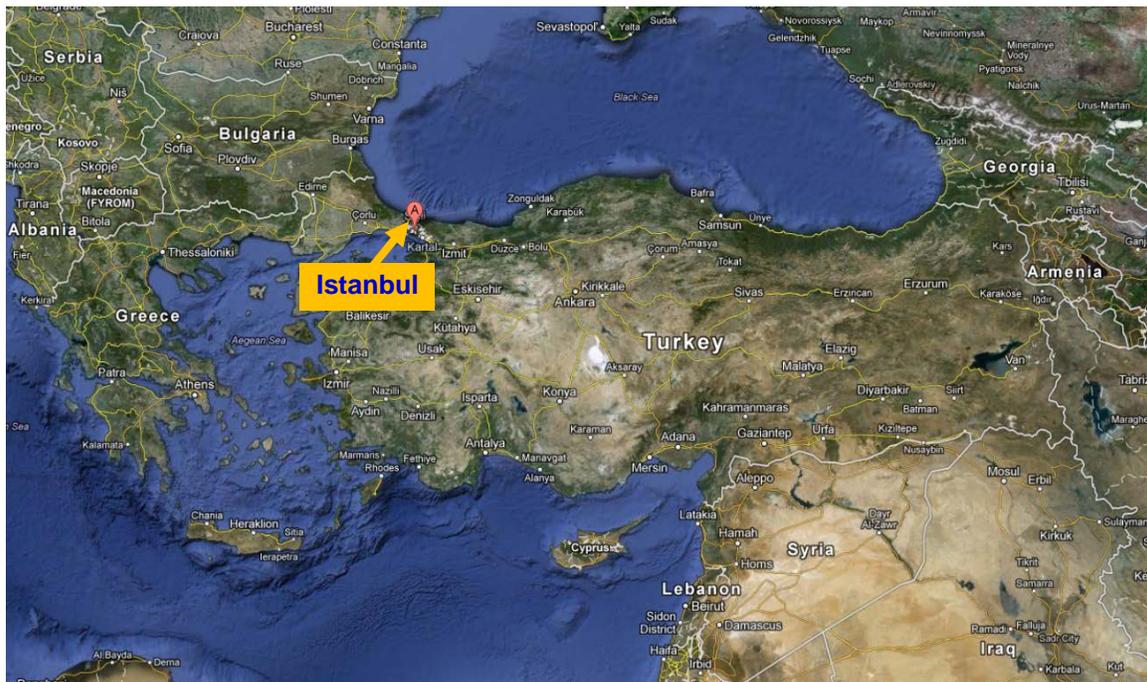


## ISTANBUL: INFORMATION FOR WNFM ATTENDEES

### From Byzantium to Modern Istanbul

Istanbul is Turkey's most populous city, and its cultural and financial center. Located on both sides of the Bosphorus, the narrow strait between the Black Sea and the Marmara Sea, Istanbul bridges Asia and Europe both physically and culturally. Istanbul's population is estimated to be between 12 million and 19 million people, making it also one of the largest in the world. Istanbul was designated as one of three European Capitals of Culture in 2010. It is a confident city on a path to international respect and prosperity as part of a country that has emerged as a regional power and cultural center.

The city was founded around 660 BC as Byzantium and for nearly 16 centuries following its establishment as Constantinople in 330 AD, it served as the capital of four empires: the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, the Latin Empire and the Ottoman Empire. Constantinople was conquered by the Ottomans in 1453 and its name was changed to Istanbul. By the mid-1500s the city was a major cultural, political, and commercial center. Ottoman rule continued until they were defeated in WWI. When the Republic of Turkey was born in 1923, Kemal Atatürk moved its capital to the city of Ankara.



(Source: Google Maps)

Under the leadership of Ataturk, the country adopted wide-ranging social, legal, and political reforms. After a period of one-party rule, an experiment with multi-party politics led to the 1950 election victory of the opposition Democratic Party. Subsequently Turkish political parties have multiplied, but democracy has been fractured by periods of instability and intermittent military coups, which eventually resulted in a return of political power to civilians. Turkey joined the UN in 1945 and in 1952 it became a member of NATO. In 1964, Turkey became an associate member of the European Community and it began accession membership talks with the European Union in 2005. Over the past decade, it has undertaken many reforms to strengthen its democracy and economy. These reforms have resulted in a generally thriving economy, one of the fastest growing in the world.

(Photo Source: GoTurkey.com)

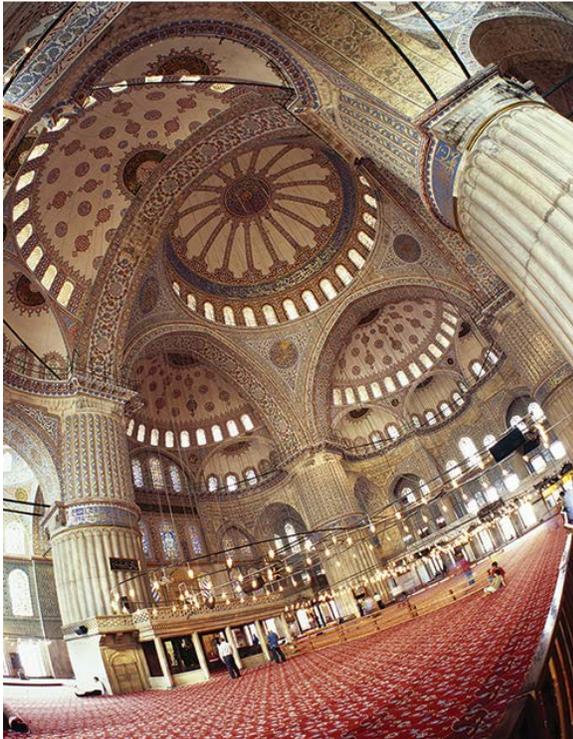
## Religious Tolerance

For hundreds of years, the Ottoman Empire promoted religious tolerance; Jews who were expelled from Spain in the late 1500's found a new home in Istanbul. Under the Ottoman Empire, each religious community was autonomous in domestic affairs and could apply its own religious law in its own courts. During the founding of the modern country, Kemal Ataturk rejected tying the new government to Islam; he believed that religious government was hampering Turkey's social, commercial and diplomatic progress. Today, Turkey is predominantly Sunni Muslim and is also a liberal, secular republic, with the constitution charging the preservation of secularism to the armed forces. Non-Muslims are enthusiastically welcomed everywhere, including mosques. Many of the world's major organized religions are represented in Istanbul. Modern Turkey exemplifies the success of its visionary founders, transforming itself from a feudal monarchy to a modern democratic republic within a single generation.



## Entertainment and Tourism

Istanbul has developed an active and thriving night life with many quality restaurants and an ever-growing array of bars and clubs. Its art scene is vibrant, and creative industries are flourishing within the city, including design, architecture, music, publishing and fashion. Another area of creative endeavor not to be missed is the wide array of wonderful restaurants available in the city. Food is most often locally sourced and seasonal; spices and cooking techniques reflect Eastern and Western traditions as well as the chef's imagination. Prices are generally fairly low and service is good.



Istanbul has a modern and convenient airport, and Turkish Air is routinely voted the best airline in Europe. According to Istanbul's General Directorate of Investment & Enterprises and the Department of Research & Evaluation, the city had more than 9 million tourists in 2012. With its long history at the center of empires, Istanbul offers a wealth of historic and religious sightseeing opportunities. The bulk of these ancient monuments (Hagia Sophia, Topkapı Palace, the Blue Mosque, and Basilica Cistern) are located around Sultanahmet Square. North of the peninsula containing the old city, across the Golden Horn, is Galata with its distinctive Galata Tower. Istanbul Modern, with its exhibitions of contemporary Turkish art, is on the nearby waterfront of Karaköy. Another sight, of religious significance, is the Whirling Dervish Hall of Sufi Mevlevi order. Further north is the Istiklal Avenue, Istanbul's prominent pedestrian street running from near Galata Tower to Taksim Square, the central square of the city. Bosphorus boat tours, which can last from 30 minutes to a full day, provide lasting vistas of both Asian and European Istanbul. Of

course, a stay in Istanbul is incomplete without a visit to the Grand Bazaar and the Spice Market, where a visitor can shop and haggle for Turkish souvenirs; they are feasts for the senses. If all of the sightseeing becomes tiring, a visit to a hammam, or traditional Turkish bath, will restore body and soul.

## Safety

According to an article dated January 27, 2013 in *USA Today*, Istanbul “is a bustling hub with all of the trappings that come with a major metropolis, including crime.” Despite a recent high profile incident, the publication goes to say that Istanbul is safe as violent crime against foreigners and tourists is rare, but muggings, scams and verbal harassment do occur. In total reported crimes Turkey ranks 32nd in the world, well behind the top six countries (United States, United Kingdom, Germany, France, Russia and Japan). Turkey ranks fifth out of the thirty six OECD countries in homicides per 100,000 of population,



well behind the United States and just ahead of Korea. For most of the other categories of crime, Turkey has a low incidence compared to other OECD countries. Like many countries, Turkey has experienced acts of terrorism over the years but it ranks 18th in world based on the number of fatalities (169 fatalities in the 2000 through 2006 period). As with any large international city, it is wise to be aware of one’s surroundings and be prudent with valuables. However, Istanbul is generally safer than most cities. While a secular country, Turkish society is moderately conservative, so it is best to dress modestly to avoid unwanted attention, and particularly if visiting a mosque. With these few precautions, a stay in Istanbul will undoubtedly prove to be a safe and welcoming one.



(Photo Source: GoTurkey.com)