

TURKEY

SWISSÔTEL BOSPHEORUS, ISTANBUL

Heading to wonderful Istanbul? This chic hotel perched atop a hill and nestled in palace grounds is the perfect base

We love Istanbul. In fact, Team **scene** has been there eight times collectively. Why? Well, it's only four hours away, but also, there's the fact that it offers the best a bustling city has to offer, as well as beautiful landscapes and a breathtakingly deep history.

And with its central location, brilliant restaurants, views of the famous Bosphorus and the gorge hamams, there's no better place to stay while there than at the Swissôtel.

Overlooking the ocean and city, the 500-room hotel is an easy walk from the trendy and luxurious neighbourhood of Nişantaşı, which is where we recommend you head for dinner most nights, as you'll be surrounded by Istanbul hipsters and feel out of the touristy grind.

The hotel is also only a 10 minute walk from the famous Dolmabahçe Palace, which was the main base of the Ottoman



Empire from 1856 to 1922, and the fact that the hotel's 65 acres of grounds was once the palace's gardens is pretty cool too.

In-between wandering around rambling Istanbul, definitely reserve time to just sit by the sea-facing – and ginormous! – hotel pool; but also reserve a slot to visit the modern hamam for a good old-fashioned scrub-down.

Also, take a moment to dine in one of the hotel's many restaurants, and while the sandwiches and macarons in the cute Café Swiss are delish, it's the rooftop spot, Gaja, that's a must, thanks to its glorious views out over the Bosphorus and the buzzing vibe.

You can dine on haute cuisine there, or just pop up for a drink, but make sure to get there early to guarantee a good seat so you can take a few we're-supping-cocktails-in-Istanbul snaps with the Bosphorus behind you before dark and upload them straight to Facebook to make your mates (and Team **scene**) jealous.

INSIDE INFO

Book the fine-dining package and you'll get to prepare and then sit down and enjoy a meal with Gaja Restaurant's Chef de cuisine, as well as famous Turkish food writer Ali Esad Göksel. Also included is a continental breakfast for two, accommodation in a suite, access to the executive lounge and access to Amrita Spa's facilities. The deal starts from Dh4,700 per night.

Details

Rooms from Dh940 per night | Bayildim Cad. No.2 Macka, Besiktas | +90 212 326 1100 | www.swissotel.com/hotels/istanbul



Ask for a Bosphorus-facing room



The gorge seaside pool



The modern hamam



UK

COVENT GARDEN, LONDON

This fun cobble-stoned area of London – which is in the middle of theatre-land and is packed with restaurants, bars and a festive market – is one of the most cockle-warming Christmas destinations in the world. And this year is no exception. Not only is there a 10-metre Christmas tree, there's also a huge Lego advent calendar, a series of giant chandeliers dotted around the area and the chance to meet reindeer. Oh, and stop by the market to pick up classics like roasted chestnuts and mulled wine. Ah, Christmas time!

Near St Pauls Church, London | www.coventgardenlondonuk.com



GERMANY

YAKSHI'S BAR, HAMBURG

Looking like it has sprung out of a Klimt painting, this unusual bar is all fluid lines, coloured glass and natural materials – it's also the place to see and be seen in the super-cute city of Hamburg. There are 250 drinks on the menu, so give yourself time to peruse the menu, and the food blends European and Asian influence to artful effect. We're just as fond of the sashimi as we are of the goulash soup.

East Hotel, Simon-von-Utrecht-Strasse 31 | www.east-hotel.de