Istanbul Quick Facts!

Istanbul is a fascinating city full of rich history and diverse culture. See it with Teach International and get ready to teach English in yet another exciting TESOL market.

Istanbul has many unique features including that it is the only city in the world to straddle two continents. Surrounded by the Marmara Sea and the Black Sea, this important port city is positioned in both Europe and Asia. Its variety is one of Istanbul's greatest attractions: The ancient mosques, palaces, museums and bazaars reflect its diverse history. The thriving shopping area of Taksim buzzes with life and entertainment. And the serene beauty of the Bosphorus, Princes Islands and parks bring a touch of peace to the otherwise chaotic metropolis.

Istanbul, or the ancient city of Constantinople, symbolises splendour, magnificence and grandeur. Made famous by crusaders, this ancient city is Turkey's cultural heart and former capital. There is much which remains to be discovered in Istanbul and you cannot fully know it until you become a part of it, mingle with its crowds and get lost in its winding streets. Discover its history, its culture, its civilization and its treasures.

The Culture

Once capital of the Ottoman Empire, Istanbul still remains the commercial, historical and cultural pulse of Turkey, and its beauty lies in its ability to embrace its contradictions. Ancient and modern, religious and secular, Asia and Europe, mystical and earthly all co-exist here.

Turkey is a modern, secular yet Islamic, country with an amazingly rich cultural and natural heritage that is opening its gates to the world. Its people are for the most part proud, open, and friendly. The rewards of living and working in Istanbul—a beautiful, fascinating, and diverse city at the crossroads of East and West— although not monetary, are there to be had.

Turkey is a fascinating place, and for history buffs it is a treasure chest. While there are an abundance of archeological sites and historic monuments to see, don′t forget about Turkey′s world-famous museums.

If you wish to understand how people of different religions lived together on this land for centuries, visit the places of worship and their surrounding areas. You may have to use some imagination however, as many sites have deteriorated with the passing of time.

When speaking of arts and culture, there is an abundance of festivals throughout the year. Art galleries are great places to follow Turkish modern art - cultural centres offer gorgeous exhibitions of artists from abroad. Finally, concert halls have regular performances during the season for music lovers.

ESL Teaching

With its sights set on joining the European Union eventually, Turkish parents and Turkish young people are more eager than ever to promote the English language. Dozens of private secondary schools and a few universities use English as the language of instruction, and many secondary schools hire native-speaking teachers. If you speak English as your first language, you are almost guaranteed a job teaching English in Turkey. The number of students wanting to learn English far outweighs the number of English teachers, which means that there are jobs for both new and experienced English teachers.

Most Turks are exposed to English from an early age. Turkish primary schools provide basic English language instruction or courses as part of their curriculum. This is even more so at the university level, where most students are either required to do a year's worth of preparatory English coursework or where a sizable percentage of courses, typically around 30 percent, are taught in English. Most of the 30 percent, however, were given in the first year and a half of their studies and by non-native English speaking Turkish professors.

There are a host of language schools large and small in Istanbul. You can walk around any transport hub or station and find them; fill out an application and leave your CV, a letter of introduction, copies of your academic qualifications and letters of recommendation if you have them. If you have an MA and some teaching experience, you should be able to land a relatively well-paying teaching job at a private, or even a state-run public university in Turkey. These are considered the plum jobs by Turkish educators and are much sought after.

There are numerous English schools in Istanbul that cater to adult students, and these are definitely easier to find a job in than the primary schools. This means that you will likely work evenings and weekends, but this leaves your day free to explore this diverse city. There are language schools in other cities, such as the capital, Ankara, or in Izmir, Antalya, Mersin etc., but Istanbul is the cultural, historical and social centre of the country and where the majority of TESOL work is to be found.

You will find the salaries in Turkey are reasonable (around AU$1,400-2,000, NZ$1,600-2,300 per month), and employers often include benefits such as reimbursement of airfares, accommodation and paid holidays. However, even though the cost of living is very low, you aren't likely to leave with a huge savings account. Any extra money is usually spent on exploring Istanbul, trips around the country, or maybe on a Turkish carpet! If you are not paid for the two month slow down period over the summer, you can head for the UK along with many European based TESOL teachers to pick up the abundant TESOL summer work there.

There are many TESOL markets within close reach of Turkey, so as a next step you may find yourself working in the Middle East or in Eastern or Western Europe. From Turkey you can easily visit these areas on job scouting trips.

The Weather

In Istanbul, summer month are warm and humid with very little rain, especially between July and August. Winter months can be cold and wet with some snow but not that much extreme as some other areas of Turkey. Spring and autumn are mild and this would be the best time for visitors.

Istanbul is so huge in area and it has so many topographic diversities that you can experience several different sub-climates in the same city. You can even have completely different climates in the same day; while snowing in one area you can notice the sun shining (but cold of course) in another part of the city.

During the summer months, the temperature is usually around 30 degrees, and during winter, the day-time temperature is around 10 degrees with much colder nights. During winter there is occasional snow but it doesn't usually last for more than 10-12 days. In the springtime, especially between April-May and September-October, it is a very comfortable climate with daily temperatures of around 15-25 degrees.

Getting Around

Travelling around in the city of Istanbul is a real adventure. The choice for transport is many and varied:
taxis, 'dolmus' (shared private taxi, also called "minibus"), buses and trains, tram, subway train, ferry boats of all kind and age. Buses are really cheap, but even taxis and especially minibuses offer reasonable prices.

Istanbul has a decent public transport network, which you'll appreciate once you get the hang of using the pre-paid and are jumping on and off public transport. And if it all gets too much, a taxi driver is always ready to race you to your destination - and you won't pay too much for the thrill, either. A hint for taxis: you should insist on using the meter. It will always be cheaper! But all public transport slows to a crawl around peak hours; this is the time to take to your feet. Walking is the best way to see Istanbul - though the ferries rate a close second.

The suburban trains are a bit decrepit but reliable and inexpensive. Istanbul's metro is under construction, though some lines are already in service; it's inexpensive, with frequent services. There are several tramlines to choose from if you want a ride with a view. It's an easy matter to rent a car; it's navigating the thing through the insane traffic that might prove to be difficult.

Nightlife in Istanbul

Primarily a destination for those seeking historical enrichment and a taste of the exotic, Istanbul presents itself to visitors in a number of unexpected ways. When the sun sets and the spotlights turn on, Istanbul dresses for the night and invites its various and varied communities along for the ride. Dozens of rooftop lounges and exclusive restaurants are transformed into the living rooms of the smart set. Informal and sometimes raucous restaurants or taverns teem with the built-up energy of the long working week. The energy is visible, and as new and innovative night time destinations open up weekly, Istanbul is fast becoming a credible rival to Europe's other nightlife hotspots.

Don't think that because 98% of Turks are Muslim that nobody's drinking wine with dinner. On the contrary, in some areas bars outnumber mosques, figuratively speaking. A typical evening on the town will involve large amounts of food accompanied by even greater amounts of *raki,* that aniseed-flavored spirit known as "lion's milk" - traditionally consumed in a tavern or pub where patrons gather to eat and drink.

Live music is a staple of Turkish nightlife, and Istanbul's cafes, clubs, and Turkish Houses all provide inroads to the niche of your choice. Bars, cafes, and nightclubs in Istanbul are generally not categorized according to the type of music they play, choosing to book instead groups with different styles from night to night. A good rule of thumb is, the earlier the hour, the softer the music. Another good rule is to avoid spots with neon lights and security guards and anything with the word "nightclub" or "club" in the name, as these have the reputation of being the seedy places where bad things happen to good visitors.

Hotel lounges or rooftop bars provide a mesmerizing alternative to wall-to-wall smoke-filled cafes. All over the city, splendidly romantic views present themselves from almost every rooftop, or you can succumb to the appeal of one of the several Turkish Night shows around town.

City Cost Guide

Backpacker Accommodation:	TRY 15	AU 8.58	NZ 11.09	US 9.10
Three-star Accommodation:	TRY 70	AU 40.05	NZ 51.78	US 42.45
Medium priced three course meal:	TRY 20	AU 11.44	NZ 14.79	US 12.13
Bottled water	TRY 1	AU 0.58	NZ 0.75	US 0.60
Beer:	TRY 2.50	AU 1.43	NZ 1.85	US 1.51
Monthly apartment rental	TRY 1,500	AU 857.00	NZ 1,108.00	US 909.00

Getting there

No airline flies directly from Australia or New Zealand to Istanbul. However, a number of airlines fly via one or two stopovers. A number of other airlines fly part of the way with a partner airline flying the rest. It is best to search general flight websites for these sorts of flights, or go into a travel agent. Below are some airlines that complete the long haul flight.

www.malaysia.com
www.singaporeair.com
www.emirates.com
www.britishairways.com
www.qatarairways.com
www.swiss.com
www.klm.com
www.airfrance.com.au

Useful phrases to get you started

English word/phrase	Turkish word/phrase	Pronounce it like this
Hello	Merhaba	**Mare**-ha-ba
Good morning	Günayd|n	Gyewn-eye-**dn**
Good afternoon	Ïyi günler	Ee-yee gyewn-**lair**
Good evening	Ïyi ak$amlar	Ee-yee ack-**sham**-lar
Good night	Ïyi geceler	Ee-yee gyeh-jel**lair**
See you later	Sonra görü$ürüz	Son-rah gyurryew-shyew-ryewz
See you tomorrow	Yar|n görü$ürüz	Yar-n gyurryew-shyewr-yewz
How are you?	Nas|ls|n|z?	Nah-**sill**-sn-nz
Very well, thanks	Çok iyiyim, te$ekkürler	Chock ee-yee-yeem, te**sh-ek-cure**-lair
Thank you	Te$ekkür ederim	Te**sh-ek-cure** ed-air-eem
Thank you very much	Çok te$ekkür ederim	Chock te**sh-ek-cure** ed-air-eem
How much? (price)	Kaç para?	Cach pa-ra (try not to say "catch")
Toilet(s)	Tuvalet(ler)	**Too**-val-let (lair)
Where are the toilets?	Tuvaletler nerededir	**Too**-val-let-lair **neh**-red-ed-eer
Yes	Evet	Eh-vet
No	Hay|r	Hah-yer

Source: http://www.manastro.co.uk/members/turkey/turkish.htm - check this website for more information on learning basic Turkish.

Relevant Websites

General Reference

http://www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide/turkey/istanbul/
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Istanbul
http://www.mymerhaba.com

ESL Employment

http://www.teachabroad.com/Turkey.cfm
http://www.tesall.com/ - search Istanbul
http://www.eslcafe.com/ - search International Job Board