

## Hotels

— Suite spots and shore things



1 Soho House Istanbul, Pera  
Club class

Found in imposing palaces built for Sultans, waterside Ottoman factories and Levantine merchants' residences, Istanbul's hotel stock certainly has historic mettle. While there are some grand dames here, a new generation of hoteliers are combining a clean modern palate with sumptuous carpets, soft Aegean linen and the bespoke work of local designers and craftsmen working in walnut, brass, marble and glass. The only conundrum is whether to stay in the thick of the action or upstream on the edge of the glittering Bosphorus.

Soho House Istanbul is the first private members' club in the city and the largest Soho House in the world. The club area (see page 105) occupies the Palazzo Corpi, built in 1873 by a Genoese ship builder and later used as the US consulate. The annexe was added while the building served as the consulate and has 28 rooms, while the new Glass Building has a further 59 and a rooftop pool.

Cocktails are high on the list of amenities: rooms feature well-stocked bars, lemons and limes in the fridge and cut-glass shakers and tumblers. All guests, whether members or not, enjoy privileges that include access to the club, gym, cinema and two rooftop plunge pools.

Mesrutiyet Caddesi 56, Beyoglu  
+90 (0)212 377 7100  
sohohouseistanbul.com

MONOCLE COMMENT: Start your trip with a hamam treatment and signature Moody Massage at the Cowshed spa.



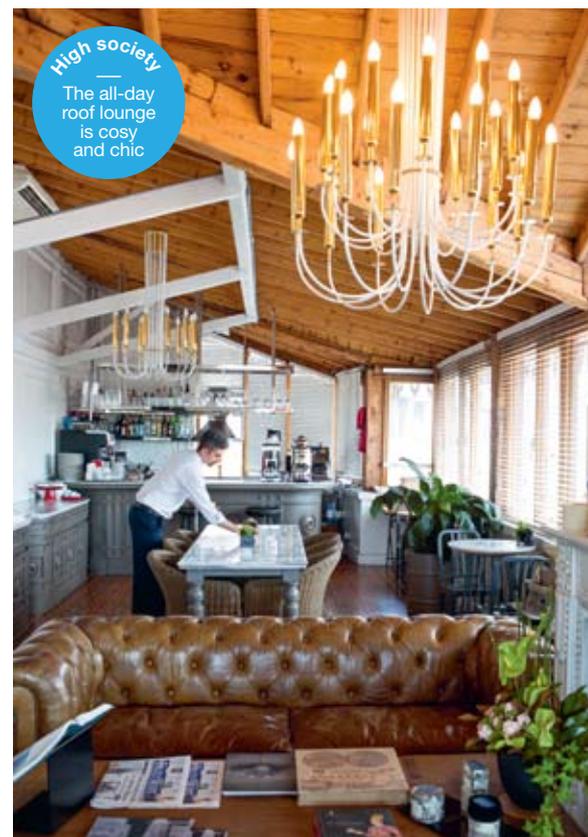
2 House Hotel Galatasaray, Cukurcuma  
*Old world meets new*

Above the entrance to this 19th-century mansion the words "Zenovitch Apartments" are a reminder of the Serbian merchant who built this elegant pile in 1890. Inside, design firm Autoban has preserved other original features while adding modern elements, such as the brass-and-iron chandelier in front of the sweeping marble staircase and the hexagonal glass tiles at reception. In the 20 spacious suites, futuristic shower pods contrast with graceful corning.

The rooftop view from the lounge bar is stunning and you're in the thick of the vibrant Cukurcuma neighbourhood, surrounded by the cafés, ceramics studios and rag-and-bone men that make Beyoglu so beguiling. Opened in 2010, this is the first project by House Hotels, a boutique collection with four properties in the city and a new "cave hotel" nestled amid the lunar landscape of Cappadocia.

Bostanbasi Caddesi 19, Beyoglu  
+90 (0)212 244 3400  
thehousehotel.com

MONOCLE COMMENT: Explore the antique shops of Cukurcuma and take a little history home with you. Look out for glassware and enamel.



High society  
—  
The all-day rooftop lounge is cosy and chic



I've only just remembered that I can't read Turkish

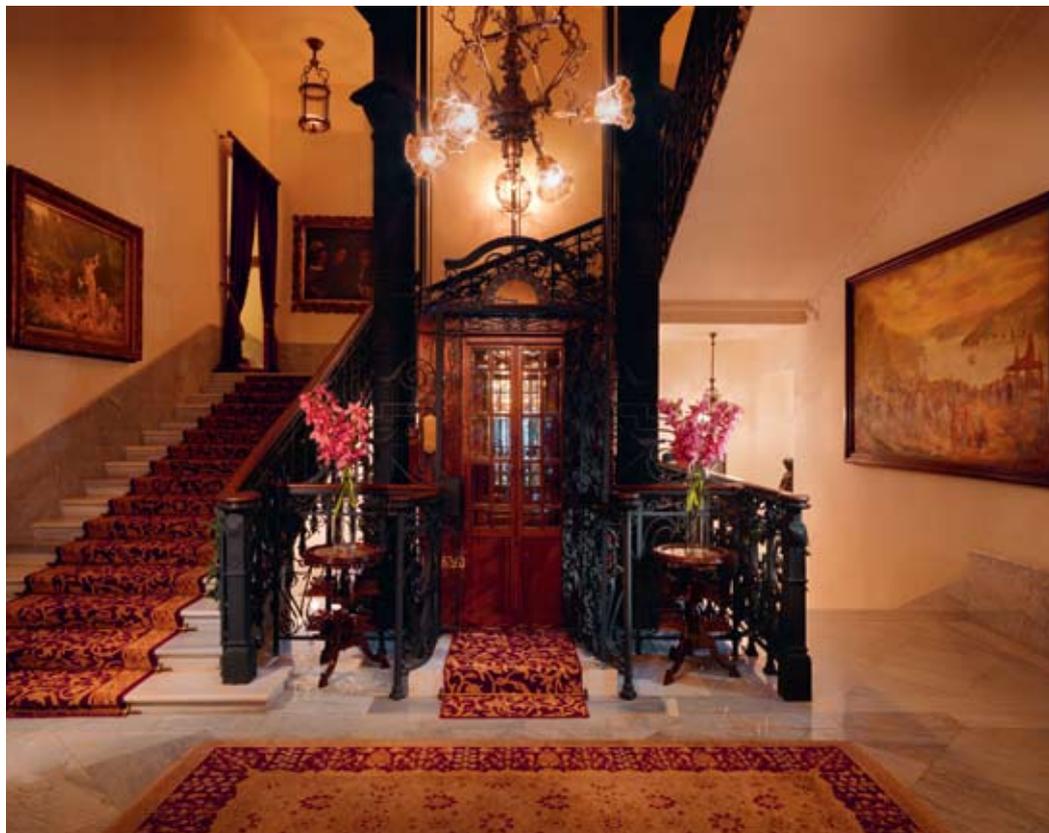
3 Pera Palace, Pera  
*Literate luxury*

Perched on a bluff overlooking Istanbul's Golden Horn, the Pera Palace has long been a beacon for writers and artists. It was built by the French-Ottoman architect Alexander Vallaury in 1892 and Agatha Christie is said to have written *Murder on the Orient Express* here, while Ernest Hemingway was another regular.

Though it has "museum hotel" status and is owned by Turkey's Demsa Group, the Pera is managed and run by Dubai-based Jumeirah, who took over the lease in 2010 after a €23m refurbishment. The changes spruced up the historic building but left it with a little less storied character. Even so, the domed Kubbeli Saloon and Orient Bar have been artfully styled by designer Anouska Hempel with rich fabrics and antiques worthy of the Orient Express heyday. The latter is perfect for a pre-dinner martini.

*Mesrutiyet Caddesi 52, Beyoglu*  
+90 (0)212 377 4000  
[jumeirah.com](http://jumeirah.com)

**MONOCLE COMMENT:** Rooms overlooking the Golden Horn are the best. Make sure you ride up in the old cage lift; it's said to be the second oldest in the world.



4 Four Seasons Hotel Istanbul at the Bosphorus, Besiktas  
*Understated grandeur*

This 19th-century Ottoman seafront edifice is best reached by water taxi, such is its proximity to the Bosphorus. The building itself is magnificent but the interior tone is understated, with classic lines and muted hues. Palace rooms feature high ceilings and arched windows that overlook the strait.

The Aqua restaurant's Italian-influenced menu draws diners for weekend brunch and alfresco dinners and is known for its lavish *iftar* meal to break the fast during Ramadan. The spectacular spa offers indoor and outdoor pools and excellent treatments.

*Ciragan Caddesi 28, Besiktas*  
+90 (0)212 381 4000  
[fourseasons.com/bosphorus](http://fourseasons.com/bosphorus)

**MONOCLE COMMENT:** Concierges here set the standard for the city and are founts of knowledge. They can arrange anything and know almost everyone and everything.

Catch a wave

Istanbul's traffic is notorious and at rush hour the road is best avoided. Water taxis are the most efficient way to move swiftly up and down the Bosphorus and are great for groups. Opt for a Deniz taxi. [deniztaksi.com.tr](http://deniztaksi.com.tr)

5 4 Floors, Galata  
*Home from home*

Tucked down a back street in the heart of Galata, this historic house has been restored by designer Sema Topaloglu and filled with glassware, artwork and furniture crafted in her Balat studio. Warm wooden floors and coffered ceilings create a homely environment suitable for longer stays. Upper storeys have floor-to-ceiling windows and iron-filigreed balconies that look out over the terracotta rooftops of Beyoglu to the Bosphorus beyond.

The penthouse duplex, with its risqué glass bathroom, features furniture by Ingo Maurer and Marcel Wanders. Service is friendly but hands-off; you're left to play at being a local, whether throwing a party or cooking a meal.

*Tercimani Cikmazi 20, Beyoglu*  
+90 (0)532 497 7921  
[4floorsistanbul.com](http://4floorsistanbul.com)

**MONOCLE COMMENT:** You're on the crest of one of Beyoglu's steep cobbled hills so pack sturdy shoes.



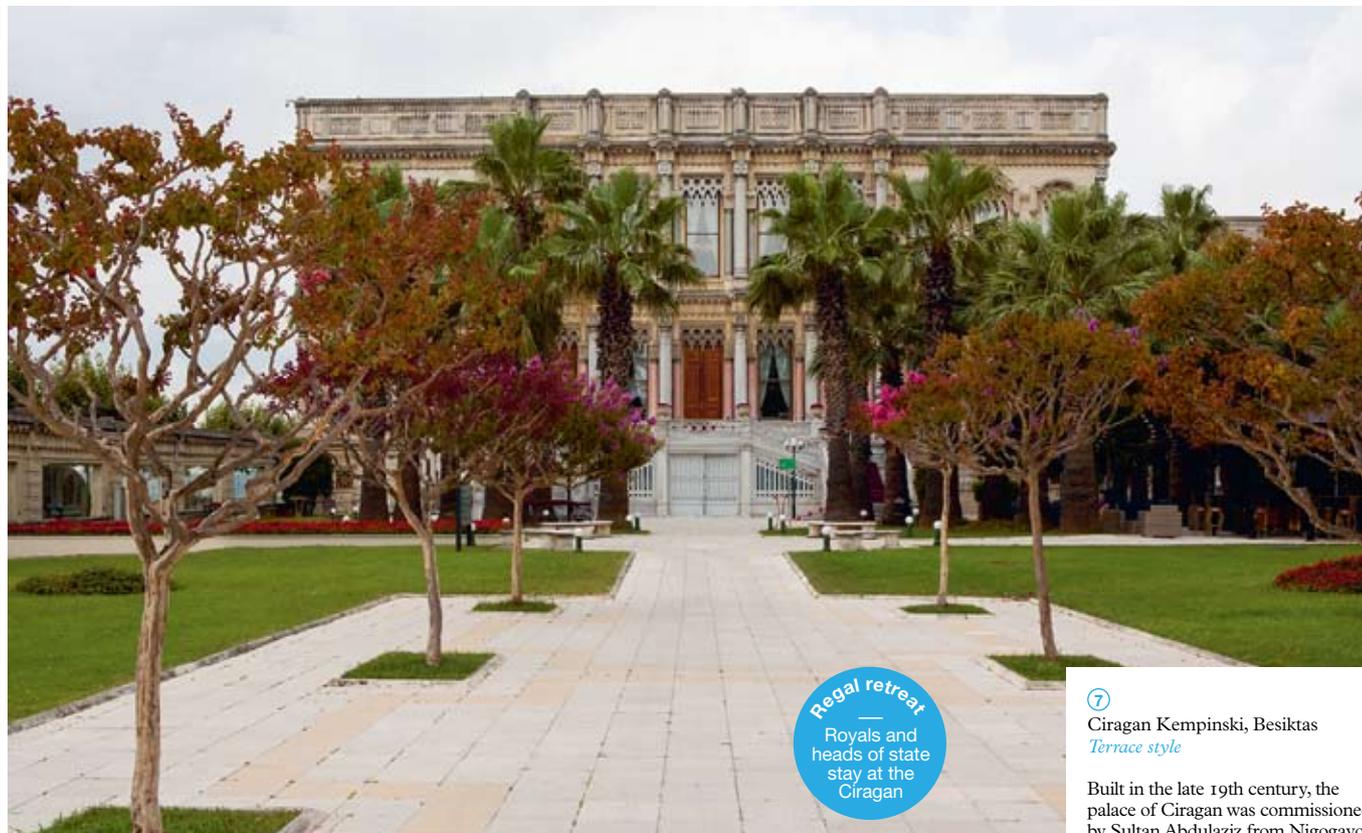
6 Tomtom Suites, Galata  
*Mother of superior stays*

This fin-de-siècle building was once the section of a French embassy reserved for Franciscan nuns. Today it consists of 20 suites that are furnished with wooden mid-century-inspired furniture and adorned with fine examples of contemporary Turkish art. White Carrara marble bathrooms all have underfloor heating and whirlpool baths. A glass lift carries you from the gallery-like four-storey atrium to the roof, which overlooks the city and the historic peninsula beyond.

The rooftop Nicole restaurant, named after a former Abbess, is one of the best fine-dining spots in Istanbul. It is headed by a husband-and-wife team: chef Kaan Sakarya prepares his own personal interpretation of Turkish nouvelle cuisine, while Cordon Bleu-trained pâtissier Aylin Yazicioglu is in charge of the delectable desserts and pastries.

Bogazkesen Caddesi Tomtom,  
Kaptan Sokak 18, Beyoglu  
+90 (0)212 292 4949  
tomtomsuites.com

MONOCLE COMMENT: Ask for a room that offers a view of the Bosphorus from your bathtub. The top-floor luxury suite has a glass-walled bathroom and a private terrace.



Regal retreat  
—  
Royals and heads of state stay at the Ciragan

7 Ciragan Kempinski, Besiktas  
*Terrace style*

Built in the late 19th century, the palace of Ciragan was commissioned by Sultan Abdulaziz from Nigogayos Balyan, architect of the nearby Dolmabahce palace. Today its landscaped grounds and opulent architecture are the backdrop for weddings and parties where guests dine beside the Bosphorus.

Despite an indulgent Ottoman aesthetic, Ciragan has the discreet charm of a grand hotel and an unbeatable waterside location (its modern extension is rather less historic but no less lavish). The heated infinity pool seems to merge with the Bosphorus when viewed from the terrace, with a fog of steam rising above it in winter.

Ciragan Caddesi 32, Besiktas  
+90 (0)212 326 4646  
kempinski.com

MONOCLE COMMENT: Guests in the palace section get a unique treat: a soap butler who cuts blocks of olive-oil soap in 12 different scents.



8 Park Hyatt – Macka Palas, Macka  
*Upscale institution*

Located in the fashionable neighbourhood of Nisantasi, the Park Hyatt – Macka Palas is the hotel of choice for travellers who value privacy and discreet luxury. The hotel, which is set in an elegant art deco building, has an unassuming entrance and understated lobby – the accommodation is where the action is.

All 90 expansive rooms feature bathrooms with a tub, shower and private hamam, while 25 of them also come with a sauna and steam room. The eighth floor is set aside for suites and can be booked in its entirety. The area is where Istanbul's elite browse international brands and Turkish boutiques or relax at terrace cafés.

*Bronz Sokak 4, Sisli  
+90 (0)212 315 1234  
istanbul.park.hyatt.com*

**MONOCLE COMMENT:** Take a morning jog around Macka Park and ride home in a theme park-style cable car across the gorge.



**Concierge and curator services**

- 01 **Eatinerary:** Tailor-made food itineraries by the team behind the Culinary Backstreets tours. Just tell them your tastes and dates and they'll choose dining venues. Suggestions arrive on a handily plotted map. [culinarybackstreets.com/eatinerary](http://culinarybackstreets.com/eatinerary)
- 02 **Locally Istanbul:** The personable duo of Umit Aggul and Erk Erkaya offer informal tours of the city based on your interests, pace, timing and mood. They can also introduce you to a range of experts in art, design and culinary trends. [locallyistanbul.com](http://locallyistanbul.com)
- 03 **Personal Shopping with Ceyda:** Parsons School of Design graduate Ceyda Tavasi helps you negotiate Istanbul's fashion scene with hour-long, half-day and full-day shopping sprees. Get discounts on top brands, plus introductions to young Turkish designers. [ceydatavasi@gmail.com](mailto:ceydatavasi@gmail.com)
- 04 **Context Travel:** These three-hour walking tours for one to six people feature guides who are scholars or specialists with MAs or PhDs in subjects such as history, architecture, art, religion and gastronomy. [contexttravel.com](http://contexttravel.com)
- 05 **Hotel Momcierge:** The world's first family-travel concierge helps parents travel light on the road with English-speaking, vetted babysitters, a full array of baby kit, transfers with child seats, wi-fi hotspots and more. [hotelmomcierge.com](http://hotelmomcierge.com)

9 Witt Suites, Cihangir  
*Playful aesthetic*

This apartment building on a steep hill in leafy Cihangir has been decked out by design firm Autoban with oak rocking chairs, leather sofas and sleek marble tables. Every detail, from the small kitchen to the Ross Lovegrove-designed shower rooms, channels the contemporary Turkish aesthetic that Autoban has become known for; clean modern lines with glints of brass, lacquer and velvet that hint at a rich Ottoman influence.

The upper rooms have beautiful views of the straits and a few have breezy terraces; there is a kitchen garden on the roof where guests can get stuck in to some therapeutic digging and watering. Run by brother and sister Tuncel Toprak and Secil Erdogan, the service is fun, friendly and attentive – not least the unpacking service.

*Deftardar Yokusu 26, Beyoglu  
+90 (0)212 293 1500  
wittistanbul.com*

**MONOCLE COMMENT:** There's no restaurant but you can follow the example of neighbourhood residents and order from Savoy Balik, one of the city's best fish restaurants. They are happy to whisk a perfectly grilled sea bass to your terrace in no time.



**Luxe living**  
—  
The suites have a modernist loft vibe

10 Sumahan on the Water, Cengelkoy  
Waterside retreat

On the Asian side of the Bosphorus just outside Cengelkoy, the Sumahan is a family-owned hotel set in a mid-19th-century factory that once produced *suma*: a spirit made from figs that is then used in the production of raki.

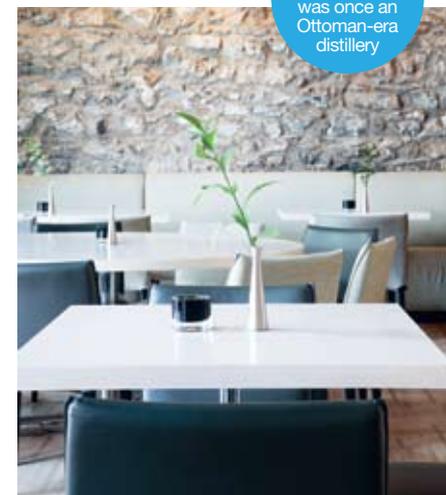
The building was inherited by Turkish-American architect couple Mark and Nedret Butler, who transformed it into a modern hotel while retaining industrial touches. The interiors were designed by their daughter Yasha, who combined Turkish marble and kilims inside with US Adirondack chairs in the garden. Most of the rooms have fireplaces and all have Bosphorus views from large arched windows. There is a white-marble hamam with turquoise Iznik tiles and a shoreline restaurant, Tapasuma. The only downside is that the hotel is a little removed from the action, which can be a bit awkward – you're a 15-minute ride from Kabatas on the hotel's launch.

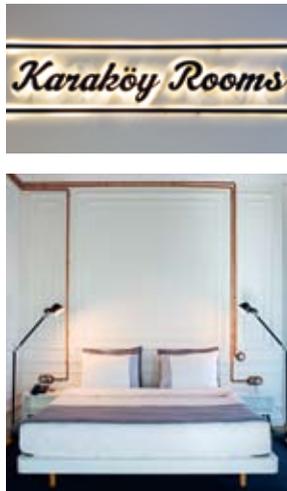
*Kuleli Caddesi 43, Uskudar*  
+90 (0)216 422 8000  
[sumahan.com](http://sumahan.com)

**MONOCLE COMMENT:** Book a suite with French doors opening onto the garden and enjoy sunset views of the Bosphorus from your bed.



Industrial chic  
—  
This hotel was once an Ottoman-era distillery





12 Splendid Palace, Buyukada  
*Island charm*

This art nouveau gem is a twin-domed, whitewashed time capsule. Its glossy parquet floors, heavy brass-and-wood key fobs and rickety panelled lift have escaped the heavy-handed refurbishments seen in grand hotels elsewhere in Europe. It is a slice of island history; the ladies in crocheted capes playing bezique on the marble terrace speak Ladino, the language of Sephardic Jews derived from medieval Spanish and laced with Arabic and Hebrew.

Guests can while away afternoons sipping Turkish mineral water next to a pleasant pool surrounded by faded wooden mansions, bougainvillea and plum trees. Service isn't jump-to-it slick and some of the rooms are crying out for some careful restoration but the Splendid's genteel manager and caring, attentive staff lend the establishment a magnificent air of old-world charm.

*Nisan Caddesi 53, Princes Islands  
+90 (0)216 382 6950  
splendidhotel.net*

MONOCLE COMMENT: Be sure to ask for one of the recently refurbished rooms, which feature antique furniture and chaises longues.



13 Vault Karakoy, Karakoy  
*On-the-money refurb*

Once the headquarters of Credit General Ottoman, this palatial site stood empty for years until it was transformed by architect Han Tumertekin, interior designer Sinan Kafadar and his assistant Asli Cakin (pictured) and boutique hoteliers House Hotel. From the green-marble and white-porcelain roll-top baths to the wool upholstery of the armchairs, rooms have a gravitas that brings out the grandeur of the original structure. There is a historic cage lift, a grand piano in the bar (the original bank vault) and books in front of the large fireplace. Most of the rooms face the street, with the exception of the rooftop suite where you'll find a bath with one of the best Bosphorus vistas in town.

MONOCLE's bureau and radio studio can be found in a mezzanine space that occupies an adjoining building: Cemaat Han, once the community centre of the Neve Shalom congregation.  
*Bankalar Caddesi 5, Beyoglu  
+90 (0)212 244 6434  
thehousehotel.com*

MONOCLE COMMENT: Go for a walk around the surrounding hardware markets. The Jewish Museum in a backstreet behind the hotel is also a rare insight into the area's past.



**Money making**

Impressive Bankalar Caddesi was the centre of the Ottoman empire's financial world. In the late 1960s, Henri Cartier-Bresson photographed suited clerks leaning against the iconic art nouveau Camondo Steps, which were commissioned by the wealthy Jewish Camondo family in 1870.

11 Karakoy Rooms, Karakoy  
*Artistic minimalism*

Run by the same husband-and-wife team who own Karakoy Lokantasi, the fantastic neighbourhood restaurant beneath the hotel, these 12 rooms and studios have parquet floors, white wooden panelling and huge floor-to-ceiling windows (some have glimpses of the water from geranium-covered terraces). Decor is similarly minimal: white bed linen, wooden chairs, writing desks and filament lights connected by on-show copper-covered electrics. In a nod to the building's Ottoman origins, the light-filled bathrooms feature Turkish-made geometric tiles.

The hotel is in the thick of the city's most swiftly changing area, surrounded by bars, boutiques and restaurants and just a skip to the historic peninsula.

*Kemanekes Caddesi 10, Beyoglu  
+90 (0)212 252 5422  
karakoyrooms.com*

MONOCLE COMMENT: Karakoy is home to some of the city's best cafes and boutiques but make sure you also explore the shops selling maritime supplies. Next door-but-one to the hotel is a shop specialising in Filipino brands aimed at sailors in port.



Wow, something smells good - I'm off to page 28



**Art in the city**

An in-house art curator puts on exhibitions at the hotel

