

# Istanbul Fascinates Oprah Winfrey

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June 30, 2009 - "Hello from Istanbul!! We have had a few crazy packed days over here. We arrived in Turkey a few days ago and visited the ruins at Ephesus. They were amazing! We also spent a couple of days in Istanbul which is a stunning city. I was here five years ago with my best friend, Annic, and we had so much fun that I was excited to come back. The city is packed with things to see and do and the people could not be more lovely. Last night we saw whirling dervishes and fire dancers. So cool."

Oprah wrote her observation about Turkey in her blog.

U.S. television talk show diva has been honored in Turkey with a traditional Ottoman Mehteran band and whirling dervishes, observers say.

Winfrey arrived in Istanbul aboard the ship Norwegian Gem along with all 1,600 of her employees, including some part-time contractors and their families, whom she had taken on a Mediterranean cruise, the Anatolian News Agency reported.

Winfrey threw a party for them at the Ciragan Palace Hotel as part of a sea cruise that started in Barcelona and includes stops in Rome, Messina, Santorini, Izmir, Ephesus, Istanbul, Athens and Valletta, Malta, the news service said.

The total cost of the trip is a reported \$8.6 million.

After touring Ayasofya and the Blue Mosque, Winfrey shopped at the Grand Bazaar. She also threw a party at the Ç1ra an Palace for her employees and their families on Monday. The television icon was welcomed by a traditional Ottoman mehteran band at the Ostanbul palace, and the show included performances by whirling dervishes and dancers. Winfrey said at the party that she came to Turkey for the first time in 1995. Winfrey also said although their cruise was initially supposed to last a week, she had extended it to two weeks so her guests could see Ephesus and Ostanbul, which she described as a wonderful city. Speaking to NTV TV station, Winfrey said she was deeply impressed by the mosques, palaces and people of Ostanbul and that she is looking forward to coming to Turkey again. (Source UPI, Today's Zaman )

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 ISTANBUL'S TOP 10 TOURIST SITES  
 By Kathy Hamilton - (TURKOFAMERICA)

After touring the major tourist sites, it is well worth the time to visit these lesser known, but still important, venues to get a better understanding of Istanbul's past and present. Since most of these are off the main tourist routes, they are much less crowded and offer a more relaxed atmosphere in which to explore on your own and escape from the tour busses clogging other parts of the city.

## 1. Rüstem Pa\_a Mosque

This small mosque, built in 1561, is a welcome respite from the frenetic pace of the Spice Bazaar. Designed by Ottoman master architect Sinan for Sultan Süleyman's son-in-law and Grand Vizier, Rüstem Pa\_a, this mosque is known for its fantastic array of Iznik tiles. Address: Has1c1lar Cad., Eminönü.

## 2. Princes' Islands (Adalar)

Just a 45-minute ferry ride from the city, the Princes' Islands offer a welcome change of pace from urban life. Justin II was the first to build a palace on Büyükkada in 569. During the Byzantine era, the Islands were home to many monasteries, where exiles were often sent. In the second half of the 19th century, the introduction of steamboats made access easier and as a result, wealthy families began to settle there. The easiest way to get there is by the ferries running from Sirkeci or Kabata\_.

## 3. Süleymaniye Mosque

Dominating the Istanbul skyline, the Süleymaniye mosque complex, founded by Sultan Süleyman I, is master architect Sinan's crowning monument for the city. Construction began in 1550 and took seven years to complete. The largest mosque in the city, the complex at one time included a soup kitchen, guest house, hospital, hamman, and college. The result of his efforts is a mosque that is breathtaking in size, and that has near perfect acoustics. Address: Aifhane Cad., Süleymaniye.

## 4. Yedikule

Yedikule, the Castle of Seven Towers, was never used as a royal residence, but rather, two of the towers housed foreign envoys who fell out of favor with Ottoman rulers. The original towers were built as part of the Theodosian walls in 390. The top of the walls offer one of the best views to be found in Istanbul. Address: Yedikule Meydani Sokak, Yedikule.

## 5. Sadberk Hanım Museum

In 1981, the Sadberk Hanım was the first private museum to open in Turkey. Consisting of two large wooden houses on the shores of the Bosphorus, the larger house, built in 1911, was the former summer house of the Koç family. The second building, the Sevgi Gönül Wing, dates from the 20th century. On display are ethnographical items from Turkey, including relics from the Neolithic periods through the Ottoman era. Address: Piyasa Cad. No. 27-29, Büyükdere.

#### 6. Mosaic Museum

The 5th century Great Palace of the Byzantine emperors consisted of hundreds of rooms, many decorated with gold mosaics. The museum is situated on the site of the ancient palace, and the vast floor mosaic is thought to have been in the colonnade between the royal apartments and the imperial enclosure next to the Hippodrome. Address: Arasta Çarşısı, Sultanahmet.

#### 7. Archeological Museum

Housing one of the world's best collections of antiquities, the museum includes excellent displays of classical and pre-classical treasures. The building itself was constructed by Osman Hamdi Bey (1881-1910) to house his archeological finds, including sarcophagi from Sidon. The new four-story wing opened in 1991 and features exhibits on the history and archeology of Istanbul and surrounding areas, as well as a children's museum. The Museum of the Ancient Orient features rare and priceless relics from Egyptian and Hittite cultures, as well as from Mesopotamia. The Ishtar Gate dates from 605-562 BC, during the rule of Nebuchadnezzar II in Babylon. Address: Osman Hamdi Bey Yolu, Gülhane.

#### 8. Yıldız Park

Originally a part of the grounds of the Çırağan Palace, the garden was later incorporated into the plans of Yıldız Palace, a collection of pavilions and villas built in the 19th and 20th centuries. Spread across the hillside above İhlamur-Yıldız Boulevard, the palace was at one time the principal residence of Sultan Abdul Hamit II (1876-1909). Address: Çırağan Cad., Beşiktaş.

#### 9. Sabancı Museum

Since 1884, what is today Sabancı Museum has been both a private and royal residence. Opened as the Sabancı University Sakıp Sabancı Museum in 2002, it now hosts world-class exhibitions in a state-of-the-art environment. The three ground floors have been preserved as they were when the Sabancı family resided there. The museum also boasts an impressive collection of rare manuscripts as well as an extensive collection of 19th and 20th century paintings. Address: İstinye Cad. No. 22, Emirgan.

#### 10. Turkish and Islamic Art Museum

The former residence of Ibrahim Paşa (1493-1536), Grand Vizier to Sultan Süleyman, the museum hosts a collection dating from the Omayyad Caliphate (661-750) to modern times. With detailed explanations in Turkish and English, each room concentrates on a particular era or region of the Islamic world. The ground floor features displays on the lifestyles of the different Turkic peoples. Address: Atmeydanı Sokak, Sultanahmet.