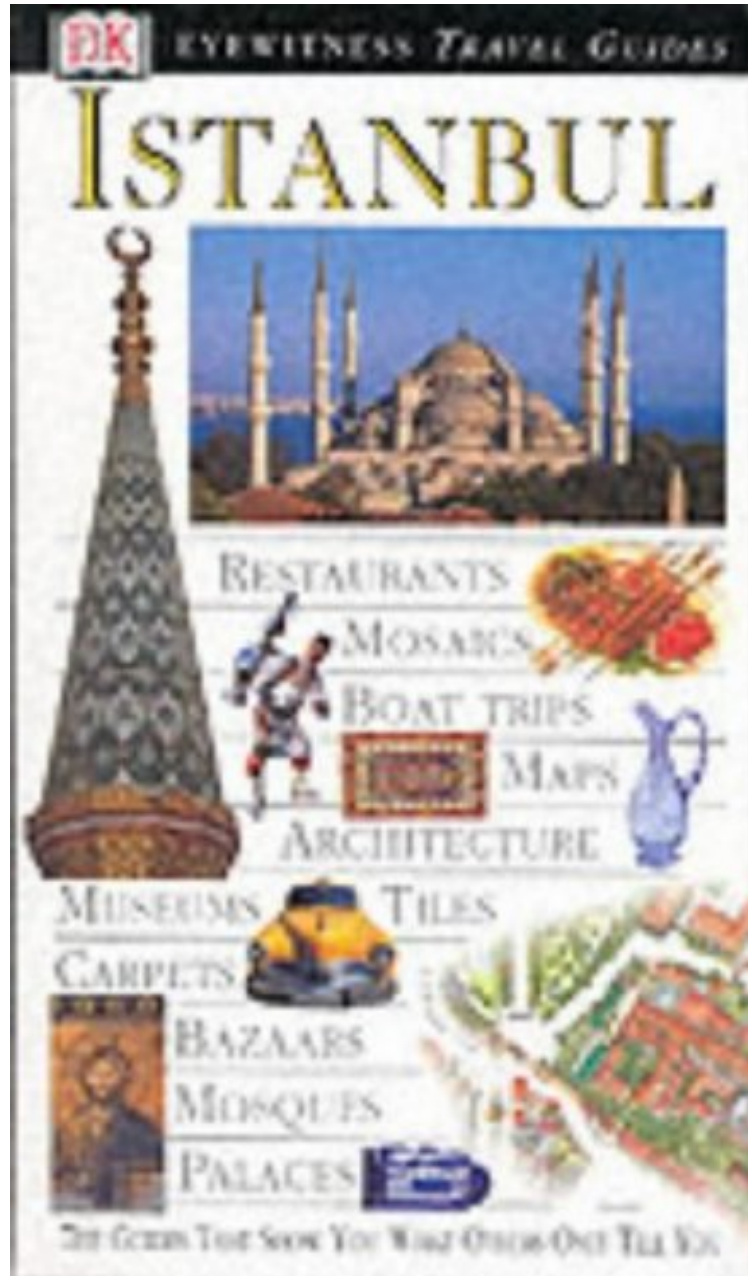


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## Istanbul (DK Eyewitness Travel Guide)

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**Kindersley Dorling : Istanbul (DK Eyewitness Travel Guide)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Istanbul (DK Eyewitness Travel Guide):

123 of 123 people found the following review helpful. Best general purpose guide By Diego Banducci[[VIDEOID:33158751]] If you're only going to buy one guide to Istanbul, this is the one. The principal reason is that Istanbul is a city of great architecture, which D-K's cut-away diagrams ideally showcase. You can quickly determine where you are within a building and which features you have not yet seen. For us, the most enjoyable attraction in Istanbul was the ferry ride up the Bosphorus, which ends at a charming village near the Black Sea with excellent restaurants where you have lunch before returning. There are commercial tourist boats that make this trip, but we much preferred the public ferry that cost approx. \$10 round-trip -- one of the great travel bargains of the world. The discussion about it in this guide is quite good. Some things not covered in the book: \* When we asked the concierge at our hotel for the best place to change money, he said "The Grand Bazaar, no question." Indeed. In addition to a narrow spread between buy and sell, there is no commission (other commercial money-lenders not only charge a large spread, but usually tack on a 4% commission). The local merchants all use the money-changers there, and according to the concierge, exchange rates for the entire country are set there. Alternatively, you can use ATMs, which appear to be ubiquitous. \* Among the best bargains in the Grand Bazaar are gold and silver, which are sold by weight with a reasonable mark-up, as opposed to the 400% markups commonly charged by American jewelers. Each jeweler has a gram scale where he weighs any given piece, and then prices it accordingly, based upon the price of gold that morning. The gold, by the way, appears to universally be 22 karat, worked in India. Because Indian workers are paid \$15 per month, labor is not a material element in the price. A jeweler I spoke with priced a bracelet (pre-bargaining) at \$650, when the price of the gold alone was \$525. He was highly competent and straightforward in answering my questions, as were most of the merchants I dealt with. Similar savings seem to be available on diamond jewelry, although I did not consider myself competent to judge the quality of the stones and thus, did not buy anything. \* Rug merchants appear to be somewhat less reputable and certainly more insistent (one becomes tired of hearing their ubiquitous "hallo"). If they ask which hotel you're staying in or when you're leaving, simply respond "Why do you want to know?" One rug merchant, who is married to an American woman and is himself quite americanized told me that many of the merchants import rugs from China and then represent them as being from Turkey or Iran. As with diamonds, it pays to know what you're buying. \* Cab drivers are often dishonest. Know how much you should pay for a given trip and carry a lot of small bills and coins, so that you can pay exactly. Do not expect change. You may receive old lira (the Turkish lira was steeply devalued several years ago). Make sure the driver starts the meter when you get into the cab. The rate after midnight is 50% greater than before. The meters state fares in Turkish lira, but drivers may try to charge you in dollars or Euros; state clearly that you will pay them in lira when you get into the cab and demand that they turn on the meter. Still, the (honest) rates are quite reasonable, especially since tips are not expected. \* The food is excellent, good ingredients and wonderful spices. Explore or ask your concierge. The best place we found, on the advice of our concierge, was the Magnaura Cafe Restaurant at Akbiyik No. 27 in Sultanhamet, tel: (0212)518 76 22, three blocks from the Haja Sofia. UPDATE 3/09: Better yet, just across the street the Albura Kathisma Cafe, Yeni Akbiyik Cad. No. 26 Sultanhamet. This street is full of good, reasonably priced, restaurants. \* Be prepared to awaken at 6:00 am with the Call to Prayer, which is blasted from loudspeakers on the minarets of the mosques. It doesn't last long, but it will awaken you. I was not able to sleep through it, a problem that I rarely encounter. A video of the Call to Prayer, taken from the park between Aya Sofia and the Blue Mosque, is included in this review (Be sure to turn up the sound). \* Three must-sees that we regret having missed: (1) the Chora Church, (2) the Palace Cistern, and (3) the old city walls. UPDATE [3/09] On a second trip we visited all three; well worth the effort. Additional recommendations: (1) the Spice Market (2) Sokollu Mehmet Pasha Mosque, a lovely smaller mosque near the Blue Mosque with beautiful tiles, and (3) the Church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus (aka the Little Hagia Sofiya), now a mosque and one of the most calming places of worship I've ever been in. All things considered, it's a great city. For a really useful pocket-sized guide: Top 10 Istanbul (EYEWITNESS TOP 10 TRAVEL GUIDE) For a less functional but more beautiful and sophisticated guide, try Knopf Guide: Istanbul (Knopf Guides Istanbul and Northwest Turkey) Visitors with a serious interest in the city's many historic sites will enjoy Imperial Istanbul: A Traveller's Guide: Includes Iznik, Bursa and Edirne by Jane Taylor. Not only is Ms. Taylor a knowledgeable historian, she also frequently displays her wonderfully dry British sense of humor. While not promoted as such, the book can easily serve as a walking guide to the city. For a more Nuts N' Bolts tour guide on navigating the city on foot: Rick Steves' Istanbul (Rick Steves) Recommended reading: John Freely's Istanbul Recommended viewing: Byzantium: The Lost Empire, Topkapi, the Supercities VHS tape Istanbul], and the Teaching Company course The World of Byzantium-The Great Courses (24 lectures, 30 minutes/lecture)(6 VHS TAPES) DVD to avoid: Globe Trekker: Turkey UPDATE (02/18/2012): The Teaching Company has just released a superb DVD, "The Great Tours: Greece and Turkey, from Athens to Istanbul" by Professor John R. Hale of the University of Louisville that features three half-hour programs on Istanbul that are as good as they come. Although the list price is \$255, their programs are regularly sold at 70% off, i.e., \$69.95. If you're going to that part of the world, buy that program. 12 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Excellent guide By Alberto Vargas I had never used this series of guidebooks before, so I did not know what to expect. I was pleasantly surprised during my recent visit to Istanbul in June of 2007. The main selling points of these DK guides are the superior maps and illustrations of

tourist attractions. Major museums, mosques and palaces are shown in detail, with drawings and photos of the interior and exterior, as well as nicely illustrated historical tidbits. For doing the touristy things like visiting major attractions and taking pictures, this guide is great. I am not sure how good this guide is when it comes to restaurants and nightlife. I did not explore that side of Istanbul as much, and what I saw did not impress me much. Overall, I think I would have preferred a guide geared more towards active young people with a slightly cynical edge - this guide seemed to present everything as pretty and somewhat sterile. From what I saw, Istanbul definitely has an interesting culture that this guide did not fully capture. Overall, good guidebook, and highly recommended. Read it ahead of time to know where the main sites and activities that interest you are located. Then do some more research online for good hotels to stay in - online reviews are more up to date. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. May Need Magnifying Glass! By Beachbumman I have previously bought DK guides of other places that we have visited, including Rome, Venice, Florence, Madrid, etc. They are truly mini-encyclopedias and well worth buying for an in-depth explanation of destinations. I am rating this guide of Istanbul in advance of our visit. The only negative I would note is that the DK guides pack so much information into their volumes by, among other things, using a font for their text that is VERY SMALL. (Yes, I am not a youngster and I do wear corrective lenses.) I don't know if they are available in a Kindle version. If so, that option or using an old-fashion magnifying glass may be necessary if your eyes, like mine, begin to tear at the sight of such fine print! I still recommend them for their in-depth contents. (I typically also purchase a Rick Steves guide, if available for the destination, to help me prioritize what to see.)

Organized district by district, this guidebook to Istanbul contains specially commissioned maps to show every significant sight, location, building, museum and gallery as well as major shops, hotels and restaurants. They are placed on the page alongside practical information.

"Known for its four-color maps, photos and illustrations, the [DK] Eyewitness Guides are extremely user-friendly for travelers who want their information delivered in a concise, visual way." Chicago Tribune "The best option Color photos, maps, and diagrams bring the place to life." The Philadelphia Inquirer