ISTANBUL, THREE WAYS

With a direct flight from Houston to Istanbul, along with new hot spots galore, the largest city in the world’s fastest-growing transcontinental city, which sits on the Eurasian and Asian shoreline. As you go inside the metamorphic transform of the city, which sits on the European and Asian Shoreline. As you go inside the metamorphic transform of the city, which sits on the European and Asian Shoreline.

By Kate Parham

There’s never been a better time to visit Istanbul. Not only has Turkish Airlines just launched a direct route from Houston to Istanbul, but the city itself has undergone a metamorphosis—a change that’s as quick as it is global.

Dress is the same as all major cities, so bring a scarf for drivers. Expect to pay a $2 taxi charge upon arrival.

Getting there: Book a flight on Turkish Airlines’ new non-stop route from George Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH) to Istanbul Ataturk Airport (IST). Roundtrip fares are only $790 (this month). The average class starts at $4,500. Expect to pay a $125 fee upon arrival.

Setting the scene: This is the heartland of Istanbul. From the 12th century Fatih Sultan Mehmet Bridge to the 15th century Topkapi Palace, Istanbul is a city filled with history, culture, and stunning architecture.

Where to eat: Start your evening of right with a traditional Turkish coffee at Mandabatmat, a hidden gem near St. Antoine’s Cathedral, serves up coffee so thick you may mistake it for chocolate.

Where to stay: Take a walk through the cosmopolitan Marmara Pera Hotel at Sultanahmet, housed in a former Ottoman architect. The hotel’s perfectly groomed courtyard, neoclassical buildings, and magnificent views while you nosh on bona-fide Ottoman architecture.

Where to eat: The unassuming café turns out some of the country’s best Alevi cuisine, employing unique ingredients, like self-confessed yogurt and cardamom (peppermint). Start your meal with a round of pomegranate mezes (appetizers), like dolmas (stuffed grape leaves) and smoked eggplant, before digging into a kofte. For one of the best views in town, finish your eating tour at Mille, located on the resort floor of the cosmopolitan Marmara Pera Hotel. The upscale spot offers beautiful, contemporary dishes such as slow-cooked gosht, green beans, lemons and olives, and crispy sardines served with minced meat, honey, and lemon.

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For the Foodie: Where to stay: Ciyasofrasi is Istanbul’s most famous restaurants, and for good reason. The unassuming cufi turns out some of the country’s best Alevi cuisine, employing unique ingredients, like self-confessed yogurt and cardamom (peppermint). Start your meal with a round of pomegranate mezes (appetizers), like dolmas (stuffed grape leaves) and smoked eggplant, before digging into a kofte. For one of the best views in town, finish your eating tour at Mille, located on the resort floor of the cosmopolitan Marmara Pera Hotel. The upscale spot offers beautiful, contemporary dishes such as slow-cooked gosht, green beans, lemons and olives, and crispy sardines served with minced meat, honey, and lemon.

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