

FAQs / TURKEY FACT SHEET 2020

December 2, 2019

Visas:

Most nationalities require tourist visas for Turkey.

All foreigners requiring a visa, must obtain their Turkish visas from Turkish missions/consulates abroad or from the e-visa application system, depending on eligibility. Information regarding Turkish e-visas and the application process can be found online at: <http://www.evisa.gov.tr/en/>. These are just 3 easy steps.

Language:

The national language in Turkey is Turkish. However, tourists will rarely find a problem communicating as English is widely spoken in hotels, tourist areas and shops.

(NEW) Istanbul Airport:

All domestic and international flights will now be operated from the Istanbul Airport. Istanbul Ataturk Airport is now closed! Please check with your airline for any concerns.

Turkish National Holidays:

During national holidays, banks and governmental offices are closed. Restaurants and shops do not close; in fact, they tend to be more crowded than usual.

January 1: New Year's Day

April 23: National Sovereignty and Children's Day (Ulusal Egemenlik ve Çocuk Bayramı)

May 1: Labor Day (İşçi Bayramı)

May 19: Atatürk Commemoration and Youth & Sports Day (Atatürk'ü Anma Gençlik ve Spor Bayramı)

July 15: Democracy and Solidarity Day (Demokrasi ve Dayanışma Bayramı)

August 30: Victory Day (Zafer Bayramı)

October 28: Republic Day - Eve (Half-day)

October 29: Republic Day (Cumhuriyet Bayramı)

2020 Religious Holidays:

May 23: Ramadan Bayram – Eve

May 24: Ramadan Bayram – Day 1

May 25: Ramadan Bayram – Day 2

May 26: Ramadan Bayram – Day 3

July 30: Sacrifice Bayram – Eve

July 31: Sacrifice Bayram – Day 1

August 1: Sacrifice Bayram – Day 2

August 2: Sacrifice Bayram – Day 3

August 3: Sacrifice Bayram – Day 4

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NOTE: We **do not suggest** traveling during these religious holidays as the entire country of Turkey is on vacation and all destinations are fully booked with high hotel rates. Please also note that the sites are extremely crowded and the bazaars are closed.

*Ramadan is celebrated between April 24th to May 23rd. During these dates there is no disruption for the tours.

Currency:

Turkish currency is officially called Turkish Lira, or 'TL'. Turkish Lira is divided into 100 kuruş. As of September 1, 2019, USD \$1.00 is worth about 5,50 TL.

In Turkey, banks are open from Monday to Friday; working hours being 9:00am to 5:00pm, though banks at the airports are open 24 hours a day. ATMs are widely accessible; it's perfectly possible to get around Turkey with nothing else but a credit or debit card.

*Australian Dollars are not widely accepted in Turkey, as such, you may want to carry US Dollars or Euros with you.

*U.S. Dollars and Euros are widely accepted in Turkey, and there are many opportunities for exchanging currencies in exchange offices, banks, ATMs and hotels.

Credit Cards:

MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted in restaurants, hotels and shops. Please note that American Express is not accepted in many establishments.

Tipping:

It's customary to tip in Turkey and you may want to think about carrying small bills in your pocket for this purpose. Visitors would normally consider tipping their tour guide, driver, hotel bell staff and waiters in restaurants.

Recommended Tipping Guidelines:

- Tour Guide: \$40.00 per day
- Driver: \$20.00 per day
- Escorts for transfers \$15.00 per transfer
- Drivers for transfers \$10.00 per transfer
- Restaurant and Waiters: 10% - 15%
- Hotel Housekeeping: At your discretion
- Porters: \$2.00 per bag
- Gulet sailing yacht: 10% of the charter cost
- VIP Airport Service: Tip is included
- Bosphorus Cruise Captain: \$25.00 per cruise
- Dalyan River Boat Cruise: \$25.00 per cruise

Hotels, restaurants, bars and cafes sometimes add a 10-15% service charge; please check your bill before tipping.

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Taxes:

At most shops, the retail price includes a Value Added Tax (VAT) of 18%.

Telephone Codes:

Country code is 90; the area codes are as follows:

Istanbul	0212 & 0216	Kuşadası	0256
Cappadocia	0384	Bodrum	0252
Antalya & Kaş	0242	Izmir	0232

Note: Phone lines in Istanbul have two different area codes for the European side and the Asian side, though they only need to be dialed *if the call is made from the opposite side*: dial 0212 for your calls to the European side when you are on the Asian side and 0216 for the Asian side when you are on the European side.

Customs:

The majority of Turkish citizens are Muslim, but there also are Christian and Jewish communities mainly in the cities of Istanbul and Izmir. The Turkish Republic was founded in 1923 on strong secular principles and, for this reason Turkey has a distinct modern and cosmopolitan feel.

Apart from government offices and banks, most businesses and shops are open seven days of the week from 10 AM until 8/10 PM.

Sites Closed:

Grand Bazaar:	Closed on Sundays.
Topkapi Palace:	Closed on Tuesdays.
Dolmabahce Palace:	Closed on Mondays.
Beylerbeyi Palace:	Closed on Mondays.
St. Sophia Museum:	Closed on Mondays during the winter season. (October 31st to April 1st)

Safety and Security:

Only take taxis from a hotel or restaurant where there is a taxi stand. Do not hail taxis on the street. We suggest arranging private transfers to/from the Airports as taxis can be unreliable.

If someone comes up to you and starts chatting, they either want money or to sell you something. Do not speak with strangers on the street, just kindly walk away. Do not give out any personal information or hotel you are staying.

Be vigilant as you would in any country you visit.

It is recommended to stay at hotels that have visible security.

Keep your passports in the safe at your hotel. You can carry a copy with you if needed.

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Photography:

If you are taking photographs of local people, always ask their permission beforehand. Your guide can assist you in this. Do not take photographs of military installations or airports. In most museums there are restrictions on the use of flash photography and the use of tripods – please ask your guide if you are unsure.

Electricity:

Turkey’s electrical current is 220-240V; sockets take the standard continental European dual round-pronged plug.

Health:

No vaccinations are currently needed for visitors to Turkey. During your stay, it is preferable to drink only bottled water, and in hotels it’s safe to brush your teeth with the tap water. Take care from the sun, which can often feel cooler than it actually is due to cool coastal breezes and lack of humidity. Drink plenty of water during the day. We also recommend that you carry a copy of your medical prescriptions with you, if any.

Recommended Attire:

Please don’t forget comfortable walking shoes, a sunhat and cotton clothing. It is always a good idea to pack a lightweight jacket or sweater as it can get cool in the evenings as well as on boats in the evening. In Istanbul and in the western region of Turkey, appropriate daytime clothing includes: long shorts, knee-length skirts, cotton trousers, T-shirts/polos, short-sleeved blouses and sundresses. For evening meals, a jacket and tie is not required, although open-collared shirts (short- or long sleeved) with trousers is suitable attire for men. In most restaurants in Istanbul, you can expect a “casual elegant” code in the evening.

***No shorts, sports clothing or flip flops.**

Around pool areas at your hotel, low necklines, sleeveless shirts, shorts and bathing suits can be comfortably worn; and, at beach resorts, feel free to dress as you would at home.

When visiting *mosques*, please remember that you will need to have your shoulders and knees covered. Ladies will need to cover their heads at the Blue Mosque (scarves are provided onsite). Smaller mosques may also require a head scarf. You can always consult your guide. You will also be required to remove your shoes so you may want to wear socks. Sea Song will provide a bag for your shoes.

Weather / Average Temperatures (F° / C°)

	Jan		Feb		Mar		Apr		May		Jun		Jul		Aug		Sep		Oct		Nov		Dec	
	F°	C°	F°	C°	F°	C°	F°	C°	F°	C°	F°	C°	F°	C°	F°	C°	F°	C°	F°	C°	F°	C°	F°	C°
Istanbul	41	5	43	6	50	10	64	18	73	23	77	25	80	27	84	29	77	25	68	20	59	15	44	7
Aegean region	48	9	50	10	53	12	64	18	75	24	82	28	86	30	89	32	82	28	73	23	60	16	50	10
Mediterranean	52	11	53	12	55	13	66	19	75	24	82	28	89	32	89	32	82	28	73	23	60	16	50	10
Cappadocia	34	1	34	1	41	5	54	12	63	17	68	20	75	24	75	24	66	19	56	13	47	8	37	3

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Dining:

For almost five centuries, the peoples that lived under Ottoman rule collectively contributed to the sophisticated cuisine that was created in the kitchens of Topkapi Palace. The territories ranged from the Balkans to North Africa, many of today's staple dishes originated in Central Asia and were introduced by the Turkic tribes migrating westward.

Lamb (*kuzu*) and eggplant (*patlican*) are two very dominant ingredients of Turkish cuisine. It is worth inquiring about vegetable dishes, as most will have meat as an ingredient or at least as a seasoning.

Turkey's national drink is *raki*, a clear anise-flavored spirit that turns cloudy when water is added and is drunk with appetizer mezes and fish. Turkey also has a thriving wine industry; don't miss trying the local grape varietals of Narince, Boğazkere and Oküzgözü. Local beers have also improved in both quality and variety in recent years; Efes or Bomonti are brands to look for.

If you have any special dietary needs, please inform us prior to your arrival and we will prepare a card outlining this in Turkish, so that you can carry it with you at meals.

Most restaurants do not serve pork or pork products.

Protocol for Recommended Lunches and Dinners When Accompanied by a Guide:

You are not required to invite your guide to dine with you. However, if you do decide to invite your guide, it is customary to pay the guide's meal. If you prefer to dine without your guide, please advise them and they will meet you at a specified time after your meal.

Restaurant Reservations:

Most restaurants require reservations as they are extremely busy. Sea Song can make a reservation for you in conjunction with confirmed transportation to/from the restaurant. You can also make a reservation through your hotel concierge.

Generally speaking, Turkish people eat dinner between 7:30 PM – 8:30 PM.

Shopping:

Turkey is a shoppers' paradise! Local items to purchase include: handmade carpets, jewelry (24 karat gold is famous), Iznik tiles, textiles, leather and many souvenirs. You can consult your guide or Sea Song for reputable merchants.

There are two main bazaars in Istanbul, Grand Bazaar (*Kapalı Çarşı*) and Spice Bazaar (*Mısır Çarşısı*). Bargaining is all part of the fun in the Bazaars!

Alternatively, if you are not interested in shopping, please inform your guide.

BALLOONING IN CAPPADOCIA:

If you are traveling to Cappadocia and would like to enjoy a Hot Air Balloon Flight please book as far in advance as possible. The demand for this experience is much more than the capacity.

ENJOY YOUR TURKISH EXPERIENCE!