

## **CULTURAL HERITAGE AND ISTANBUL**

In order to introduce cultural and natural assets with universal values accepted as the common heritage of all humanity to the world, to create public awareness for the protection of this universal heritage, and to ensure the necessary cooperation for the preservation of cultural and natural values that have been damaged or lost for various reasons, the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage was adopted on 16 November 1972 during the 17th General Conference of UNESCO held in Paris between 17 October and 21 November 1972.

The Convention, whose participation was deemed appropriate by Law No. 2658 dated 14.04.1982, was approved by the Council of Ministers Decision No. 8/4788 dated 23.05.1982 and published in the Official Gazette No. 17959 dated 14.02.1983.

Natural formations, monuments, and sites of international importance that are therefore worthy of appreciation and protection are granted World Heritage status.

Following an application process initiated by member states that have accepted the Convention and completed after evaluation by experts from the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), candidate assets acquire this status upon the decision of the World Heritage Committee.

One of Türkiye's 19 assets included in the UNESCO World Heritage List is the Historic Areas of Istanbul, accepted in 1985.

In 1985, Istanbul was included in the UNESCO World Heritage List as four separate areas: the Sultanahmet Urban Archaeological Site Area, including the Hippodrome, Hagia Sophia, Hagia Irene, Little Hagia Sophia Mosque, and Topkapı Palace; the Süleymaniye Conservation Area including Süleymaniye Mosque and its surroundings; the Zeyrek Conservation Area including Zeyrek Mosque and its surroundings; and the Istanbul Land Walls Conservation Area.

## ISTANBUL LAND WALLS

The walls surrounding Istanbul were constructed starting from the 7th century and underwent four major reconstructions due to collapses and rebuildings. Their final construction dates to after 408 during the reign of Emperor Theodosius II (408–450).

The walls extended from Sarayburnu along the Golden Horn coastline to Ayvansaray and along the Marmara coast to Yedikule, from Yedikule to Topkapı, and from Topkapı to Ayvansaray. The total length of the walls is 22 km: 5.5 km along the Golden Horn, 6.5 km land walls, and 9 km Marmara walls.

The land walls consist of three sections: the moat, outer wall, and inner wall. The moats have today become agricultural areas.

Adjacent to the walls at intervals of approximately 50 meters, there are 96 towers, many of which are partially collapsed or cracked. These towers protrude approximately 10 meters from the wall line, are mostly square-planned, and approximately 25 meters high.

## **THE GOLDEN HORN**

The Golden Horn (known as the Golden Horn by Westerners) is an inlet of Istanbul. The term refers to a bay at the mouth of a river.

According to Greek legend, the Megarians named it Golden Horn in honor of Keroessa, the mother of their king Byzas.

Colonization during the Byzantine period began here, and it also served as the maritime center of the Byzantine Empire.

Walls built along the coastline protected the city from naval attacks. At the entrance of the Golden Horn, a massive chain was stretched from the city to the northeastern tip of the old Galata Tower to prevent unwanted ships from entering.

The tower was largely destroyed during the Fourth Crusade in 1204, but the Genoese later built a new tower adjacent to it. This tower, known as Galata Tower, was named Christea Turris (Tower of Christ) in 1348.

During the Ottoman period, the area was heavily populated by Bektashi communities.

## **TOPKAPI PALACE**

Topkapı Palace, located in Istanbul, is one of the oldest and largest surviving palaces in the world.

Situated on the acropolis hill overlooking the Golden Horn, the Bosphorus, and the Sea of Marmara, it occupies the historical founding site of Istanbul.

The palace complex covers an area of approximately 700,000 square meters and is surrounded by walls stretching nearly 5 kilometers.

Used for over 500 years, the palace fell into neglect after the sultan moved to Dolmabahçe Palace but was restored during the Republican era and converted into a museum.

Among the most valuable exhibits are relics attributed to Prophet Muhammad, including his cloak, tooth, footprint, and sword, brought from Cairo during the reign of Sultan Selim I, as well as the famous Spoonmaker's Diamond and the Topkapı Dagger.

## **GALATA TOWER**

Galata Tower, located in the Galata district of Beyoğlu, Istanbul, was originally constructed in 528.

It offers a panoramic view of the city and was initially built by Byzantine Emperor Anastasius.

After being heavily damaged during the Fourth Crusade in 1204, it was rebuilt by the Genoese in 1348.

The first three floors bear Genoese architectural characteristics, while the upper floors reflect Ottoman influence.

In 2013, Galata Tower was included in the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List as part of the Genoese Trade Route.

## **TAKSIM SQUARE**

Taksim Square derives its name from the distribution of water during the Ottoman period.

After being expanded from a narrow residential area, it became one of Istanbul's main squares.

The Republic Monument at its center serves as a ceremonial and gathering place.

The monument, designed by Italian sculptor Pietro Canonica, was completed in 1928 and represents Atatürk and the foundations of the Republic.

## **HAGIA SOPHIA MOSQUE**

Hagia Sophia, meaning Holy Wisdom, is a former basilica, cathedral, museum, and current mosque located in Istanbul.

It was constructed between 532 and 537 by Byzantine Emperor Justinian I.

After the conquest of Istanbul in 1453, it was converted into a mosque by Sultan Mehmed II.

Converted into a museum in 1947, it served as a museum until 2020, when it was reconverted into a mosque.

Its architectural features mark a significant turning point in architectural history.

## **SULTANAHMET MOSQUE**

Sultanahmet Mosque, also known as the Blue Mosque, was built between 1609 and 1617 by order of Sultan Ahmed I.

It is decorated with over 20,000 Iznik tiles and is Türkiye's first mosque with six minarets.



## **MAIDEN'S TOWER**

Maiden's Tower, located off the coast of Üsküdar, has a history dating back to 408 BC.

It has served various functions including a defense tower, quarantine station, lighthouse, and restaurant.

The tower underwent multiple restorations, most recently completed in May 2023 by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

## **RULES OF CONDUCT AT CULTURAL HERITAGE SITES**

To enhance your experience and preserve cultural heritage sites for future generations, please comply with the following rules:

- Wearing revealing clothing and speaking loudly in places of worship is prohibited.
- Permission must be obtained before photographing religious leaders, children, or strangers.
- Sitting or leaning on monuments or fragile historical artifacts is prohibited.
- Altering, moving, touching, or selling archaeological artifacts is prohibited.
- Consumption of alcohol and smoking is prohibited in designated areas.
- Giving money or sweets to children encourages begging; donations should be made to recognized charities.
- Public indecent exposure is strictly prohibited and subject to penalties.
- Purchasing illegal products derived from endangered wildlife species should be avoided.
- Polluting the environment and nature is strictly prohibited and subject to penalties.