



**TWO
BAD
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Gay Istanbul – the best gay hotels, bars,
clubs & more

The seat of the former Byzantine and Ottoman Empire, Istanbul is a unique fusion of the east and west in culture, cuisine, and geography as the European and Asian sides are divided by the Bosphorus Strait. The sights of this 18-million-plus city take you back to historic Constantinople as grand mosques, ancient markets, and magnificent palaces reflect a rich and fascinating past that's been shaped over the centuries by the Greeks, Persians, Romans, Venetians and Ottomans. It also makes for a great jumping-off point for short trips to nearby Bursa, Troy, and The Prince's Islands. Although Istanbul has a large gay nightlife scene and is relatively tolerant compared to its neighbors, it's important to remember that this is the capital of an Islamic country instilling conservative values in society

General Tips

Istanbul's peak tourist season is summer starting in June and lasting through August when daytime temperatures can reach the low 80s (27°C). This is also when accommodation prices rise, and the city is most crowded. The best times to visit are March to May and September to November, when the days are more temperate, and you'll find the city and sights to be much more pleasant. A visit from December through February can get you the best deals, however, be prepared for cold (37°F/3°C), wet, and even snowy weather.

Homosexuality is not illegal in Istanbul, however, there are no legal protections for gay and transgender people who often face violence and discrimination. Certain acts may be deemed "offenses against public morality" creating a gray space for the LGBT community. LGBT tourists generally shouldn't experience any issues when visiting Istanbul, but it's also recommended to be cautious with public displays of affection in order to maintain your safety. If you take precautions, you can enjoy Istanbul's thriving LGBT scene with its many gay bars, clubs, and cafes most of which are located in or near Taksim Square and Beyoglu.

Transportation & Airport Transfer

As of early 2019, the new Istanbul Airport (IST) was opened and became the new international hub replacing Ataturk Airport. It's located about 25 miles (40 km) northwest of Istanbul in the Arnavutköy district next to the Black Sea.

After arriving, there are several transit options to reach the city center. Although appealing, taxis are among the most expensive and can be time-consuming based on traffic and the long distance. Havaist is an airport shuttle bus that will take you to spots all over Istanbul. The trip is about 100 minutes (more during rush hour) and relatively comfortable.

Alternatively, a [private shuttle service](#) like can be booked in advance and provide a more relaxed journey at a fixed rate dropping you off in front of your hotel. As for public transit, it's a bit adventurous and cumbersome as there isn't a direct line into the city center. A future metro line is currently under construction. [Book airport transfer →](#)

If you're arriving at Istanbul's other International airport, Sabiha Gokcen, you'll find yourself on the Asian side of Istanbul. Again transferring by taxi is not recommended as it's expensive and can take over an hour. Havabus is a reliable airport shuttle service taking you to destinations like *Beşiktaş* and Taksim (90 minutes). From Taksim, you'll need to hail a taxi to reach Sultanahmet. As mentioned before, a private shuttle can also be arranged in advance providing one of the most comfortable and relaxed experiences.

Gay Hotels in Istanbul

There aren't currently any [gay hotels](#) in Istanbul, but there are many gay-friendly options.

[Tomtom Suites](#) – located in the heart of the city, this 5-star hotel is a great base for exploring Istanbul. Suites have views of Sultanahmet and Sea of Marmara. Rooms are air conditioned and feature a mini bar, a spa bath, and an iPod docking station as well as flat-screen TV, slippers, and a private bathroom with bathrobes.

[W-Hotel Istanbul](#) – historic 5-star accommodation close to the Sinan Pasha Mosque, restaurants, and shops. Guests can enjoy a sauna, valet parking and a spa and wellness center as well as an in-house restaurant offering a unique dining experience. Rooms are air conditioned and have a mini bar and a telephone.

Marmara Sisli – located in the upscale Sisli area, this hotel offers views of Istanbul, an in-house restaurant, express check-in and check-out, valet parking, and 24-hour room service. Rooms provide a stylish space to relax, complete with a mini bar. Staff are available 24/7 and can book tours and tickets.

Marmara Pera – situated in Beyoglu and a short walk from the Pera Museum, this 4-star hotel features an outdoor pool, in-house restaurant, a rooftop terrace with skyline views, and fitness center with a swimming pool. Rooms are air conditioned and include tea and coffee making facilities, a mini bar and wireless internet access.

The Fox Taksim – situated in the Taksim district, near Istanbul Lutfi Kirdar Convention & Exhibition Center. Guests have access to a currency exchange, a safety deposit box and a car park onsite. Each of the 33 rooms provide guests with a mini-bar and LCD TV. An electric kettle, a dishwasher and refrigerators are available upon request.

Apartments

There are many sites for apartment rentals in Istanbul, with [AirBnB](#) probably being one of the most popular. Prices are generally comparable to budget hotels, especially if you're willing to get a room in a shared apartment. [Book AirBnB](#) →



There are even a few LGBT-oriented booking sites like [misterb&b](#) with listings from gay hosts for gay guests where you can either rent a whole apartment or a private room in a shared apartment. Understanding Istanbul's gay scene is much more easily done with the help of a local and apartment sharing is one of the best ways to meet someone living in the city who knows how things work, where and when are the best nights to go out, and what places to eat at and which to avoid.

Special Offer!

Sign up with [AirBnB](#) or [misterb&b](#) and you will receive a free \$25 credit to use on your first booking!

Sightseeing & Activities in Istanbul

[Blue Mosque](#) – one of Istanbul’s most iconic sights, the Sultan Ahmed Mosque is adorned with six minarets and a massive courtyard. It was built in the early 17th century and received its popular name due to the blue tiles surrounding the interior walls. Since it’s an active Mosque, avoid visiting during one of the five daily prayer times as the mosque is closed for 90 minutes each. [Book tour →](#)

[Hagia Sophia](#) – directly across from the Blue Mosque (which was built to rival and surpass the Hagia Sophia), it’s one of the greatest marvels of architecture and was constructed as a Byzantine basilica in the 6th century by Emperor Justinian. In 1453 it was converted to a mosque and today it is a museum and active house of worship. [Book tour →](#)

[Grand Bazaar](#) – one of the oldest and largest covered markets in the world, it boasts over 4,000 shops/souks selling everything from antiques, to jewelry, to gold, carpets, leatherware, and souvenir items. To walk away with a bargain try your hand at haggling for the best price. [Book tour →](#)

[Topkapi Palace](#) – heart of the Ottoman Empire and home to the sultans and their women of the Harem for over three centuries. At least a half day is recommended to tour the complex of low buildings, pavilions, and courtyards of what was a self-contained city and explore the outer-terraced gardens and admire the view over the Golden Horn. [Book tour →](#)

[Taksim Square](#) – the modern city center of Istanbul, this area includes many hotels, restaurants, and shops as well as Istiklal pedestrian street that touts numerous bars, night clubs and movie theaters. Additionally, explore the cultural center and opera house and take a ride on the old-school tram. The most notable landmark is the Republic Monument that commemorates the formation of the Turkish Republic in 1923. [Book tour →](#)



Topkapi Palace

Gay Tours in Istanbul

[Top Sites of Istanbul Tour](#) – this walking tour is offered by Istanbul Gay Tours and is one of the best ways to see the sites of Old Istanbul in one day. Enjoy the flexibility and personalization of a private tour guide with the ability to set your own pace. Lasting about 7 hours, you'll see top sights and attractions including Hagia Sophia, Blue Mosque, Topkapi Palace, Hippodrome, and Grand Bazaar or Spice Bazaar.

[Off the Beaten Path Istanbul Tour](#) – a full-day, LGBT-friendly tour that starts at the Hippodrome, Blue Mosque, and Grand Bazaar. You'll then stop for Turkish coffee or tea, a pastry and Shisha (hookah). Afterward, discover the old book Bazaar and the Mosque of Suleymaniye, sample Turkish delights in the Spice Bazaar, and head to the old greek and Jewish district by bus before getting a ferry back to the old town.

[Istanbul Layover Tours](#) – make the most of any layover with these customized tours that start the moment you arrive at either the Istanbul or Sabiha Gokcen Airports. You'll be met by expert tour guides who will take you from the airport and to the top sights before returning you to the airport or your hotel to continue your journey.

Restaurants and Cafes in Istanbul

[Another Coffee Shop](#) – gay-owned cafe in the Galata neighborhood that serves up homemade cakes, cookies, and pastries alongside award-winning coffee from KUNGPOW Coffee, a local micro-roaster. Great place with cool decor perfect to hangout and enjoy an afternoon pick-me-up.

[360 Restaurant](#) – a multi-award winning modern and sophisticated restaurant in a penthouse atop a 19th century building provides guests with stunning panoramic views. Open for lunch and dinner, the menu offers a modern fusion of Turkish and international cuisine with an exclusive wine list. On the weekends, it's transformed into Club360, the perfect spot to enjoy a cocktail as well as DJs, singers, and live performances.

[Vegisso Vegan Cafe](#) – located in the LGBT-friendly Kurtulus district, this gay-owned vegan cafe is a short walk from Osmanbey/Pangalti metro station. Open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, enjoy your meal and a drink in the cozy garden or stop by for one of several social events hosted at the space.

[Nar Pera Cafe & Restaurant](#) – located in Asmali Mescit, this quaint and cozy establishment is easily passed by, but not to be missed. Gay-friendly staff offer European dishes at good prices and later in the evening, the music is turned up creating a bar/club atmosphere that is popular on weekends.

[Kat Restaurant & Cafe Bar](#) – charming old-world elegance and cozy ambience make this a perfect place for a special dinner out. Sip on a drink from the rooftop bar and terrace that offers mesmerizing views of the Bosphorus Strait and Asia across the way and enjoy the spectacular Mediterranean, Turkish, and International dishes.

Istanbul Gay Bars

[Pinokyo Cafe Bar](#) – popular gay bar located off Istiklal Avenue on the 1st floor (upstairs) of a building. Enjoy live Turkish music, singing, DJs, and drag performances. Busiest on the weekends, this spot attracts a mixed clientele, both gay and straight.

[Chianti Bar](#) – open from 3pm daily, this friendly local gay bar is on the 2nd floor (up two flights of stairs). It's a chill cafe by day and bar by night offering karaoke and outdoor seating. The relaxed atmosphere gets turned up at night as a [party](#) atmosphere sets in.

[Chaplin Cafe & Bar](#) – just a 10-minute walk from Taksim metro station on the 3rd floor of the building, this cozy, casual gay bar attracts a young, local pre-party crowd. You'll find a chill and friendly vibe as well as food and drinks at a great value. Music and crowds tend to pick up later in the evening.

[Durak Bar](#) – located in the Aksaray district, this well-known traditional-style bar offers local beer and live music. A popular hangout for bears and a more mature, macho crowd, it's busiest on the weekends after midnight.

Istanbul Gay Clubs and Parties

Haspa – centrally located near Taksim Square, Haspa Club quickly gained popularity since opening in 2010. It features live Turkish pop music performances almost daily, go-go dancers, karaoke, and shows. Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays offer traditional Turkish music and peak hours are after midnight.

Love Dance Point – for over a decade, this gay institution has been a popular gay night club. Check out the resident DJs, house drag queens, and hot go-go boys dancing the night away to some great music. Themed **parties** regularly take place on Friday nights

Tek Yön Club – one of the most famous and biggest gay dance clubs in the city, it's open every night attracting a mixed crowd of locals and tourists. Stop in for a drag show on weekdays and Sunday evenings and get out on the packed dance floor on Friday and Saturday nights. It has an open-air garden for cruising and smokers and hosts occasional BayBears Club events.

Super Fabric – a 10-minute walk north of Taksim Square, this popular LGBT night club has a mixed crowd and hosts themed parties with DJs, performers, and go-go dancers. The modern interior and top notch sound system make it worth the cover that's typically charged on Friday and Saturday nights.

Club 17 – just a 5-minute walk from Taksim metro station, this is more of a cruise club as it attracts a local crowd of young hustlers and male escorts and the gay men interested in their services. You'll also find drag queens and cross dressers amid the loud techno beats and underground gay culture.

Day Trips from Istanbul

The Princes' Islands – a chain of nine small islands in the Sea of Marmara that are a popular escape from the hustle and bustle of Istanbul for both locals and tourists. Several ferries will take you from Istanbul to the islands and the trip can be anywhere from 55 to 100 minutes. The islands are known for their lush pine forests and wooden Victorian cottages as well as being free of motor vehicles making horse-drawn carriages and bicycles the main means of transportation. [Book tour →](#)

Bursa – the best route to the Ottoman Empire’s first capital is by ferry across the Sea of Marmara and then a short bus ride will take you to the city center. Once you arrive, experience some of Bursa’s most historic landmarks like the Green Mausoleum (Yesil Turbe) and the Green Mosque (Yesil Camii) famous for their tile decor. Explore the 14th-century Great Mosque (Ulu Cami) and venture to Koza Han to discover the ancient heart of the silk trade. [Book tour →](#)

Troy – although a day-trip is possible, we recommend spending about two days in the area ([Çanakkale](#) or Eceaba) if you have the time. The journey from Istanbul takes about six hours by bus or car and ferry/taxi to arrive in Troy. You’ll need to get an early start as the whole excursion will take 14-16 hours. Once you’re there, discover the ancient ruins from many different civilizations, see a replica of the Trojan Horse, and visit the Roman Temple (Bouleuterion) and museum. [Book tour →](#)