

# EALTA2013 VISITOR'S GUIDE -ISTANBUL-



The Maritime Museum, Beşiktaş

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## 1. The Conference Venue

EALTA 2013 will be held at **Istanbul Military Museum, Valikonağı Caddesi Harbiye, Şişli, İstanbul**, a central location just up from Taksim Square on the European side of the city. The conference “base” is the **Tryp Hotel**, three minutes away, and directly across the main road leading into Taksim. This part of the city is tourist-friendly and home to many shops and restaurants which are easily accessible for lunch on conference days. The nearest metro station is **Osman Bey**, which can be used to avoid the road works which are currently in operation in Taksim Square itself.

For the sake of clarity, all explanations below refer to the conference venue, although you may of course be based in a different part of town.

## 2. Arrival in Istanbul

For participants arriving from outside Turkey, by far your best option to get to Istanbul is to arrive at **Atatürk International Airport**, approximately 30-40 minutes by taxi from the conference venue. If possible, avoid **Sabiha Gökçen Airport**, which is on the Asian side of the city and a good 60-90 minutes by airport bus to the conference venue. The only benefits are that the airport serves many of the budget airlines and that the ride into town gives you great views of Istanbul from the bridge as you cross from Asia into Europe.

There are two channels for **passport control** at Atatürk Airport, one for Turkish citizens and one for everybody else. Just before passport area, you’ll see the visa office on the left. Most EU and non-EU nationals need a **tourist visa** to enter Turkey, but in almost all cases it can be bought on arrival at this office. Still, it’s best to check here what your status is: <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/visa-information-for-foreigners.en.mfa> and then, if necessary, **make sure you buy your visa before going through passport control**, otherwise they’ll send you back!

When you enter the **arrivals hall** turn right and walk for about 50 metres or so until you see the exit on the left (not that well signposted). From there you have the following options:

### Taxi



Just outside the airport exit you’ll see a continuous flow of yellow taxis ready to take you into town. The fare to the conference venue will probably be 40 to 50 Turkish Lira (TL), around €20, or slightly less if you’re staying in Taksim or Sultanahmet.

In all likelihood, you’ll have no problem at all with your taxi driver. Depending on where you’re heading exactly, he may take you round the coast road (sahil yolu) and past the historic centre, which makes for a splendid introduction to the city. It should take around 30-40 minutes, perhaps less outside

rush hour. The fare tends to get rounded up or down to the nearest Turkish lira, so don't worry about that. Tipping is appreciated but not expected. Enjoy the ride and try and forget about the traffic.

**However...** all taxis have a **taxi meter** clearly displayed in red digits on the dashboard or in the mirror at the front. It should read "Gündüz" meaning "day rate" but it applies to day or night. If you see "Gece" displayed then alarm bells should start ringing because he's using the more expensive (and now non-existent) night rate. Make sure he has the meter on. If he gives you any stories about an extra fee for entering the airport zone, don't take any notice. If he drives too fast say "Yavaş yavaş!" (pronounced "yavash, yavash"), which means simply "slow down!"

## Airport Bus

Leaving every half hour one floor down from Arrivals at Atatürk Airport, a cheaper option to a taxi is the **Havataş Airport Bus**. A one-way ticket costs 10TL, around €4.5. The bus takes you to Taksim Square, which is a short taxi ride to the conference venue (5-7TL, €2-3). Unfortunately, there are currently major road works in Taksim Square, so you may be delayed towards the end of the journey. Departure times, and information about buses from Sabiha Gökçen Airport, can be found here:

<http://www.havatas.com/en/coach.aspx?i=1>.

## Metro

The cheapest but least convenient option is the underground, which is a bargain at around €1 for the half-hour journey to the terminal station, **Aksaray**. Although that still leaves you with a 10-20-minute taxi ride to the conference venue (around €7-10), it's particularly convenient if you're heading to **Sultanahmet**, in which case a taxi will cost €6 at most. Whether you're heading for Sultanahmet or the conference venue, after exiting the station, cross the busy main road using the underpass and flag a taxi down.

## 3. Money

### Exchange Rates

The Turkish Lira (TL) is a stable currency, and so these (approximate) rates will apply:

€ euro	£ sterling	\$ dollar
2.2TL	2.8TL	1.8TL

### Changing Money

All major cash point/ATM cards work in the cash machines, and all major credit cards are accepted in medium range hotels and restaurants. If possible, avoid buying Turkish Lira in your home country as the rates will almost certainly be unfavourable. If you need to exchange cash, then use the exchange offices (**Döviz**) that you'll see all over town.

## 4. Accommodation

Information about accommodation options is available on the conference website:

<http://ealta2013.sabanciuniv.edu/recommended-accommodation>

## 5. Links on Istanbul

Of course there's an enormous amount of information on the Internet about Istanbul, and you may well have your favourite sites or guidebooks, but here are some possible starting points:

### Travel Guides

<http://www.roughguides.com/destinations/europe/turkey>

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/turkey/istanbul>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/travel/series/istanbul-city-guide>

### Istanbul Municipality Site

[http://www.ibb.gov.tr/en-US/Pages/Home\\_Page.aspx](http://www.ibb.gov.tr/en-US/Pages/Home_Page.aspx)

### Music and Other Entertainment

<http://www.timeout.com/istanbul/>

<http://www.biletix.com/anasayfa/ISTANBUL/en>

## 6. Traveller's Tips

- Istanbul is on the whole a very safe city, and people are usually very helpful if you have any problems. Still, take all the usual precautions of keeping hold of your bags on public transport, and of course don't walk down backstreets on your own at night. If you're in the Taksim part of town, perhaps resist any intrepid instincts you may have to cross the busy main road into Tarlabaşı, especially at night.
- Especially in Sultanahmet, some of the **shopkeepers and street sellers** may pester you so much that it becomes irritating. The best thing is simply to ignore them, even if you feel that's slightly rude. Otherwise, enjoy a good haggle.
- The **wine** served in most Istanbul restaurants is astronomically expensive (up to €30 a bottle). Always check with the waiter before he opens it. In many cases, you may prefer to drink the local beer (Efes), or the local spirit, raki.

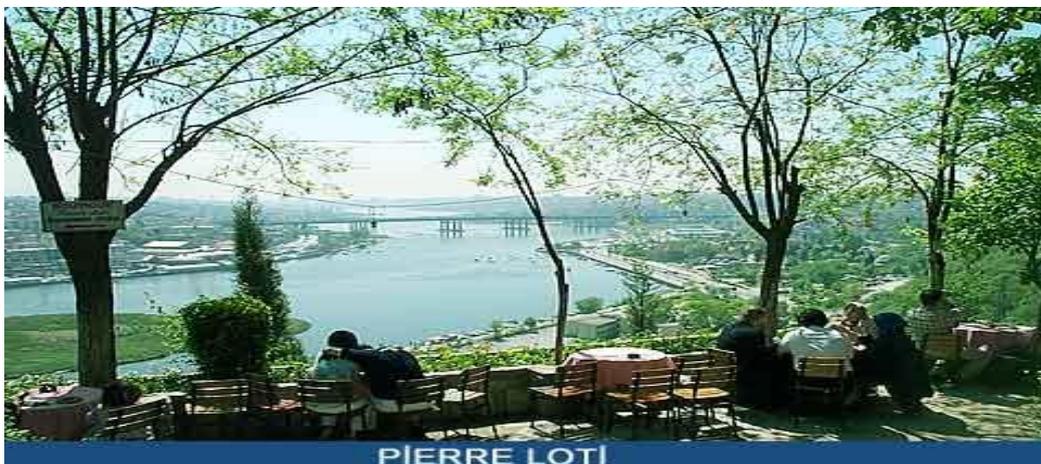
- In some of the more religiously conservative areas of the city such as **Fatih**, famed for its magnificent mosque, it's advisable to dress modestly to avoid offending the locals or provoking any kind of negative reaction.
- Outside the mosques in the main tourist areas, you may be asked to pay an entrance fee by a self-appointed official. In fact, you are free to enter a mosque at any time (apart usually from prayer time) without charge. You can, however, make a contribution on exit if you wish.
- The local currency, **the Turkish Lira**, has been created deliberately to look like the Euro so that the transition to that currency, were Turkey ever (misguided enough?) to adopt it, all the easier. It's very easy to mix the two currencies up, and if you do, you'll be paying over double what you should be (€1=2.2TL).
- For potential problems with **taxi drivers**, see **Arrival in Istanbul** above.

## 7. The Weather

We've chosen just about the worst weekend to predict the weather! It will probably feel like early summer, i.e. pleasantly warm and sunny with a slight breeze. However, it could also feel like the end of spring, with the possibility of high winds, a slight chill, and even the odd rain storm. If you plan to come on the boat trip or the Friday night event, bring a jumper or light coat just in case. Hopefully, you won't use either at all during your stay.

## 8. Off the Beaten Track

If you're staying for the duration of the conference, you'll almost certainly want to prioritise a visit to Sultanahmet, Istanbul's historical centre, and the location of much of the city's revered Ottoman and Byzantine architecture (not to mention one or two carpet sellers). See the conference **Social Programme** for details of the Sunday afternoon tour: <http://ealta2013.sabanciuniv.edu/social-programme> However, if you have a little more time, you might want to wander around some of the city's other districts, each with its own atmosphere and history. If so, here are some suggestions, all of which are at most a 20-minute bus or taxi ride, or even walking distance, from the conference venue.



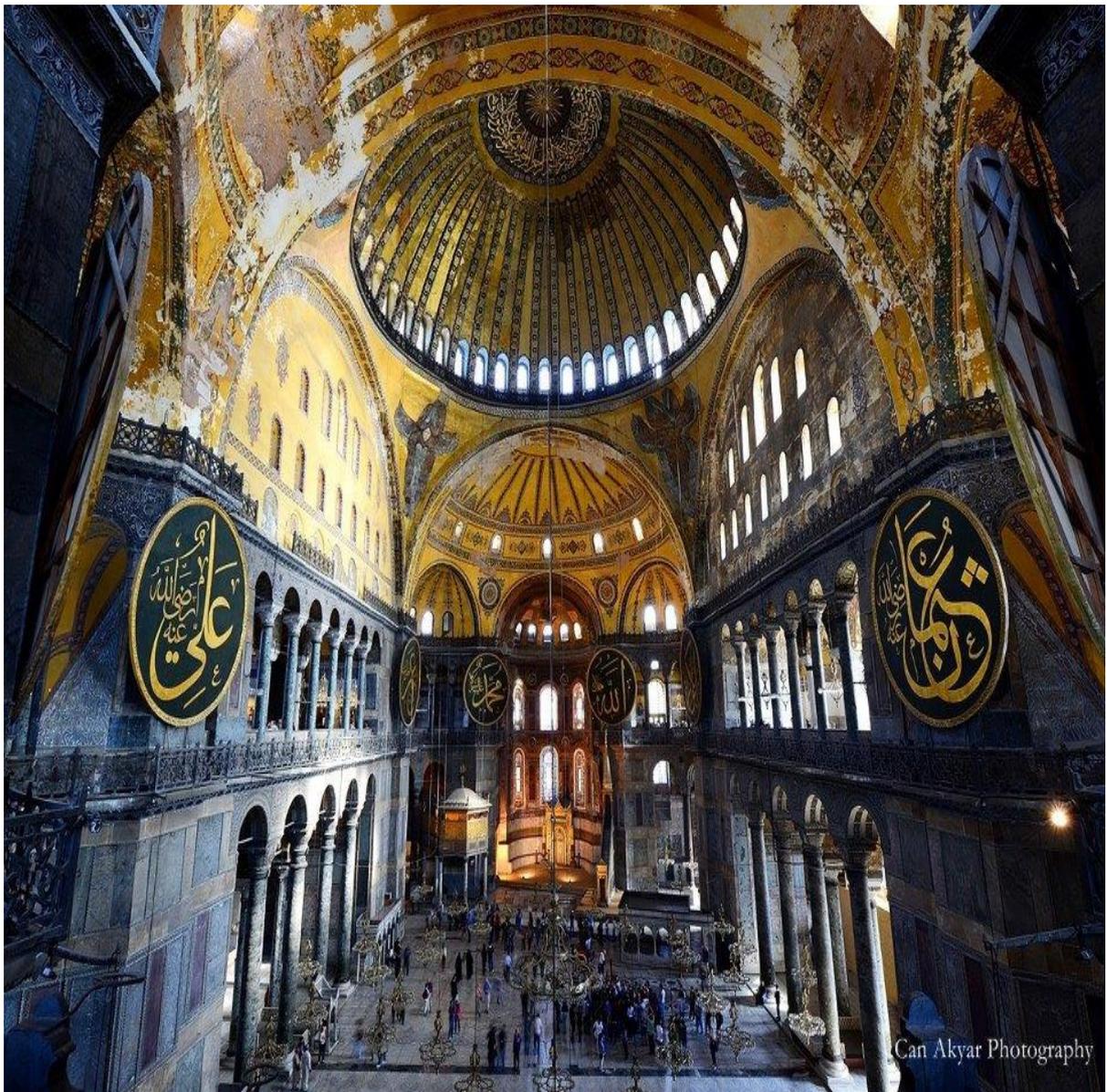
The Pierre Loti Café and Eyüp (view of the Golden Horn, imperial mosque in Eyüp)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNEj05fPRP4>

Fener and Balat (the old Greek and Jewish quarter)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sz-XLbhENwY>

Ortaköy (market, mosque, and restaurants near the water)  
<http://www.greatistanbul.com/photos/Ortakoy/index.html>

Beşiktaş (the Maritime Museum, departure point for the Saturday night boat trip)

Nişantaşı (fashionable, modern part of town close to the conference venue, good for shopping)



Hagia Sofya, Sultanahmet

**Have a great trip!**