

## Where to stay



The private cabana of a 'Spectacular' room at W Istanbul

**Istanbul** Five fabulous new places to stay

## Hot and steamy

In Turkey's exciting city on the Bosphorus, Rachel Howard finds five new hotels with modern comforts amid the minarets and hammams

### W ISTANBUL

Property developer Serdar Bilgili had already made a splash with waterfront hotel A'jia when he bought the neo-classical Akaretler Row Houses and transformed them into a miniature Bond Street, with Europe's first W hotel as its centrepiece. Hunky doormen hover in the shadowy lobby, with its throbbing music and gauze curtains through which guests can make an entrance. Silver lifts and neon-pink corridors lead to 134 bedrooms. The decor is a mishmash of oriental opulence (shiny textiles and decorative carving) and Western gloss (hi-tech entertainment systems). Bathrooms, with copper basins and Bliss pampering kits,

are screened behind wooden closets. Some rooms have tantalising views of the Marc Jacobs and Jimmy Choo shops across the street; others have pebble patios modelled after Topkapı Palace gardens. The sultry W Lounge buzzes with celebrities and socialites. Upstairs, in the Spice Market restaurant, legions of waiters ply glamourpusses with Mongolian lamb satay and John Dory tempura courtesy of executive chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten. Work off the lethal rakı cocktails in the Sweat gym or the small spa with Estée Lauder products. **ROOM TO BOOK** 'Spectacular' rooms have draped and cushioned cabanas for starlit seduction sessions. **PRICE** Doubles from €232

22 Suleyman Seba Caddesi, Akaretler, Beşiktaş (00 90 212 381 2121; [www.starwoodhotels.com/whotels](http://www.starwoodhotels.com/whotels))

### FOUR SEASONS HOTEL ISTANBUL AT THE BOSPHORUS

The Çırağan Palace Kempinski Istanbul, once the Sultan's summer retreat, has long been the most desirable place to stay on the Bosphorus. But when Four Seasons opened its second Istanbul outpost last summer, in a powder-pink palace up the road, they hoped to give the Çırağan some stiff competition. It seems to have worked: despite two modern wings that are more in keeping with Four Seasons' first property, a former prison in Sultanahmet, the new Four Seasons has already hosted

Sarah Jessica Parker and countless society weddings. Aside from hand-painted ceilings and 18th-century engravings, the decor is mainstream global: all pale marble and plush neutrals. What sets it apart (other than flawless service) is the 190-metre waterfront terrace, dotted with scarlet parasols and lit by flaming torches at night, and the vast basement spa which features three hammams and a glittering mosaic pool with underwater music. A handful of suites have private terraces that overlook the Bosphorus, but you'll have to dig deep: the Atik Pasha Suite costs €18,000 a night. **ROOM TO BOOK** Less than a quarter of rooms have Bosphorus views. Make sure you book one of them. **PRICE** Doubles from €465 28 Çırağan Caddesi, Beşiktaş (00 90 212 381 4000; [www.fourseasons.com/bosphorus](http://www.fourseasons.com/bosphorus))

### WITT ISTANBUL SUITES

Tuncel Toprak spent years tracking down the right location for his first hotel project. He finally settled on this corner block in Cihangir, an enclave of funky cafés and creative studios which he compares to New York's Meatpacking district. 'I wanted to stay away from the tourist areas of Taksim Square and Sultanahmet. Here you can be an insider and hang out with locals,' he says. Toprak chose Autoban, ➤



Four Seasons Hotel Istanbul at the Bosphorus

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### The style is modernist, from the laser-cut floral motifs to the plywood Magnolia pendant lights

➤ designers of the city's fashionable House Café chain, to create the interiors. From the laser-cut floral motif in the black-marble reception to the plywood Magnolia lights, Autoban's signature modernist style is imprinted on the 17 open-plan suites. Well-stocked kitchenettes, grey marble bathrooms designed by Ross Lovegrove, boxy leather sofas and Bose iPod docks create a luxury loft vibe. Fabulous beds cocooned by curved leather headboards are designed for lie-ins (you can order breakfast in bed at no extra charge). Thoughtful staff strike the right balance between familiarity and courtesy. A short walk from Istanbul Modern museum and the bars of Beyoğlu, Witt Suites is a hit with designers, photographers, the fashion crowd and international artists showing at nearby galleries.

**ROOM TO BOOK** No 52, a corner suite, has stunning views across the Bosphorus to Topkapı and Hagia Sophia.

**PRICE** Doubles from €135  
*Defterdar Yokusu No 26, Cihangir (00 90 212 393 7900; www.wittistanbul.com)*

#### TOMTOM SUITES

Tucked away in a warren of alleyways off Istiklal Avenue, Beyoğlu's main pedestrian drag, this elegant newcomer is housed in a former convent. Although the 19th-century exterior has been respectfully restored, the interiors are modern and the nuns have been replaced with savvy CEOs and European diplomats from the surrounding consulates. A glass lift glides between the 20 enormous suites (even the smallest are huge by average hotel standards). The look is clean and clutter-free, a soothing symphony of taupe and beige.

Bespoke oak furniture and solid-wood floors are offset by vibrant paintings, ceramics and monochrome rugs. The Carrara marble bathrooms have underfloor heating, custom-made bathrobes and L'Occitane treats. Guests are spoiled with fresh fruit and flowers daily, free WiFi and a cosy library stocked with guide books, CDs and films. The ground-floor Bistro serves international standards in rather bland surroundings, but the rooftop Teras bar has show-stopping views across the jumble of rooftops to the minarets of Sultanahmet (unforgettable at sunset). Just moments from the hipster hang-outs clustered around the Galata Tower and Tünel, this classy retreat is peaceful, undisturbed by traffic.

**ROOM TO BOOK** Splash out on the top-floor Executive Suite, the only room with a private terrace and a glass-walled Jacuzzi.

**PRICE** Doubles from €160  
*18 Tomtom Kaptan Sokak, Boğazkesen Caddesi, Beyoğlu (00 90 212 292 4949; www.tomtomsuites.com)*

#### PARK HYATT ISTANBUL

Maçka Palas was designed in 1922 as a residence for the neighbouring Italian embassy and is modelled on a Milan palazzo. Before construction was complete, Ankara became the capital of Turkey, and the embassies moved there, so the Art Deco building



was converted into exclusive apartments. After an extreme makeover by New Yorker Randy Gerner, the building was reborn as the Park Hyatt Istanbul in November last year. Gerner made his name creating sleek HQs for investment banks and this 90-room hotel shares that no-expense-spared aesthetic, from the rooftop Presidential Suite (with private access via the original lift) to the glamorous basement spa (with heated massage beds by Armani Casa). The soaring, sky-lit lobby with its circular Wine Lounge is dazzling. Deluxe rooms with padded-leather headboards, shimmering drapes and polished limestone and walnut bathrooms are generously proportioned – even the mini-bar measures are XL. Exclusive amenities extend to the Blaise Mautin toiletries, soundtrack composed by Turkish DJ Mercan Dede, and black-and-white prints by Magnum photographer Ara Güler. Power lunches take place in the macho The Prime steakhouse or on the pool terrace wedged between the upmarket shopping malls of Nişantaşı. The Italian connection lives on: there are Armani and Gucci boutiques at street level.

**ROOM TO BOOK** The 60-metre Spa King rooms have their own hammams and steam rooms.

**PRICE** Doubles from €250  
*4 Bronz Sokak, Tesvikiye (00 90 212 315 1234; www.istanbul.park.hyatt.com)*

