27 function rooms on 3 interconnecting floors, including the city's largest ballroom for up to 1'500 guests and a panoramic terrace.

Swissôtel The Bosphorus: www.swissotel.com

5-star luxury property situated in a prestigious residential district amidst a historical garden on a wooded hilltop, commanding panoramic views of the *Bosphorus*, the Asian coast and the *Old City*. Member of the *Leading Hotels of the World* and in *Condé Nast Traveler Gold List 2011*, it offers 497 spacious rooms and suites, as well as 28 function rooms including 3 ballrooms.

Çırağan Palace Kempinski: www.kempinski.com
5-star luxury *Imperial Palace* dating back to the 18th century, once the residence of *Ottoman* sultans. A landmark - the only 5-star deluxe hotel superbly positioned on the waterfront, directly on the European shores of the *Strait*. Offers 313 elegant rooms as well as 20 lavish reception,

banqueting and meeting facilities catering to every need from 50 to 1'000 guests. Highlight: the legendary 1693 square meter terrace offering exhilarating views.

Grand Hyatt Istanbul: www.istanbul.grand.hyatt.com
5-star deluxe hotel situated in the heart of Istanbul's modern *Business District*, within walking distance of the main convention and exhibition centers and just minutes away from the historic landmarks of the *Old City*. Boasts 360 guest rooms, among the largest in the city, as well as 13 flexible meeting rooms for gatherings of any size in 1'507 square meters of function space.

Four Seasons Bosphorus: www.fourseasons.com
5-star luxury property on the European bank of the *Strait*, radiating a fresh, eclectic spirit. 170 bright and airy guest rooms, blending *Ottoman* design details and contemporary furnishings with garden, city and waterfront views. Features 2 elegant ballrooms with pre-function areas and 6 tastefully decorated meeting rooms, enhanced by sophisticated quayside terraces.



Çırağan Palace Kempinski, Istanbul

Our picks for smaller meetings

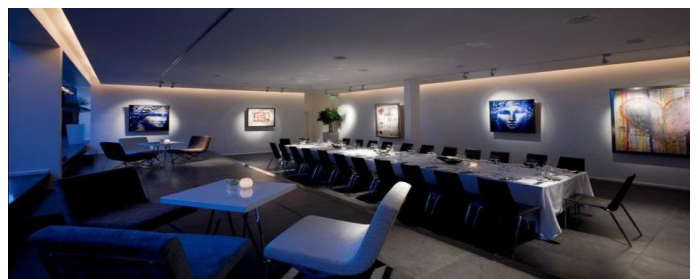
Mövenpick Hotel: www.moevenpick-hotels.com

5-star, voted "*Europe's Leading Business Hotel*" by the WTA** in 2011. Set in the heart of the city's modern business and chic shopping district, rising up among the skyscrapers of Istanbul's skyline, it combines contemporary style with flawless service which finds expression in its 249 comfortable guest rooms and 11 flexible function and meeting rooms.

The Sofa Hotel: www.thesofahotel.com

5-star, member of *Design Hotels*TM, located in the city's trendy shopping and entertainment district, a mere 3 minute walk from *Istanbul Convention and Lutfi Kirdar Exhibition Centers*. Boasts 82 bedrooms in minimalist-chic with an *Ottoman* twist and 6 well-equipped meeting rooms. Highlight: the *Art*8 Lounge* on the top floor with roofed and open areas for between 100 and 300 guests.

**World Travel Awards (the so-called "Tourism Oscars")



Art*8 Lounge, The Sofa Hotel, Istanbul

Pera Palace Hotel: www.perapalace.com

5-star deluxe “museum-hotel” established in 1892 to serve *Orient Express* clientele. In 2010, it re-emerged, restored in full grandeur after 3 years of renovation. Overlooking the *Golden Horn* and amidst the *Taksim District*, a center of cultural activities and night life, it features 115 beautifully appointed rooms, recreating the atmosphere of late 19th century Istanbul.



Ballroom, Pera Palace Hotel, Istanbul

Istanbul hotel overview (sorted by ideal meeting size)

| Hotel | Ideal Meeting Size | Rooms | Max. Capacity Classroom Style |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|-------|-------------------------------|
| Conrad Istanbul | 300 - 500 | 590 | 750 |
| Swissôtel The Bosphorus | 100 - 400 | 497 | 1000 |
| Çırağan Palace Kempinski | 150 - 280 | 313 | 600 |
| Grand Hyatt Istanbul | 100 - 200 | 360 | 280 |
| Four Seasons Istanbul | 50 - 150 | 170 | 540 |
| Mövenpick Hotel Istanbul | 60 - 120 | 249 | 240 |
| The Sofa Hotel & Residences | 20 - 70 | 82 | 120 |
| Pera Palace Hotel | 30 - 60 | 115 | 132 |



Winter garden, Matbah Restaurant, Istanbul

Special venues

The cosmopolitan harbor city not only bridges Asia and Europe but also past and future. It carefully preserves its historic legacy with its stately palaces and mansions, enchanted mosques and cathedrals, bustling bazaars and steaming hamams and looks to a modern future - Istanbul is a 21st century metropolis with vibrant neighborhoods, brimming with contemporary cafes, trendy restaurants, eclectic clubs and a wealth of hip event venues.

For a bird's eye view of the metropolis, the city's smart staple is the multiple award-winning **360**, a glass-walled rooftop restaurant in a turn-of-the-century apartment house, offering an interesting mix of Asian and European cuisine with a popular bar.



Mikla rooftop restaurant & bar, Istanbul

Literally speaking on top of everything since its opening, is **Mikla** - one of Istanbul's most glamorous fine-dining spots. The restaurant, perched atop the *Marmara Pera Hotel*, has views to die for, a refined Turkish-Scandinavian fusion cuisine to match and a verdant rooftop bar.

Truly on the water in the middle of two continents is **Suada**, the ultimate in leisure and entertainment in Istanbul. A man-made island on the *Strait*, it consists of 7 restaurants and function space, some of the open-air areas with retractable roofs and an olympic-size pool. Boats ferry guests from the mainland to the artificial floating dock, both a daytime beach-club and a night-time hangout. We recommend the **G Balik Restaurant** for delicious seafood for larger parties of up to 350 guests or the **Suda Kebap** for smaller meat-loving groups.

Going underground: the **Basilica Cistern** is the largest of several ancient Istanbul cisterns, originally used for storing water. A 1963 movie-set for 007's "*From Russia with Love*", the impressive 9'700 square meter cathedral-size cavern with over 360 illuminated marble columns, is available for hosting small private functions. Alternatively, for larger groups an evening in the style of "*a thousand and one nights*" could be staged at the **1001 Column Cistern**, the oldest known cistern in Istanbul.

Back to the past: Istanbul inherited some rich “pickings” from its *Ottoman* ancestry as for palaces and mansions, and many have been restored and converted into boutique hotels, clubs and restaurants. **Matbah**, in the heart of the *Old City*, is one of them. It offers authentic *Ottoman* cuisine in the opulent surroundings of a palace garden and caters for small and medium-sized parties. As an option for larger groups, you could host a gala reception and dinner at the scenic **Esma Sultan Palace**, a glass covered brick ruin that can be used as a year-round venue for events and exhibitions.



Esma Sultan Mansion, Istanbul

Sightseeing and shopping in Istanbul

A quintessential Istanbul experience is to take a **boat trip** along the *Bosphorus*, be it during daytime on a majestic sailboat, at sunset on a traditional *gület* or while enjoying a dinner cruising aboard a luxury motor-yacht.

Sightseeing in the “*City of Seven Hills*”, as Istanbul is often made reference to, is **both educational as well as visually rewarding**. The city’s most prominent attractions are of the **architectural kind** - historical ones, such as the *Hagia Sophia*, a huge museum and former cathedral; the iconic *Blue Mosque* with its graceful minarets; or the modern, high-end *Kanyon Shopping Mall*, a multipurpose complex, undulating around a dramatic architectural “canyon”.

To yet another shopping mecca and must-see while in Istanbul: the *Grand Bazaar*, the **oldest and biggest enclosed market in the world**. Built in 1461, it boasts around 4’000 shops where just about anything can be found. The experience is more about wandering through the winding streets and markets, taking everything in and hunting for bargains. Here, unlike at *Kanyon’s* with its trendy designer shops, haggling is an essential skill.

And don’t leave Istanbul without buying a box of *Turkish delight*, an edible, sweet souvenir consisting of sugar-dusted cubes of thickened milk, fruit or dried nuts.



Lanterns, Grand Bazaar, Istanbul

Cuisine

Those not having a sweet tooth could opt for **spices and herbs**, being the **backbone of Turkish cooking**. Many spices found at the local markets are grown in the country - black pepper, red flake pepper, wild thyme mint, cumin or sumac. These and more are best bought at Istanbul’s second largest bazaar, the *Egyptian Bazaar*, also known as *Spice Bazaar*.

After sightseeing and shopping, spoil your guests with some **authentic Turkish fare**, including delicious *mezes*, classic *kebabs* - of which there are over 100 varieties – and phyllo-pastry with honey and chopped nuts in the form of *baklava* for dessert. Freshly brewed *Turkish coffee* and Turkey’s national drink *raki*, an anise-flavored spirit that turns milky-white when mixed with chilled water, round off the culinary expedition in the *Land of the Crescent Moon*. *Afjet olsun* and *serefe!*



Sunset cruise on the Bosphorus, Istanbul

Our working style at home and abroad

From small, exclusive and complex right through to comprehensive, large-scale projects: Vischer, Merkt & Partner enjoy extensive experience in the conception, creation and worldwide organization of corporate meetings and events. All our events fulfill a stringent requirement: offering an unforgettable experience in a unique atmosphere. We achieve this by preparing a sound concept based on an innovative, compelling idea.

In order to guarantee the high quality standards we stand for, we select and manage the venues and local partners personally. Regardless of the size of your meeting or event, we put together the perfect team for your project, always under the expert guidance of one of the two owners who will take care of everything in person on site.

Objective of our newsletter

The purpose of this newsletter is to provide you with background information on some of the cities and regions in which we have held successful meetings and corporate events to date. Maybe we can also persuade you to consider holding your next meeting or event in one of our preferred cities – we would be happy to do so!

Closing remarks

The Turkish metropolis is a city of sound, taste, culture and innovation and with its exotic appeal, **one of the most happening cities of the moment**. It is easily accessible from all parts of the world and offers charming hospitality in world-class hotels, state-of-the-art meeting facilities and unique event venues. A combination of qualities which make the city an attractive destination and perfect location for any type of corporate event.

Would you like to know more about the city where East meets West and ancient and modern, religious and secular, mystical and earthly all co-exist? We would be pleased to give you an in-depth presentation.

The next issue will cover Singapore