

BLUELIST¹ (blu,list) v.
to recommend a travel experience.

What's your recommendation? www.lonelyplanet.com/bluelist

DRINKING

top picks

- Hotel Nomade Terrace Bar (p172)
- Java Studio (p173)
- Café Meşale (p173)
- Set Üstü Çay Bahçesi (p173)
- Leb-i Derya Richmond (p176)
- Leyla (p176)
- Mikla (p176)
- Nu Teras (p176)
- 360 (p176)
- The raft of nargileh joints at Tophane (p174)

DRINKING

It may be the biggest city in an officially Muslim country, but İstanbul's population likes nothing more than a drink or two. If the raki-soaked atmosphere in the city's meyhanes isn't a clear enough indicator, a foray into Beyoğlu's thriving bar scene will confirm this fact. If you're in the mood for a drink, we suggest you go out on the town on a Thursday, Friday or Saturday night. Alternatively, you could check out the alcohol-free, atmosphere-rich *çay bahçesis* (tea gardens) or *kahvehanes* (coffee houses) dotted around Sultanahmet and over the Galata Bridge in Tophane. These are great places to relax and sample a Turkish institution, the nargileh (water pipe), and a cup of *Türk kahvesi* (Turkish coffee) or *çay* (tea).

SULTANAHMET

Sadly, there are few pleasant bars in Sultanahmet. The joints along Akbıyık Caddesi are great for backpackers and unthinkable for everyone else. Don't despair, though. Why not substitute tobacco or caffeine for alcohol and visit one of the many atmospheric *çay bahçesis* dotted around the neighbourhood?

CHEERS BAR Map p50 Bar
Akbıyık Caddesi 20 ☎ 10am-2am; ☑ Sultanahmet
Slap-bang in the middle of backpacker central, this raucous bar is not for the faint-hearted. If you can imagine nothing better than sinking a skinful, listening to Men at Work's *Land Down Under* and bragging about how cheaply you're managing to live while on the road, this place is for you. The nearby *Just Bar* offers more of the same.

HOTEL NOMADE TERRACE BAR Map p50 Bar
☎ 212-513 8172; www.hotelnomade.com; Ticarethane Sokak 15, Alemdar; ☎ noon-11pm; ☑ Sultanahmet
Guests aren't the only ones to enjoy the rooftop bar at this chic boutique hotel. Management is happy for everyone to claim a comfortable banquet seat and soak up the view of Aya Sofya and the Blue Mosque while enjoying a cold beer, fresh juice or cocktail.

KYBELE HOTEL BAR Map p50 Bar
☎ 212-511 7766; Yerebatan Caddesi 35; ☎ 8am-10pm; ☑ Sultanahmet
The lounge bar at this charming but vaguely eccentric hotel is chock-full of antique furniture, richly coloured rugs and old etchings and prints, but its signature style comes courtesy of the hundreds of colour-

ful glass lights that are suspended from the ceiling. It's a wonderfully atmospheric spot for a pre-dinner drink.

SEVEN HILLS TERRACE BAR Map p50 Bar
☎ 212-516 9497; Tevkifhane Sokak 8A; ☎ noon-midnight; ☑ Sultanahmet
We agonised about whether to include this rooftop bar-restaurant in the book or not. Its amazing views are certainly worthy of comment, but like everyone in Sultanahmet, we're deeply disturbed as to how the place managed to get a permit to build so high, dominate the skyline (not felicitously) and obscure the views of so many other businesses. On top of this, the waiters here can be spectacularly disinterested in serving guests who only want a drink – the money (and tips) are clearly in the sub-standard fish dishes the place serves and not in the pricey drinks. Hmm.

SULTAN PUB Map p50 Bar
☎ 212-528 1719; Divan Yolu Caddesi 2; ☎ 9.30am-1am; ☑ Sultanahmet
Sultanahmet's version of Ye Olde English Pub, the Sultan has been around for years and continues to attract the crowds due to its peerless position close to Aya Sofya, the Blue Mosque and the Basilica Cistern. The pub grub is what you would expect from a place like this (ie stodge), but the outdoor tables are a great spot to watch the world go by and the beer is served in iced glasses, just the way it should be.

FES CAFÉ Map p50 Café
☎ 212-526 3071; Ali Baba Türbesi Sokak 25-27, Nuruosmaniye; ☎ 9am-10pm; ☑ Beyazıt
A relaxed atmosphere prevails in this sister establishment of the well-known Grand Bazaar café. It's a good spot for a post-bazaar

recovery, with good-quality Illy coffee and home-made lemonade on offer.

JAVA STUDIO Map p50 Café
☎ 212-517 2378; Dalbastı Sokak 13; ☎ 7am-11pm; ☑ Sultanahmet
Celebrating the 'fine art of coffee', this laid-back café in the shadow of the Blue Mosque is run by Canadian Jennifer Gaudet, who takes her beans and brews very seriously. You can choose from an extensive list of coffees, teas, milkshakes and lassis, accompanying your choice of tiple with a slice of freshly baked lemon poppy-seed cake or a chocolate brownie. There's comfortable seating, free wi-fi and a book exchange. A true traveller's haven.

CAFÉ MEŞALE Map p50 Çay Bahçesi
☎ 212-518 9562; Arasta Bazaar, Utangaç Sokak, Cankurtaran; ☎ 24hr; ☑ Sultanahmet
Meşale, located in a sunken courtyard behind the Blue Mosque, is a tourist trap *par excellence*, but we still love it. Generations of backpackers have joined locals in claiming one of its cushioned benches under coloured lights and enjoying a tea and nargileh. There's sporadic live Turkish music in the evening and a dervish performance at 8pm and 10pm.

DERVİŞ AİLE ÇAY BAHÇESİ Map p50 Çay Bahçesi
Dervish Family Tea Garden; Mimar Mehmet Ağa Caddesi, Cankurtaran; ☎ 9am-11pm, closed winter; ☑ Sultanahmet
The Derviş' paved courtyard, which is superbly located directly opposite the Blue Mosque, beckons patrons with its comfortable cane chairs and shady trees. Efficient service, reasonable prices and peerless people-watching opportunities make it a great place for a leisurely tea, nargileh and game of backgammon.

NARGİLEHS: NAUGHTY BUT NICE

When ordering a nargileh, you'll need to specify what type of tobacco you would like. Most people opt for *elma* (when the tobacco has been soaked in apple juice, giving it a sweet flavour and scent), but it's possible to order it unadulterated (*tömbeki*). The water pipe will be brought to your table, hot coals will be placed in it to get it started and you will be given a disposable plastic mouthpiece to slip over the pipe's stem. Just draw back and you're off. Bliss!

TÜRK OCAĞI KÜLTÜR VE SANAT MERKEZİ İKTİSADİ İŞLETMESİ ÇAY BAHÇESİ Map p50 Çay Bahçesi
Crn Divan Yolu & Babıali Caddesi, Çemberlitaş; ☎ 8am-midnight, later in summer; ☑ Çemberlitaş
Tucked into the rear right-hand corner of a shady courtyard filled with Ottoman tombs, this enormously popular tea garden is a perfect place to escape the crowds and relax over a *çay* and nargileh. You can even score a cheap and tasty *gözleme* (Turkish crepe filled with cheese, spinach or potato) here.

YEŞİL EV GARDEN BAR/CAFÉ Map p50 Café/Bar
☎ 212-517 6785; Kabasakal Caddesi 5, Cankurtaran; ☎ noon-10.30pm; ☑ Sultanahmet
Most of the bars in Cankurtaran are rowdy backpacker establishments, so the elegant rear courtyard of this historic hotel is a real oasis for those wanting a quiet drink. In spring flowers and blossom fill every corner; in summer the fountain and shady trees keep the temperature down; and in the cooler months a flower-filled conservatory provides shelter. The drinks are expensive – a fresh juice or a beer will cost YTL9, for instance – but as the old adage says, quality doesn't come cheaply.

YENİ MARMARA Map p50 Nargileh Café
Marmara Café; ☎ 212-516 9013; Çayırözü Sokak, Küçük Aya Sofya; ☎ 8am-midnight; ☑ Sultanahmet
This is the genuine article: a neighbourhood teahouse packed to the rafters with backgammon-playing locals, who play while sipping tea and puffing on nargilehs. The place has bucket loads of character, featuring rugs, wall hangings, low brass tables and fasıl music on the CD player. In winter a wood stove keeps the place cosy; in summer patrons sit on the rear terrace and look out over the Sea of Marmara.

TOPKAPI PALACE & AROUND

SET ÜSTÜ ÇAY BAHÇESİ Map p63 Çay Bahçesi
Gülhane Parkı; ☎ 10am-11pm; ☑ Gülhane
Those who appreciate the ceremony of proper tea service will love this terraced tea

garden overlooking Seraglio Point. Here, you can watch the ferries plying the route from Europe to Asia, while at the same time enjoying an excellent cup of tea served in a teapot and accompanied by hot water (such a relief after the fiendishly strong brews that are common in Turkey). It's so pleasant that you may decide to stay for a lunch of a cheap *köfte ekme* (meatball sandwich) or a *tost* (toasted cheese jaffle).

BAZAAR DISTRICT

Like most parts of the Old City, the area around the Grand Bazaar is conservative and there are few places serving alcohol. There are a number of *çay bahçesi*s that are worth checking out though, as well as the city's most famous *boza* (tonic) bar.

VEFA BOZACISI Map p78

Boza Bar

☎ 212-519 4922; Katip Çelebi Caddesi 104/1, Kalenderhane; ☎ 7am-midnight; ☑ Laleli This famous *boza* bar was established in 1875 and locals still flock here to drink the stuff, which is made from water, sugar and fermented grain. The viscous mucous-coloured beverage has a reputation for building up strength and virility – it won't be to everyone's taste, but the bar itself, with its blue tiles, mirrored columns, marble tables and wooden bar, is worth a visit in its own right. If the *boza* is too confrontational for you, the bar also serves *şıra*, a fermented grape juice.

BALKAN TÜRKLERİ DAYANIŞMA VE KÜLTÜR DERNEĞİ Map p78

Çay Bahçesi

☎ 212-511 2618; Yeniçeriler Caddesi 84, Çemberlitaş; ☎ 7am-midnight, later in summer; ☑ Çemberlitaş

This club, set in the pleasant courtyard of the Koca Sinan Paşa Medrese, is a pretty spot in which to enjoy a cup of *Türk kahvesi* or *çay*. Enter through the gate to Koca Sinan Paşa's tomb.

ERENLER ÇAY BAHÇESİ

Map p78

Çay Bahçesi

☎ 212-528 3785; Yeniçeriler Caddesi 36/28, Çemberlitaş; ☎ 7am-midnight, later in summer; ☑ Çemberlitaş

Packed to the rafters with students from nearby İstanbul University who are doing their best to live up to their heritage (ie develop a major tobacco addiction), this

nargileh establishment is set in the leafy courtyard of the Çorlulu Ali Paşa Medrese and has a row of carpet shops down its side.

LALE BAHÇESİ Map p78

Çay Bahçesi

Sifahane Sokak, Süleymaniye; ☎ 8am-midnight; ☑ Üniversite

In a sunken courtyard that was once part of the Süleymaniye *küllüye* (mosque complex), this charming outdoor teahouse is always full of students from the nearby theological college and İstanbul University, who come here to sit on cushioned seats under trees and relax while watching the pretty fountain play. It's one of the cheapest places in the area to enjoy a *çay* and nargileh.

ETHAM TEZÇAKAR KAHVECİ

Map p77

Kahvehanesi

Halicilar Caddesi, Grand Bazaar; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Sat; ☑ Beyazıt

This tiny tea and coffee stop is found smack-bang in the middle of Halicilar Caddesi. Its traditional brass-tray tables and wooden stools stand in stark contrast to the funky and more-expensive Fes Café opposite.

ŞARK KAHVESİ Map p77

Kahvehanesi

☎ 212-512 1144; Yaglıkçilar Caddesi 134, Grand Bazaar; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Sat; ☑ Beyazıt

The Şark's arched ceiling betrays its former existence as part of a bazaar street; years ago some enterprising *kahveci* (coffee-house owner) walled up several sides and turned it into a café. The nicotine colour on the walls is testament to its long pedigree as a popular tea and cigarette spot for the bazaar's stall-holders. These days they have to fight for space with tourists, who love the quirky 'flying dervish' murals, the old photographs on the walls, and the cheap tea and coffee.

GALATA & TOPHANE

There aren't too many bars and cafés around this area, but you'll find a raft of incredibly popular nargileh cafés in the park behind the Tophane tram stop (Map p103). There's nothing gained by us singling out one of these joints at the expense of the others – they're all redolent with the smell of apple tobacco and packed with trendy teetotalers.

ANEMON GALATA BAR Map p103

Bar

☎ 212-293 2343; nr Galata Meydanı & Büyükhendek Caddesi, Tünel; ☎ 6pm-midnight; ☑ Karaköy As yet undiscovered by the İstanbul bar set, this eyrie on top of a recently restored Ottoman hotel is one of the best places in the city to watch the sun set while enjoying a cocktail. Views over to Old İstanbul and across the Golden Horn are stunning.

İSTİKLAL & AROUND

Whether you want to drink a few quiet ales in a cosy pub, down a martini or two in a sophisticated bar or party the night away in its pumping next-door neighbour, the streets and lanes off İstiklal Caddesi will have the drinking spot for you. This is where the city's barflies and party set hang out (when they're not down on the shores of the Bosphorus) and it's great fun.

Coffee culture is also something that is embraced on this side of the Galata Bridge. In fact, we will go so far as to say that Beyoğlu has gone batty over its beans, and really needs to calm down. At the time of research there were seven multinational coffee-chain franchises on İstiklal Caddesi. In our view, that's caffeine addiction that's got truly out of hand...

See the Eating chapter for reviews of cafés that serve good food.

ADA Map p107

Bar/Café

☎ 212-251 6682; İstiklal Caddesi 158A; ☎ 8am-midnight; ☑ Karaköy, then funicular to Tünel The side streets off İstiklal may be full of great cafés and bars, but the grand boulevard itself possesses a motley range of choices. Fortunately, Ada is the exception. A cavernous place that's half book and music store and half bar/café, it has style and substance in equal measure. The house wine by the glass is Antik, an excellent quaffing drop, and the coffee is good too.

BADEHANE Map p107

Bar

☎ 212-249 0550; General Yazgan Sokak 5, Tünel; ☎ 9am-2am; ☑ Karaköy, then funicular to Tünel This tiny neighbourhood bar is a favourite with Beyoğlu's bohemian set. In fine weather patrons chain smoke, sip beer and play backgammon in the laneway. When it's cold, dark or wet, the action moves inside and is often accompanied by live music. Dress down and come ready to enjoy an attitude-free evening.

BÜYÜK LONDRA OTELİ BAR Map p107

Bar

☎ 212-245 0670; Meşrutiyet Caddesi 117, Tepebaşı; ☎ noon-11pm; ☑ Kabataş, then funicular to Taksim

This is a true time-warp experience. We'd hazard a guess that the décor at this historic hotel has remained untouched for close on a century, and we've pleased to report that the prices haven't hiked up much during that time (an Efes is YTL4). The gin and tonics are pricey but lordy, they're strong!

5 KAT Map p107

Bar

☎ 212-293 3774; Soğancı Sokak 7/5, Cihangir; ☎ 10am-2am Mon-Fri, 10.30am-3am Sat & Sun; ☑ Kabataş, then funicular to Taksim

Run by glamorous red-haired film actress Yasemin Alkaya, 5 Kat is one of the city's original glamour bars. The 'boudoir chic' décor features deep red walls, satin ceiling, velvet chairs and candles galore – it's amusingly over the top. The Bosphorus views from the full-length windows are simply breathtaking and in the warmer months there's a rooftop terrace bar as well.

JAMES JOYCE IRISH PUB Map p107

Bar

☎ 212-224 2013; Irish Centre, Balo Sokak 26, off İstiklal Caddesi; ☎ 1pm-2am Sun-Thu, 1pm-4am Fri & Sat; ☑ Kabataş, then funicular to Taksim

The only authentic Irish bar in town, this popular place is a good spot to enjoy a pint and a *craic*. There's a mixed crowd and a popular all-day breakfast. It occasionally organises live sessions of traditional Irish folk music and performances by Irish singers.

KEVE Map p107

Bar

☎ 212-251 4338; Tünel Geçidi 10, Tünel; ☎ 8.30am-2am; ☑ Karaköy, then funicular to Tünel

Is this the most atmospheric bar in the city? In a plant-filled Belle Époque arcade just opposite the Tünel station, Keve is invariably full of 30-somethings who've just been to a gallery opening on İstiklal and need a drink before moving on to see a new art-house release at the cinema. The twinkling lights and wrought-iron tables add mightily to the atmosphere.

LEB-İ DERYA Map p107

Bar

☎ 212-293 4989; Kumbarcı Yokuşu 115/7; ☎ 11am-4am; ☑ Karaköy, then funicular to Tünel

On the 7th floor of a building off İstiklal Caddesi, this much-loved place is friendly, stylish and always buzzing. And oh, the views! Sip a cocktail or cold beer while gazing over to the Asian side and you'll never want to leave. There's also food on offer (see p166).

LEB-İ DERYA RICHMOND Map p107 Bar

☎ 212-243 4375; Richmond Hotel, İstiklal Caddesi 445, Kat 6; ☎ 7pm-2am Mon-Sat; ☎ Karaköy, then funicular to Tünel

This glam younger sister of perennial favourite *Leb-i Derya* (p175) has managed to wheedle her way into many hearts since she opened in 2007. The views are to die for, and the surrounds are incredibly chic. A wonderful spot for a pre-dinner cocktail or two.

LEYLA Map p107 Bar

☎ 212-244 5350; Akarsu Yokuşu Sokak 46, Cihangir; ☎ 8am-4am; ☎ Kabataş, then funicular to Taksim

The bar *de jour* in trendy Cihangir when this book went to print, Leyla has a casually stylish interior, a DJ who really knows his stuff (every night except Sunday) and a reasonably priced drinks list.

MİKLA Map p107 Bar

☎ 212-293 5656; Marmara Pera, Meşrutiyet Caddesi 167/185; ☎ noon-2am; ☎ Karaköy, then funicular to Tünel

This is the classiest bar in town. Sink into the Alvar Aalto-designed chairs and watch the twinkling lights of Beyoğlu while you down a wonderfully dry martini or good-quality glass of house wine. After your drinks, we highly recommend you stay for dinner. See p165 for a restaurant review.

NU TERAS Map p107 Bar

☎ 212-245 6070; Meşrutiyet Caddesi 149/7; ☎ 6.30pm-2am Mon-Thu & Sun, 6.30pm-4am Fri & Sat Jun-Oct only; ☎ Karaköy, then funicular to Tünel

With its glass bar, tables full of beautiful people dining alfresco and panoramic views, Nu Teras is one of *the* places to be seen in town. Go at sunset and frock up. See p165 for a restaurant review.

PASİFİC HOUSE Map p107 Bar

Sofyalı Sokak, Asmalımescit; ☎ noon-2am; ☎ Karaköy, then funicular to Tünel

There are loads of bars on this side of town, but not too many that are both cheap and well located. Ultra-casual Pasific scores on both of these counts (a beer is only YTL3.50), so there's no wonder that it's constantly packed. The fact that it's on one of the city's most happening streets is a plus, too.

PANO Map p107 Bar

☎ 212-292 6664; Hamalbaşı Caddesi 26, Tepebaşı; ☎ 11am-1am; ☎ Kabataş, then funicular to Taksim

You'll have to fight your way through the throngs at this extraordinarily popular wine bar on a Thursday, Friday or Saturday night. Serious drinkers prop themselves on the high bar tables at the front and swig the cheap house wine; others take a table at the back or upstairs and pace themselves while sampling good-quality hot and cold meze.

SMYRNA Map p107 Bar

☎ 212-244 2466; Akarsu Yokuşu Sokak 29, Cihangir; ☎ 10.30am-midnight; ☎ Kabataş, then funicular to Taksim

Smyrna is known for its long bar, collection of antique toys, couch-filled back corner and candle-lit tables. The atmosphere is laid back, the music is unobtrusive and the crowd is early 30s 'Beyoğlu Arty'. If you decide to make a night of it here (and many do) there's good simple food available, too.

360 Map p107 Bar

☎ 212-251 1042; Mısır Apartmanı, İstiklal Caddesi 311, Kat 8; ☎ noon-2am Mon-Thu & Sun, noon-4am Fri & Sat; ☎ Kabataş, then funicular to Taksim
Its 'industrial chic' interior design and knock-out views have made 360 the darling of the city's beautiful people, who love nothing more than perching at one of its terrace bars and ordering from the huge drinks menu. A martini will set you back YTL20, but it will be oh-so-worth-it. The place morphs into a nightclub on Friday and Saturday nights. See p165 for a restaurant review.

URBAN Map p107 Bar

Kartal Sokak 6A; ☎ noon-2am; ☎ Kabataş, then funicular to Taksim

In a quiet and leafy laneway near the Galatasaray Lycée, this place makes a perfect pitstop in the late afternoon or early evening. In warm weather, sit outdoors under the grapevine to enjoy a beer or freshly made *limonata* (lemonade); in cold or wet weather, the mezzanine seating is nearly as nice. There's free wi-fi.

KAFFEEHAUS Map p107 Café

☎ 212-245 4028; Tünel Meydanı 4, Tünel; ☎ 8am-11pm; ☎ Karaköy, then funicular to Tünel

This place is popular with locals, who monopolise its tables for long breakfasts and lingering coffees every day of the week. In warmer weather, the front of the space opens to Tünel Square and provides great people-watching opportunities; when it's cooler, the velvet-upholstered armchairs are the perfect place to curl up with a coffee and a newspaper.

HACO PULO Map p107 Çay Bahçesi

☎ 212-2444210; Hacopulo Pasajı; ☎ 9am-11pm; ☎ Kabataş, then funicular to Taksim

Set in a picturesque cobbled courtyard, this was one of original tea-and-nargileh joints to open in the side streets off İstiklal Caddesi. Locals love it, and we hazard a guess that you will, too.

CLUB 17 Map p107 Gay Bar

Zambak Sokak 17; cover charge YTL10 (Fri & Sat only, includes one free drink); ☎ 11pm-4am Sun-Thu, 11pm-5:30am Fri & Sat; ☎ Kabataş, then funicular to Taksim

Attractive young men looking for hormonal release or patronage pack this small, narrow bar as aggressive techno beats accompany wafting sexual energies. At closing, the veritable meat rack in the street makes final hook-up attempts possible.

BEŞİKTAŞ & ORTAKÖY

ÇIRAĞAN PALACE HOTEL KEMPINSKI

Map p117 Bar

☎ 212-326 4646; www.ciragan-palace.com; Çırağan Caddesi 32, Beşiktaş; ☎ Yıldız

This is where the botox brigade comes to show off its bling. Nursing a mega-pricey drink at one of its terrace tables and watching the scene around the city's best swimming pool, which is right on the Bosphorus, makes us feel like Diane Fossey observing her chimps. Some similar habits, perhaps, but definitely a different species...

KADIKÖY

This is where the city's grunge set comes to party, and party it certainly does. The length of Kadife Sokak is filled with unpretentious bars and cafés that are busy from late morning to late at night. During the day, coffee and games of Scrabble, Monopoly and backgammon are on the agenda; at night, cheap beer, live music and conversation take over. Karga Bar (see below) is the most famous of the street's establishments, but Isis and Bahane Kültür and a host of others are great back-ups. Dress down and don't forget that the last ferry back to Karaköy leaves at midnight (8.40pm to Eminönü) – if you want to stay later, a *dolmuş* to Taksim will be your only public transport option.

KARGA BAR Map p127 Bar

☎ 216-449 1725; Kadife Sokak 16; ☎ 11am-2am; ☎ Kadiköy

Karga is one of the most famous bars in the city, offering up cheap drinks, loud music and avant-garde art on its walls and in the upstairs gallery. It doesn't have a street sign – look for a green and cream building with a wooden door. There's a small courtyard downstairs that's a great spot to enjoy a late-afternoon beer. Nearby *Isis* and *Bahane Kültür* are also good bets.

BLUELIST¹ (blu,list) v.
to recommend a travel experience.

What's your recommendation? www.lonelyplanet.com/bluelist

NIGHTLIFE

top picks

- **Q Jazz by Les Ottomans** (p182)
- **360** (when there's an imported DJ spinning or a special event; p176)
- **Crystal** (p181)
- **Kokosh By Asmali** (p184)
- **Ghetto** (p181)
- **Love Dance Point** (p181)
- **Sortie or Reina** (any time in summer; p181)
- **Tonique** (p181)

There's an entertainment option for everyone in İstanbul. You can while away the night in glamorous nightclubs on the Bosphorus – where you'll spend your entire holiday budget in one night if you're not careful – or you can drink rakı while listening to live fasıl music at one of the city's many cheap and rowdy meyhanes. With an almost religious devotion to all forms of music and a great love of dance, it's rare to have a week go by when there's not a special event, festival or performance scheduled (see also p16) in İstanbul. In short, the only thing you can't do in this town is be bored.

Tickets & Reservations

If you can't make it to the box office, or if there isn't one for the venue, try **Biletix** (☎ 216-454 1555, 216-556 9800; www.biletix.com). It's a major ticket seller for all kinds of events from festivals and big-name concerts to football matches. Biletix outlets are found in many spots throughout the city, but the most convenient for travelers is probably the one at the **İstanbul Kitapçısı** (☎ 212-292 9518; İstiklal Caddesi 79-81, Beyoğlu). Alternatively, you can buy tickets by credit card on Biletix's website and collect them from the venue before the concert.

CLUBBING

Who cares if İstanbul's in Europe or Asia? All we know is that it's developing a great club and live-music scene. The horrible 1980s covers and saccharine Turkish pop that used to be inflicted on club-goers are increasingly being replaced by Middle Eastern fusion beats, techno and jazz-influenced tracks. If you're like us, you'll rarely see the daylight during your stay.

When İstanbullular go out clubbing they dress to kill. If you don't do the same, you'll be unlikely to get past the door bitches (usually buffed young hunks) at the mega-venues on the Bosphorus. Fortunately, you'll have no trouble in venues in other parts of town as these cater to the transient crowd and couldn't give a toss what labels you're wearing.

As is the case with bars and restaurants, most of the clubbing action is in Beyoğlu or along the Bosphorus. The only thing to do at night in Sultanahmet is leave. Clubs are busiest on Friday and Saturday nights, and the action doesn't really kick off until 1am. Many of the clubs close down from June or July – when the party crowd moves down to Turkey's southern coasts – until the end of September. Those clubbers who stay in town tend to flock to the open-air waterfront spots such as Sortie and Reina.

As well as the clubs reviewed here, **Angelique** (☎ 212-327 2844/45; www.istanbuldoors.com/en; Salhane Sokak 5, Ortaköy; ☎ 7pm-3am summer only; 🚫 Ortaköy), **Blackk** (☎ 212-236 7256; www.blackk.net; Muallim Naci Caddesi 71, Kuruçeşme; ☎ 10.30pm-4am; 🚫 25E, 25T, 40) and **360** (p176) are safe bets if you want to have dinner, a few drinks and a dance or two.

ARAF Map p107

☎ 212-244 8301; Balo Sokak 32, Kat 5, Beyoğlu; no cover charge; ☎ 5pm-4am; 🚫 Kabataş, then funicular to Taksim

This is grungy fun central for English teachers and Turkish language students, who shake their booties to the in-house gypsy band and swill the cheapest club beer around (a mere YTL5). To avoid the locals' weekend mating madness, go on Tuesday or Wednesday.

BABYLON Map p107

☎ 212-292 7368; www.babylon.com.tr; Şehbender Sokak 3, Tünel; cover charges & performance times vary, bookings at Biletix or at the box office (open 10am-6pm); ☎ 9.30pm-2am Tue-Thu, 10pm-3am Fri & Sat; 🚫 Karaköy, then funicular to Tünel Recent developments have seen Babylon devoting itself exclusively to live performances; in this regard, it's truly a city institution. The eclectic program often features big-name international music acts, particularly during the festival season. DJ chill-out sessions have been moved to its restaurant/lounge right behind the concert hall.

BALANS MUSIC HALL Map p107

☎ 212-251 7020; www.balansmuzik.com; Balo Sokak 22, Beyoğlu; cover charge varies, sometimes free; ☎ closed summer, from 10pm Wed-Sat in winter; 🚫 Kabataş, then funicular to Taksim After enjoying the city's best locally brewed beer (the caramel brew) on the 1st floor, the lively multinational crowd here

separates. Rock aficionados gravitate to the upper floors and the rest of the crowd moves to the impressive 1500-person-capacity performance hall, which features a glass-encased winter garden that is as magical as it is acoustically enhancing. This is the outpost of the new crop of gig-goers. Check the website for details.

CRYSTAL Map p117

☎ 212-278 4578; www.clubcrystal.org; Muallim Naci Caddesi 65, Ortaköy; cover charge Fri & Sat YTL35; ☎ midnight-5.30am Thu-Sat; 🚫 56

This is home to the city's techno aficionados, who come here to appreciate sets put together by some of the best DJs from Turkey and the rest of Europe. There's a great sound system, a crowded dance floor and a lovely covered garden bar. The Friday and Saturday cover charge includes one drink.

DÉJÀ VU Map p107

☎ 212-252 6131; Sadri Alishık Sokak 26, off İstiklal Caddesi; cover charge YTL10; ☎ 10pm-4am Sun-Thu, 10pm-5am Fri & Sat; 🚫 Kabataş, then funicular to Taksim

Progressive electronica and hip-hop lasso in the youthful dancers contorting on the dance floor, while other dance enthusiasts egg them on. This is the place to go with the musical flow. The cover charge includes one drink.

GABILE Map p107

☎ 0538-277 1699; www.clubgabile.com; Hüseyinağa Mah, Yeşilcam Sokak 7, Beyoğlu; free entry; ☎ 11pm-5am; 🚫 Kabataş, then funicular to Taksim

A circus atmosphere prevails in Gabile's three floors and rooftop terrace. Circuit clones, fey young things, lipstick lesbians and straying straights mix to enjoy the amateurishly staged drag and erotic shows. It's unbridled fun to the max. Drinks cost YTL8.

GHETTO Map p107

☎ 212-251 7502; www.ghettoist.net; Kalyoncu Kulluk Caddesi 10, Beyoğlu; cover charge varies; ☎ 8pm-4am; 🚫 Kabataş, then funicular to Taksim Décor-wise, this three-story club behind Çiçek Pasajı (p110) makes a bold postmodern statement, with Renaissance-style painted high ceilings and a long, back-illuminated bar with bottles that seem to glow in the dark. The musical program is equally interesting,

comprising creative foreign or local live acts. At Ghetto Terras (reached via a back staircase) techno and house music rule.

LOVE DANCE POINT Map p115

☎ 212-296 3357; www.lovedancepoint.com; Cumhuriyet Caddesi 349/1, Harbiye; cover charge YTL20; ☎ 11:30pm-4am Wed, 11:30pm-5am Fri & Sat; 🚫 Kabataş, then funicular to Taksim

Going into its eighth year and wrestling the plum as the major player in the gay club scene, Love DP often partners with major London/Amsterdam/Berlin clubs to host wild, pan-European circuit parties. Here, gay anthems are thrown in with hard-cutting techno and Turkish Pop. This place attracts the well-travelled and the un-impressionable, even some straight hipsters from nearby Nişantaşı. The cover charge includes one drink.

ROXY Map p107

☎ 212-245 6539; www.roxy.com.tr; Arslan Yatağı Sokak 1-3, off Siraselvililer Caddesi, Taksim; cover charge YTL35 Fri & Sat; 🚫 Kabataş, then funicular to Taksim

Bright young things flock to this dance-and-performance club that's been around since 1994. It recently expanded its premises to include a gallery, a party space and **YAN Gastro Bar** (☎ 4pm-1am Mon-Sat, 4pm-4am Fri & Sat). It works to your advantage if you eat here before clubbing because you get a free pass, dodging the long line outside. If you come late you might not get in. The cover charge on Friday and Saturday includes one drink.

SORTIE Map p215

☎ 212-327 8585; www.sortie.com.tr; Muallim Naci Caddesi 141, Kuruçeşme; 🚫 25E, 25T, 40 Sortie vies with **Reina** (☎ 212-259 5919/21; www.reina.com.tr; Muallim Naci Caddesi 44, Kuruçeşme; Mon-Thu & Sun free, Fri & Sat 50YTL; ☎ dining 6pm-midnight, dancing midnight-4am; 🚫 25E, 25T, 40) for title of queen of the Ortaköy gold coast nightclub row. It pulls in the city's glamour-pussies and poseurs, most of whom are on the lookout for celebrities and other tabloid fodder.

TONIQUE Map p107

☎ 212-251 7020; www.balanstonique.com; Balo Sokak 22, Beyoğlu; cover charge Mon-Fri YTL10, Sat & Sun YTL20; 🚫 Kabataş, then funicular to Taksim

Perched as a part-open-air penthouse duplex on the top floor of the Balans building, this has been the scene of many recent memorable electronic music and MTV happenings in the city. Resident and foreign guest DJs creatively vie to captivate beautiful scenesters.

LIVE JAZZ

İstanbul has seen an increase in the number of dedicated jazz venues in recent years, all of which have very different styles. These include the smoky atmosphere and unpretentious décor of Nardis, the opulent trappings of Q Jazz by Les Ottomans and dinner sessions at the Istanbul Jazz Center. During the popular International İstanbul Jazz Festival (p17) and Akbank Jazz Festival (p17), other live-music sites host events.

İSTANBUL JAZZ CENTER Map p117

☎ 212-327 5050; www.istanbuljazz.com; next to Radisson SAS Bosphorus Istanbul Hotel, Salhane Sk 10, Ortaköy; music charge YTL40, set menu YTL40; 🍷 dinner 7pm-midnight, shows at 9pm & 12:30am; 🍷 56

Owner Kerem Görsev, a popular Turkish jazz icon, has a free hand when it comes to booking the jazz world's who's who. The club's stylish setting makes up for the dinner plus music plus drinks bill, which is steep (domestic beer YTL13).

JAZZ CAFÉ Map p107

☎ 212-245 0516; Hasnun Galip Sokak 20, Beyoğlu; cover varies, dinner per person approx YTL40; 🍷 8pm-4am Tue-Fri, sets at 10:30pm & 1am; 🍷 Kabataş, then funicular to Taksim

Bathed in mood lighting, this mellow place boasts expat hosts and loads of 30-something jazz-heads. Live music kicks off at 10pm. The programme changes and isn't always jazz. Beer costs YTL6.

NARDIS JAZZ CLUB Map p103

☎ 212-244 6327; www.nardisjazz.com; Galata Kulesi Sokak 14, Galata; cover varies; 🍷 8pm-1am Mon-Thu with sets at 9:30pm & 12:30am, 8pm-2am Fri & Sat with sets at 10:30pm & 1:30am; 🍷 Karaköy, then funicular to Tünel

Just down the hill from the Galata Tower, this venue, named after a Miles Davis track, is where the real jazz aficionados go. Run by jazz guitarist Önder Focan and his wife Zuhai, a director of the local magazine

Jazz, Nardis is small but big in atmosphere. Its line-up of performers is exceptionally good; some come from the winners' ranks of its yearly amateur contest and others are visiting international artists. Different daily performers make every visit fresh and serendipitous – book ahead.

Q JAZZ BY LES OTTOMANS Map p215

☎ 212-359-1582; www.lesottomans.com; Muallim Naci Caddesi 163, Kuruçeşme; 🍷 from 7pm, live performances 11pm-3am; 🍷 25E, 25T, 40

This luxury hotel on the Bosphorus, which aims to replicate an Ottoman pasha's splendiferous surroundings, offers the chance to enjoy first-rate international jazz vocalists for a cover of only YTL30. The bar menu isn't outrageously priced, either.

LIVE TURKISH MUSIC

Turks are proud of their traditional music (see p33) and, whether young or old, will usually be familiar enough with the most popular folk and fasıl numbers to sing along in bars or meyhanes. One of the most entertaining experiences you can possibly have while visiting İstanbul is to have dinner at a fasıl venue where the guests take turns in serenading the restaurant with their favourite songs. Several restaurants in the Balık Pazarı (p110) and on Nevzade Sokak (p167) are among a number of places in Beyoğlu that now offer this type of sing-and-dance-along entertainment with their reasonably priced menus. Others have a set meal deal with either limited or unlimited booze. Make sure to tip when the musicians come to your table, nothing extravagant but substantial enough to be appreciated (YTL5 to YTL 10 per person is about right). When booking at a meyhane (it's not necessary to book at bars), try to opt for a Friday or Saturday night – on other nights restaurant management might tell musicians not to come in if numbers are low.

ANDON Map p107

☎ 212-251 0222; Siraselviler Caddesi 89, Taksim; set menu incl all drinks YTL60, 🍷 2pm-4am Mon-Sat, live music 9pm-2am; 🍷 Kabataş, then funicular to Taksim

In addition to a rooftop restaurant with fine views over the Bosphorus, a wine bar with a rowdy soloist, a disco in the ground floor and a 3rd floor dedicated to the so-called İstanbul *sanat* (art) music, Andon is known for the fasıl music performed in its

excellent 4th-floor meyhane. Come prepared to sing along.

CUMHURİYET Map p107

☎ 212-293 1977; Sahne Sokak No. 4 (in the Balık Pazarı), Beyoğlu; meze YTL4-6, beer YTL4; 🍷 9am-2am, fasıl music 8:30pm-midnight; 🍷 Kabataş, then funicular to Taksim

The drinks and à la carte dishes at this three-storey meyhane are incredibly reasonably priced. Atmosphere is nostalgic, as befits a place that was known to have been a favourite watering hole of Atatürk (check out the photos of him on the walls). The name is Turkish for 'Republic'.

DEGUSTASYON Map p107

☎ 212-292 0667; Sahne Sokak No. 41 (in the Balık Pazarı), Beyoğlu; mains YTL10-18, beer YTL4; 🍷 10am-1am, fasıl music 8:30pm-1am; 🍷 Kabataş, then funicular to Taksim

This place has three stories with a summer terrace, and can accommodate 180 persons, meaning that you can usually just walk in off the street. Good cheap food and lively music are dished up – a real find in the Fish Market.

DESPINA Map pp46-7

☎ 212-247 3357; Acıgöy Sokak 9, Kurtuluş; meals YTL45; 🍷 noon-12:30am Mon-Sat, fasıl music 8:30pm-midnight; 🍷 taxi

Established in 1946 by the glamorous Madame Despina, whose faded photograph greets guests at the entrance, Despina is mainly patronised by neighbourhood locals, who come for its superb Armenian/Greek food (à la carte only) and the live fasıl music played by very accomplished musicians. On a warm evening the garden is a great setting for musical carousing.

GAY & LESBIAN İSTANBUL

All gay and lesbian listings in this book (clubs, hamams and bars) were written by René Ames, an İstanbul resident and freelance writer for *Time Out İstanbul*. René also updated the sections on clubbing, live jazz and live Turkish Music.

Having previously lived in New York, Switzerland, London and Spain, René is well qualified to assess how the gay and lesbian scene stacks up against its equivalents in the world's other big cities. He describes it as being just as lively and energy-sapping, but adds that the current impetus towards Europe makes it even more dynamic. 'People have that feeling of liberation, knowing that the European Union is hovering and showing interest in Turkey's human rights situation. It's like being in the cusp of a major historical turnover; very similar to the La Movida moment before Spain joined the rest of Europe, a truly exhilarating time when you can feel and live the possibilities.'

Asked about how the scene differs to those of its European sister cities he says, 'There are more tranny bars here than in New York or London or any other European capital. Leather and fetish clubs are the only ones absent in this mosaic, except when held as party themes. And we don't have dark rooms and naughty nooks like in some Western gay venues, meaning that most action needs to be done in private. The only public sex available is in a seedy cinema on İstiklal Caddesi showing heterosexual erotic films, or via furtive flings in dark alleys.'

The furtiveness may be due in part to the ambiguous legal status of homosexuality here; René points out that while Turkey has no laws against homosexuality, it has none in favour of it, either. 'In other words, it's neither legal nor illegal and that's where the problem is, because gays can be prosecuted or just plain harassed by the authorities under other legal statutes. Most telling is the fact that there are no antidiscriminatory laws covering sexual identity in this country; this is what the EU wants changed.' René is yet to witness police action leading to a closure of a gay venue, but he has been present when police visit and check everyone's *kimlik* (identity cards). He also notes that the hamam scene is changing: 'Police have been pretty vigilant against lewdness in hamams, too, so much so that bathhouse habitués say that the traditional homoerotic undercurrents in these bathhouses have changed considerably.'

Unfortunately, there are few organisations fighting for gay rights in Turkey. René describes the best known of these, Lambda İstanbul (www.lambdaistanbul.org in Turkish), as 'a far cry from their counterparts elsewhere', and comments that when he recently visited to try and gauge its political stance on the present situation in Turkey regarding the ascent of AKP, the implications of a Gül presidency and the impact of an impending socio-cultural overhaul after the last elections, the organisation's spokespeople had no comments to make: 'Either they were timid and not prone to open their mouths or they haven't done their homework... When I was in their office they were decorating and they seemed more interested in that task than to put their agenda out through a sympathetic member of the media.'

Asked to nominate an İstanbul gay icon, René is emphatic: 'That would have to be Ahmet Kural, one of my *Time Out* interviewees, who is credited with establishing the first gay bar in İstanbul. His bar (1001 Gece in Taksim) is still popular, though it now predominantly caters for chicks-with-dicks chasers.'

NIGHTLIFE RIP-OFFS

Foreigners, especially single foreign males, are targets for a classic Istanbul rip-off that works like this. You're a single male out for a stroll in the afternoon or evening. A well-spoken, well-dressed Turk strikes up a conversation and says he knows a 'good place where we can have a drink and chat' or a 'great nightclub' etc. You enter, sit down and immediately several women move to your table and order drinks. When the drinks come, you're asked to pay – anywhere from YTL200 to however much money you have with you. It's a mugging and if you don't pay up, they take you into the back office and take it from you.

A variation is a single foreign male having a drink and a meal at the Çiçek Pasajı. Several Turkish friends strike up a conversation, then suggest you all take a taxi to another place. In the taxi, they forcibly relieve you of your wallet.

How do you avoid such rip-offs? As many Turks are generous, hospitable, curious and gregarious, it's difficult to know whether an invitation is genuine (as it most often is) or the prelude to a mugging. Tread carefully if there's any reason for suspicion. As for nightclub recommendations, take them from a trusted source, such as your hotel clerk.

GARIBALDI Map p107

☎ 212-245 2522; İstiklal Caddesi Perukar Çikmazi (Odakule Yani) 11, Beyoğlu; www.garibaldibar.com; set menu YTL60 incl all drinks; 🕒 7:30pm-midnight Mon-Wed, 8pm-12:30am Thu-Sat, fasıl music from 8:30pm-closing; 🚇 Karaköy, then funicular to Tünel

Garibaldi is tucked into the side alley of an old Armenian Catholic church in Odakule, along the same street side as the big Collezione store. Its set menu means that you don't have to make any decisions other than to enjoy yourself, something that is ensured by the pleasing six-member fasıl group. There's a garden area if you don't feel like joining the action in the dining hall.

KOKOSH BY ASMALI Map p107

☎ 212-243 7678; Meşrutiyet Caddesi 193, Tepebaşı; set menu incl all drinks YTL80, unlimited

drinks at bar YTL50; 🕒 6pm-2am Tue-Thu, 6pm-4am Fri & Sat, live music from 8pm; 🚇 Karaköy, then funicular to Tünel

This place opposite the Pera Palas Hotel (p110) is famous for its entrancing sounds created by the zither and kettledrum, which supply the background for serious drinking and vociferous singing.

LEVENDİZ GREEK MEYHANE Map p117

☎ 212-236 7256; www.blackk.net; Muallim Naci Caddesi 71, Ortaköy; set menu incl all drinks YTL80; 🕒 7:30pm-12:30am, live music 9:30pm-midnight; 🚇 56

Part of the luxury supper club complex, Blackk, and offering a great Bosphorus view to accompany its inspired Greek cuisine, Levendiz is easily the most upscale meyhane hereabouts for the money-is-no-object crowd. Come dressed accordingly.

© Lonely Planet Publications. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'