

Hey P.,

You once said you wanted to read the stuff I write in the future. I think this is one of them. Or at least this is the sharing of my knowledge. I can only hope this helps you understand Istanbul a bit better.

Welcome to Istanbul and happy birthday!

All the sites and important things in this guide are capitalized. I have italicized the fun and interesting stuff. The guide is in separated into walks, because finding an exact address in Istanbul is really hard. You can only rely on other people giving you directions "go go go, take a left, take a second right etc.", so maybe this will be an authentic experience. The recommendations seem a lot but the walks will not take that long.

If you are flying with Turkish Airlines that's great because they have good service. They are a private company, but they are also aligned with the government as a public image- they once sacrificed camels in front of a plane for a religious holiday and took a photo of it. For PR? Probably. But they have free alcohol! With entertainment! Like movies, which are edited in time and aspect ratio and content, and unedited music! They even have Wi-Fi on certain flights, so you can do whatever you want!

I was thinking that you would read this tour guide in between your unintentional naps. They come in unexpected times, and it is very easy to give in.

Anyhow. Apart from the ceremonial applauding of the pilot that only Turks and Italians share, the music they put on when you land used to be this welcoming music from this band *İncesaz* (check the playlist, I couldn't find the actual song so I opted out for a typical one. It's at least named "September".), but now it is this new song. More active and inspirational, actually inspired from birds migrating, but much more boring than a bird's cross-continental flight.

Welcome to Istanbul!

Take in this new culture! Even the things you see while you are waiting for your luggage is so new, a new language, new signs, CHECK THOSE MOTHERFUCKING BIDETS IN THE RESTROOMS, new forms of communication, people around you puffing, probably balding all around, glasses, moustaches, women covered with varying headscarves, patterned on an object, women uncovered, with kids, men with the second button of their striped polo shirt open and their chest hair spouting out.

Ok so you have gotten out of the border, now you have to go to where the buses are. HAVATAŞ buses are from 4am to 1am every day. They will get you to TAKSIM, where I think you will be staying. I don't know if they accept foreign currency or not. So you might have to exchange 5\$. It is the best way because cabs might scam you.

And then you settle in to your temporary home, there are coordinates on the wall, you know where you are, shit is zen.

INTERLUDE!!!

Yo so I just remembered that you need some Turkish phrases! The "ı" -the logical little "I", without the tittle- is hard to pronounce, but it is like how you pronounce "e" in "locker".

Nasılsın? : How are you?
Teş(sh)ekkur ederim. : Thank you.
Merhaba : Hello
Nerede? : Where?
Tuvalet : Restroom
Taksi is taxi.

Alright fuck it, anybody will teach you swear words anyhow, and you can make friends much easier if you shout profanities.

Göt : Ass
Am : Pussy
Yarrak (try to elongate the "r" as much as possible, like YARRRRRRRRRRRR I had a running joke with a female friend on who could address each other as "my cock" [because you do in Turkey] the longestRRRAAAAAAAAAAAAAARAAAAAAKK) : Cock
Hassiktir! : Fuck!
Siktir lan! : Fuck off!
Ağzına sıçarım : I will shit in your mouth. (We really do say it.)
Pezevenk : Pimp: a profession frowned upon in Turkish culture, unlike 50 Cent's.

Interlude Ends!!!

WALK NO#1: THE WALK TO ACTUALLY WALK (I MEAN ALL THE OTHER SHIT IS GREAT TOO)

Go to TAKSIM SQUARE. Taksim means "distribution" and this is where the water was distributed from in the olden golden days.¹ You will see The Marmara Hotel². There is a Starbucks there, as there will be close to four on your way down in this walk, and you can use them as restrooms. No receipt needed. You can also probably use the hotels' as well.

Facing the hotel, to your left there is the *Atatürk Culture Center*, which had a rotating stage for performances, an interesting interior, and a nostalgic carpark. It was draped with signs and flags when the protests were happening.

¹ Oh fuck I'm sorry, here is a very important bit of information. Istanbul varies in height a lot! Ups and downs wherever you go. It is called the "City of Seven Hills" due to the hills in the old city, but it should have been called "City of Don'tevenknowman...athousand? Slopes". TAKSIM is the highest point for you and should be your reference point. You can go down many roads from there, as we will.

² The southern side of the Bosphorus opens up the the Marmara Sea. As I just checked right now because I was wondering whether there is a correlation between Phosphorus and Bosphorus (just the letter "phi" becoming "b"), Bosphorus is Greek for "Bessians + way". Wow, Greece after Istanbul will be very interesting.

Behind you will be the steps to *GEZI PARK*. This is where all the protests took place in Summer 2013. The whole thing was beautiful, but also too good to be true and Turks can't get along anyhow, so- If you enter it, and you should, imagine tents everywhere except on the stone roads, now the municipality has actually made it look better with flowers probably, but it was in shambles before and nobody even went there before the government announced a mall was going to be built, there were just junkies and hobos back then, and in the middle there is a fountain and there were speak outs and concerts and stuff on the stage to the right. That's all, really. It was nice though.

If you cross *GEZI PARK* and then take a bus or the subway in that direction, see Walk TK.

But don't cross it. Come back to the square, around where the monument is. Cop cars are maybe lined up across, occupying pedestrians' pavement. Vendors selling corn. They shout "Corn like milk!" because the corn feels creamy. Or you can buy it grilled and that's a whole another story.

Once again facing The Marmara³, there is a downhill hairpin-ish road from the left that goes to the sea. You won't walk down there ever so here is what is there:

-Germany's embassy. With some other smaller embassies across.

-Istanbul's only Chinatown gate only for a long standing Chinese restaurant.

Asian cuisine in Istanbul is not bad, it may have gotten lazier with more upscale options, even if it is more Americanized than America's Chinese cuisine. No Asians in Turkey yet. Only tourists. But not a lot of them either.

-A high school, I think.

-The torn down (and maybe they have started building the new one actually?) stadium of *Beşiktaş*, one of the big three football (Not this time, America's soft-power!) teams in Turkey. Their colors are black and white, and they make it much more serious. Very honorable and civil, but also the best ever fans that will make the stadium roar. Seriously. Close by there was a hill to watch the matches for free. It was literally called "Freehill".

-Past *KABATAŞ*, *Dolmabahçe Palace* is where Atatürk died. Interesting dude. But also understandable. I don't know if I have been there. Maybe when I was a kid and at a school trip. Nice garden. You can have tea next to the p(a)lace and look at the sea. Be careful about the prices of tea and tourist traps.

You can imagine all this road sprayed on with tags, buses flipped as roadblocks, and an all around joy around the protest times.

Aaaaaaaaand we're back to the square. So now The Marmara is behind and to the left of you. You are with the monument, facing down *TAKSIM SQUARE* to *İSTİKLAL CADDESİ* (*İSTİKLAL AVENUE*, in French it is apparently *GARDE DE RUE DE PERA*, which is just... why?) and this is it!⁴ This is the most popular place of Istanbul's

³ The cool kids just call it The Marmara.

⁴ At least for right now.

Europe. All the embassies, foreign stuff, all the weirdness, culture, counterculture, this is where it all started. Very old, check the balconies and roofs like a tourist would do⁵.

Before you go down, if you go left from where all the real *döner*⁶ and *dürüm* are (*ıslak hamburger* [our burger] is just 2TL and it is a Turkish sloppy joe. Anthony Bourdain called it "the best stoner food", I say "Why not?"), and take Siraselviler Caddesi, it will go to CİHANGİR, which is the first ever hip neighbourhood of Istanbul. There are more, but this is our Williamsburg.⁷ This was predicted 15-20 years ago by a shitty Turkish movie director who bought half the apartments, and this actually started happening in the last decade. All the artists, young professionals, whatever, who can afford to live here, live here.

You should absolutely lose your way in these streets. The further you go down, especially from the left, you will reach Defterdar Yokuşu, where there is *Van Kahvaltı Evi* for great breakfast from Eastern Turkey, where it is very high up above a plateau and there are harsh winters but delicious breakfasts. It was not that expensive too.

Take a right, and go down from ÇUKURCUMA where there is all kinds of stuff, such as:

-*The Museum of Innocence*, where the Nobel laureate Orhan Pamuk⁸ actually created a museum from the protagonist's life. Anytime she would light a cigarette, so would he etc. Cigarettes in Turkey are good because they are cheap. Some people also like the extra tar.

-*Cuma*. Nice brunch-ish, modern Turkish cuisine. They do great eggs with cheese from all around Turkey. Sit outside, watch nearby shop interactions.

-A breathing clinic where, apart from improving your breathing through physical activities they tap into the metaphysical side of you as you breathe really really fast for a minute so that you can literally access "the deeper parts of your brain". It follows William James' (outdated, but so what? it is all a narrative) sub-conscious idea, but then it gets mixed with "The Secret" and "What the Bleep Do We Know" and cosmic hacking. I

⁵ So once I heard a joke about how you can always spot a tourist in Manhattan because they look up at the roofs, but then I started looking up as well. You have to appreciate your city, no? İSTİKLAL CADDESİ is the place for that where there is constant attention diversion.

⁶ Gyro, probably from "to gyrate", which means "*dönmek*" in Turkish, which can have a different suffix and become a "*döner*", "the one who turns". *Dürüm* is a "thin long wrap". These ones sell *döner* in *dürüm* with cheese, fries, and some other stuff. They butter the sides. It is as brutal as it is heavenly.

⁷ Fun fact: Stereotypical American hipsters sport a trucker cap and moustache to embrace the cheap, trashy American culture. Turkish hipsters wear the same clothes because American hipsters do it. When McDonalds first opened in Istanbul people waited in lines in their fanciest clothes to get a burger.

⁸ A writer worth the prize, but he won it because of political statements (probably truths) he made, and like all the other Nobel prizes, it was given as a gesture, good or bad. However, it is very interesting that Orhan Pamuk's acceptance speech was very autobiographical. Even Faulkner wrote about believing in the goodness of man. He must have been very happy to win the award.

should have discovered them when I was 15 and really into this. And the owners are happy, so, whatever works.

-*Çukurcuma Hamamı* and *Galatasaray Hamamı*. I have never been to a Turkish bath, so check them out on the Internet before going.⁹ These seem to be shady and touristy. Still, they probably have beautiful architecture.

-*Çukurcuma Köftecisi*. Just meatballs. Great. Cheap. Order a bean salad to share. -Drink tea and people watch/watch people. Turkish culture is both heavy on sitting down and also consuming some kind of nicotine or caffeine. Outside seats are important to us. Or they are after the no-indoors smoking law passed.

-Get a bottle of wine (and cheese [go to a *bakkal* (bodega) and get *eski kaşar*] and bread) and sit down on the leftmost stairs of Cihangir, look at the sea. Play songs from your phone. This option is available all day and night, best in the late afternoon.

And that's it. The last time I have been in Istanbul was last year plus eight days, and the city has changed so much. CİHANGİR must be very different now. There are artisanal coffee shops. Probably a bunch of new stores. Great clothes for you. What else, I don't know. Just get lost. You'll find something. If you want to get out you climb back up the hill. That's it.

We are back on top of the hill. There is a threeway fork. You are facing İSTİKLAL AVENUE. To your left there is CİHANGİR. To the road that parts to the right, and further right down, there is TARLABAŞI, slums-lite where the drug deals happen sometimes. There is a gentrification wave of artists living there, amongst gypsies and illegal immigrants from Central Africa¹⁰, and you can explore the place in daytime. However, the municipality has been promising a complete overhaul, a hardcore gentrification that razes the buildings down to create modern living spaces. It has already begun in the back of the neighbourhood, but I don't know if it has started behind where they have advertisements for walls covering the side of the road. They had a middle class and religious-secular mixed faces smiling as potential occupants of the modeled plans.

Anyhow.

İSTİKLAL AVENUE.

⁹ Holy shit. As I was looking this up online, the first Google link led to <http://www.ammamguide.com/> to a review of a bath in Çukurcuma with a gay experience! Whoaaaa! There are even happy endings and shit! Maybe shitting. I mean, bathhouses have their reputation, and the Ottomans were quite gay, there is even a Ferzan Özpetek movie (it's in *Suggestions for P.*) about that and hamams, but this felt like news once again. The image of those burly Turkish men (very "bear") giving you a handjob didn't exist in my brain until now. But also the website is a great idea because people review Turkish baths, and that can be useful if you want to go and get scrubbed. Then you will become white/Feta(?) cheese, as we say in Turkish.

¹⁰ So far I have seen two documentaries (only because I was involved very slightly or it was an hour to kill after school) about this subject. One of them is about this Congolese singer/songwriter Enzo Ikah. He has learned Turkish, does reggae, loves everybody despite the shit he has gone through, and has been received by some official thing. Absolutely fascinating, if only because it has happened in Turkey.

People used that Burger King as a meeting spot before phones. They still do. Around the Burger King, there is a church nearby with a lot of cats. There is a kebab place (Hacı something. Not important.) that has a view of the church garden with cats.

Food: On the opposite side of the avenue, *Şimşek Pide Salonu* makes open Turkish pizzas, on pitas, and we call it *pide*. It comes with many different choices of meat and cheese. The place looks shitty, but deals serious food. *Parsifal*, this restaurant close by, is vegetarian and I saw it on Trip Advisor. Haven't been but the reviews are good. I don't think that Joanna was a vegetarian, but you never know who amongst you can be the vegetarian. Istanbul cuisine is all about meat, don't let the vegetable appetizers fool you. The main course is always meat. Or fish at best.

And finally you can walk down İSTİKLAL AVENUE.

The French Embassy, the first building to your right with some greenery is gorgeous inside. Get in that shit and check the quad.

The dessert places across like *Sütiş* are rip offs that make you pay for water when you ask a Turkish coffee. Turkish coffee comes with water, if nothing else. Nobody drinks Turkish coffee before noon, so you have a small temporal window there to have one if you want to, but I don't think it's strong enough to affect your sleep if you have one in the afternoon. Same with tea. People drink a lot of *ajdas* (the small curvy glasses) during the day. It's a way to spend time.

Next to the first, huge, seven screens movie theater that has massage chairs beyond the descending escalators is *Borsa*. It is the table d'hote¹¹ version of an old, famous restaurant (see WALK TK). You will have better opportunities to try interesting Turkish delicacies, but keep this place in mind for last resort.

The massive clothing stores blare their generic music outside. It's crazy.

To your right there will be a small mosque. Look for the yellowish walls. The street that goes in across the mosque is Sadri Alışık Sokak (Sokak = Street). Go through, and to your left there should be *Lades 2*. Best fucking breakfast ever.¹² Seriously. Let me explain. Their plates are tin, and for some reason this makes the eggs taste ten times better. Get all kinds of eggs, especially with the cured meat ones, *sucuk* and *pastırma*, they make you smell bad sometimes but it is so worth it. Don't stop, get the *beyaz (white) peynir* and olives! Don't stop get the cucumber and tomatoes and dip some bread in that! Don't be afraid! AND FOR THE LOVE OF ALL THAT IS HOLY THIS IS IN CAPS FOR A PURPOSE PLEASE ORDER THE **KAYMAK AND HONEY** AND SPREAD IT ALL OVER THE BREAD AND EAT IT I CAN IT THAT FOREVER THIS IS GOD'S GIFT TO HUMANKIND. The restaurant across is open dinnertime, it is *Lades 1*, but it has old-school food. Probably good. Further up the street, and then to the right, there is a police station. Not a lot of good come out of there.

¹¹ Table d'hot-"Tabldot" in Turkey means multiple selections put on a segregated trays. That's what lower-middle class people eat for lunch. High school style. Anywhere else in the world it means a prix fixe menu and has expensive connotations. Note as of today: It also just means menu here in Montreal. Strange.

¹² Breakfast is very very very very very important in Turkish culture. A famous Turkish poet once said "I don't know what's your idea on eating, but breakfast must have a connection to happiness."

So, come back to İSTİKLAL AVENUE. There is a huge mall after the mosque. Fuck that mall. There was an old movie theater in the alleyway and they tore it down to make it. Fuck that mall, but it also has the cheapest electronics store around here.

Turn right after passing the mall, walk down, and you will see *Küçük (Little) Beyoğlu*, where they have five floors, fifty cocktails and shots, and only one hour of a music playlist, just like the only alternative music station in Turkey (Radyo Eksen/XN, 96.2, give it a listen at 2am, it is quite broody but also pleasant) that plays English songs. High school years were great there because the drinks were more interesting than the only one kind of beer. Beyond *Küçük Beyoğlu*, there is the terrace of *Peyote*, it gets dimly lit at night, where you can drink a beer and listen to a good DJ. Speaking of beer, drink *Bomonti* if you want to drink good Turkish beer. Drink *Efes* because it is the quintessential Turkish beer.

Right across the mall is *Saray Muhallebicisi*. Any food is good here, but they excel in desserts, as evidenced by the dripping sugar on the display window. Get the *su muhallebisi* (starch pudding with rosewater), *fırın sütlaç* (rice pudding) with ice cream, *tavuk göğsü* (chicken breast, but it is a lovely dessert, order *kazandibi* if you want it burnt), and *künefe* if you want a challenge¹³. For food, the *iskender*¹⁴ (another behemoth in Turkish cuisine, definitely try it, or at least see it with your own eyes) is decent if you won't have the time to eat it at *Umut Ocakbaşı Restaurant*, apparently, which I have checked online and is very close to you right now. I haven't been there, the other *iskender* places (that only do *iskender* for example, with huge restaurants, only for one thing!) are only accessible by cars.

To its right there will be ATLAS PASAJI (ARCADE). Its movie posters at the entrance have their own sticker fonts. Inside there is the old movie theater¹⁵ and past that there is a giant old kind of mall with clothes everywhere and all kinds of whatchamacallit. It's fun. Explore.

Somewhere around is an ice cream vendor who sells sticky ice cream called *Kahramanmaraş dondurması*. He puts on a show usually. I don't know whether his ice cream is that good, but why not when the show is this fun?

The movie theatre called *Yeni Rüya (New Dream) Sineması*, just used to be *Rüya*¹⁶, you can still see the name above it, and used to show sex movies. Double billing ("Two Super Movies At Once" wrote the marquee five years ago, even after discontinuing the art of running a porno theatre) for the price of one if you can endure it.

A bit further down İSTİKLAL AVENUE, you will see ÇİÇEK PASAJI (FLOWER PASSAGE) on your right. Look up to the ceiling after you enter. Try to go at

¹³ What's underneath the caramelized top is a huge surprise. Still amazes me to this day.

¹⁴ Translated from Alexander. Literally.

¹⁵ -, one of the theatres where Istanbul holds its movie festival. The movies would be spread out all around TAKSIM and BEYOĞLU movie theaters. I used to skip school and go to five of them a day, and eat dessert at *Saray Muhallebicisi* in between screenings. It was one of my marathons.

¹⁶ Nearly everything on İSTİKLAL AVENUE used to be in that golden text over wooden brown to prevent some kind of a neon Tokyo emerging. It is more colorful now, but I also have an attachment to the blandness of the same font, same background for all the stores, a rule once even imposed on Burger King and McDonalds.

night if you can, there are Turkish buskers who play the same old entertaining songs for diners. You will definitely hear the music if you are walking down the avenue at night. If you leave from the other exit that crawls to the left, you will be in NEVİZADE, a street of bars and fish restaurants. Get *kokoreç* (minced intestines, sounds disgusting but actually quite great street food), fried clams and calamari at *Mercan Kokoreç*.

Lambo is a place where thirteen-fourteen year olds in secular high schools go on a Friday. *Meyhanes* (wine houses) are a huge part of the culture, with outside seating tables of ten to fifteen. Try to go to a *meyhane*, and spread those appetizers all over the table, order *tarator*, *LAKERDA* (pickled bonito, best thing on the menu), *muammara* (squashed and spicy peanut paste), and many many others. Don't order any main courses because they are never that good, instead order a big 750ml bottle of *RAKI*. Get merry, and realize how drunk you have gotten only when you stand up. *Cumhuriyet Meyhanesi* is very famous and right on NEVİZADE.¹⁷ *Paro* is a lovely wine bar. At the very end of this special street, for a real culture shock, there is *James Joyce Irish Pub* where only until a couple of years ago they have started selling Guinness, and for like 9 bucks. On St. Patty's Day they would have green Efes. Nice place in the empty daytime.

Okay, enough of NEVİZADE, come back where you came from and go out through CICEK PASAJI. Across the İSTİKLAL AVENUE entrance, there is *Galatasaray Lisesi*, a French missionary high school, and the namesake of one of the big three in Turkish football¹⁸. There is a hierarchy between the classes, and students graduate with a dedicated school spirit, unlike most others.

To your left, there is a road that goes downhill. There is *Ara Cafe*, the restaurant/living-space-I-think of famous Istanbul photographer Ara Güler. Check the photos, they are one of the best representations of Istanbul, maybe get *çökertme*, which is shoestring fries, meat, yoghurt, tomato sauce, and it tastes much better than it sounds. Food comes very quickly. Further down there is *Gon*, one of the few comic book stores in Istanbul right now selling only Turkish comics. There are probably more, at least some at MODA/KADIKOY (see WALK 3). If you go further down you will connect to ÇUKURCUMA. There is also a shot bar called *Tektekçi* that serves outside, and they have all kinds of weird drinks. Interesting to say the least.¹⁹

If you go the opposite way of the downhill road, across *Galatasaray Lisesi* there is a *büfe* (a sandwich/toast to go restaurants, no word for it in English) that does something called the *Ayvalık Toast*. Just look at it and despair.

Past that toast place and into the side-street (seriously, did you check out *Ayvalık Tostu*? You just gotta.) is the British embassy, surrounded by brick walls, and through the

¹⁷ *Yare* and *Refik 2* (Turks like sequels, even for restaurants) are good *meyhanes*, more local, if you take a left from NEVİZADE they should be down the hill at ASMALI MESCİT. You can research better ones, I'm sure.

¹⁸ I am a supposed Galatasaray supporter, but I don't follow. I never committed to it, although I would have liked to, I've switched teams once in the past, my dad has multiple times after following Fenerbahçe for 35 years. Football is a completely different world. It is a religion, as John Oliver says.

¹⁹ For a shittier, dinger, and a literally watered down version of that place, go to the divey *Montreal* at ASMALI MESCİT.

right there is another arcade that sells old books and vinyls but not good ones, and it must still be fun just to take a peek in.²⁰

Back onto İSTİKLAL AVENUE, after you cross *Galatasaray Lisesi*, you are now in BEYOĞLU. Get *börek* (fillo dough, filled with whatever) at *Hammurabi*. The important one is the long, spiraling minced meat *börek*, but there is something called the Kurdish *börek*, which might be used disparagingly because it is a cheap *börek* only with powdered sugar on top. It may be cheap, but it is also one of the best.

Closeby, next to a religious bookstore (across a very secular bookstore "YKY"), there is the *Hazzopulo Passage*, it is not very interesting, but there is a building that you enter and take the elevator to the top floor where you can smoke *nargile* (hookah) and drink tea with a lovely view.

There will be another, much bigger and prominent passage on your right across some generic restaurant chain Midpoint called *Odakule Passage*, but both the wall and the engraving is black so it is hard to see the name. The end of the passage will yield to an autopark, and right next to it the ugliest building in Istanbul, *the government TV (TRT) building*.²¹

A closeby club is called *Curcuna*. Haven't been, but it is supposed to have a circus/carousel-like bar. I don't know how interesting that will be.

If you walk left, especially from the right side of another The Marmara, you will be walking through PERA, which is one of the fanciest streets of Istanbul. There is the *Beyoğlu Öğretmen Evi*, a teachers' lounge that serves great and very inexpensive in a very official setting with a lovely view on its top floor. It has *Pera Palas*, an old hotel where Atatürk stayed once. That room is permanently sealed, kept in the same way, and for visitors' eyes only. Agatha Christie also stayed at the hotel, her room isn't sealed, so you can stay there, but watch out for the maid. Heh heh heh.

Anyhow, PERA is a totally valid way to walk down to the water (even though you might have to pass the low-income neighbourhood of KASIMPAŞA, and it is not that interesting, except Erdoğan is from there, he makes a point about being from 'the hood', and there is a huge stadium bearing his name), but this walk goes back to İSTİKLAL AVENUE.

Come back from *Odakule Passage*, walk down, stop by at *Olivya Geçidi* (Passage) and get Turkish coffee at *Mandabatmaz*. Do this, it's important. Since Turks drink it either as afternoon teatime or espressos after meals, Turkish coffee is not in the

²⁰ The arcade was featured in this very sappy, but not 70s campy sappy, and famous movie about a man who wasn't ready for commitment but who would buy records from this same arcade while encountering a woman and they fall in love, and he was a chef, and of course you would fall in love with him only to have him disappoint you in the end, resulting in an actual crying epidemic, endless tears in the female restrooms of movie theaters all over Turkey. Men didn't get it.

²¹ Watch Turkish TV high if you have one at the Airbnb (I just realized that Airbnb is "fly" to your "bed and breakfast", or it's just a very catchy name). Turks watch TV for chaos, crying, and catharsis.

everyday culture a lot. *Mandabatmaz's* Turkish coffee is delicious and this is the place to experience it.

Tangent because of a conversation I had in *Mandabatmaz!!!*

Try to listen to the word "allah" around Turks. Apart from the regular "god save us", "god willing", there are Arabic idioms that contain the suffix "-allah" and pass for a symbolic verbal exchange because nobody knows what they mean.²²

Here are a few examples:

Eyvallah : It's alright/Okay/Thank you

Fesupanallah! : Telling god that you've had it (Ranges from a whisper to a cry.)

Alimallah: I hope...

The word "allah" simply gets forgotten within the bigger one, to the extent that it is used in Top 40 love songs (because all Turkish songs are love songs) without any awareness that they are singing Muslim pop.

Tangent over!!

On the parallel street downwards, there is *Ficcın*, with excellent Anatolian food. Order the dumplings²³ with yoghurt,²⁴ *Çerkez tavuğu*, and *Ficcın* itself.

Across where you came from is the *St. Antuan Kilisesi (Church)*. It has a couple of parishes facing each other at the sides of the entrance, and it is the cutest thing you will ever see on this avenue.

Actually, I lied. The cutest things are to your right side after you walk down. There is a gate that is probably closed, but inside there are a lot of cats! So many! One of Istanbul's really great things is neutered and vaccinated street animals roaming the city.

On the same side there will be *Canım Ciğeri: İhsan Usta*. It is shish liver. You eat it taco-style, even picking the ingredients of your personal taco with your hand. İhsan Usta (İhsan Master) apparently was working at the original *Canım Ciğeri*, at PERA, and he left due to a feud, and his livers are better, so they say. I have been to the original, and I love it, it is the only way (and fried) I can eat liver, and if İhsan Usta's is better, I

²² This obviously causes a massive communication breakdown when the Quran is translated into Turkish and into a different alphabet than Arabic. Not that interpreting the actual language in different dialects and regions has helped the world as well.

²³ Influenced by Asian cuisine. Uyghur Turks (some kinsmen of the ones prosecuted in China) have *lağmen*, which is "lo mein"! Very thick bread too, for their long, cold winters. *Türkistan Uygur Restaurant* is walking distance from the GRAND BAZAAR, but it is too much of an eccentricity at your trip right now.

²⁴ Oh my god we put yoghurt on everything in Turkey! Whoa. Whoaaaaa we put yoghurt on anything. There is even a recipe where you put them on cold poached eggs. Spinach! My dad eats spaghetti with yoghurt! I like it too! Rice! What the actual fuck!

can't imagine how good the spin off must be. So good that I would devote a whole paragraph.

Across, next to the Holland embassy, there is *Richmond Hotel*. On top of it is a restaurant called *Leb-i Derya*. It has an amazing view of the area. Go up at sunset on a weekday and have tea. They probably serve alcohol too.

The Şişhane subway station is next to a Fatburger (if it still is right now), it was another burger place before.

That small open square you end up in is called TUNEL. It contains the first subway of Turkey, second oldest in the world. It is very short and kind of unnecessary, especially because the next subway line was built 125 years later, but going uphill on a hot day it becomes very pleasant.

If you make a u-turn, you will enter ASMALI MESCIT²⁵. This is a huge part of the nightlife²⁶. Foreigners and locals all get drunk and some show their butts to strangers. It will be a trip to walk through the crowd on a weekend, but on daytime it is a very pleasant neighbourhood to stroll and have a beer outside in an open air passage across a House Cafe. There are some old school venues if you want to dance, like *Babylon* and *Otto*. If you go to *Otto*, ask for a *Sakız Shot*, it is not strong, just sweet, an interesting idea of gum vodka.

Kloster is a classy techno club²⁷ and brings good DJs. I haven't been because it opened this year, but my friends recommend it, even though there are a bunch of young people doing drugs there, and it is the only place to do drugs in Istanbul, so it might be a sad sight. However, *Nizam Pide Salonu* across is anything but sad, they got great *pide*.

Peymane is amazing for kebabs! And close to you guys as well! There is also *Antiochia* somewhere close there for a more authentic southeastern Turkey feel.

Go to *Dürümzade* for *dürüm*. They put a little less meat in it now that they are famous, so don't be disappointed and ask for double. Go to *33 Mersin Tantuni* if you're drunk.

Just walk around ASMALI MESCIT and you will encounter something, because it is literally another way up to TAKSIM, another avenue going up İSTİKLAL AVENUE. Think of Park Slope and how a busy avenue's parallel buddies are as interesting as the denser ones. Throughout your walk down the avenue, CIHANGIR and CUKURCUMA have been to your left, but there are many capillaries that swarm the neighbourhoods.

Back at TUNEL, take the hill down next to where all the music stores are. Get a juice at one of the vendors. Go down, there is a weird shrine or something tucked over

²⁵ Or MESCID. The government has been renaming the street signs, because D (the softened T) is more Islamic Arabic.

²⁶ When the shops' blinders are closed at night, you will spot a graffiti (in Turkish it's "grafitti") of a yellow arm ending with a fist. Look out for it everywhere you go. In a couple you can see what is at the other end of the arm.

²⁷ You have three options (not an exact estimate) if you want to dance in this walk. Go to an outside *meyhane* and dance to gypsy tunes, go to one of the few good nightclubs (I don't know whether Cassette does good music), or dance to Turkish music in campy dance halls on the street perpendicular to the street that ends NEVİZADE.

there but nobody gives a shit. Go further down and you will reach GALATA TOWER!²⁸ You can/should go up there, it is a beautiful 360 view on a balcony. It was used as a tower to spot fires around Istanbul. The colors of flame, red and yellow, are GALATA Saray's team colours. The tower is even better at night, when the locals sit around it to drink²⁹. The tea parlor at the bottom had breached the public space last year, so I'm not sure, but it is a wonderful communal experience to drink outside with others.

Continue with the road you came with and go from the left of GALATA TOWER(!). Stop when you see a sign that writes Alageyik Sokak. Down there is one of the few brothels in Istanbul, at Zürafa Sokak. It is guarded by the police, and has street vendors who sell a caramelized sugar pretzel for energy or recovery. It is called the "brothel dessert". Shoot a glance to the side of waiting cars if you take that way down.

Soon you will reach KARAKOY, and now we need to regroup. Because you are at a crossroads.

Go left, pass *Saint Benoit French High School*, and you will walk to TOPHANE, where *Fasuli* makes excellent Black Sea cuisine, order the rice and beans (they are not your Mexicans' kind of rice and beans) and *mihlama*, which is simply butter, some cheese, and some more butter to dip your bread in. TOPHANE also has a lot of hookah bars where you can play backgammon or checkers³⁰ while smoking, the TV is on a music channel but the audio is from the radio. Weird experience.³¹

Further along the walk you will see a big building with a dome, which is not a mosque but an arsenal. Further along is where you will reach *Dolmabahçe Sarayı*, which is the end of another way down the hill of TAKSIM. All these ways down one hill is just fascinating. Montreal has that too. It's not really a mountain here. Just a big hill.

At KARAKOY, once you have seen the water, you can walk to the bridge³² but not cross it, instead opt to go deeper into the neighbourhood. Go to *Güllüoğlu*, there are many others because the Güllüoğlus is a crowded, but unhappy family in its own way so the descendants open up franchises under their first names, but this is the authentic one,

²⁸ An exclamation mark because it is huge(!)

²⁹ Don't forget, you can't buy alcohol after 10pm. This is important to remember if you're going to drink outside, so you can have a proper last call.

³⁰ I'm sorry about the "checkers being a stupid game" comment, it may have come off as dismissive. I mean, it *is* a stupid game, but it is also a fun game to spend time with people. I wanted to play chess with you because it is more intimate, but probably not suited for places like these, nor that restaurant.

³¹ This area was also featured in the best Bond movie *From Russia With Love*. If you can get past the unrealistic issues (like an Ottoman-ish dude with a moustache and a sash giving out girls to James Bond outside of a stereotypical castle gate after a Turkish fight), the movie also is extremely fun, and accurately features the early 1960s KARAKOY in all its beautiful grayness.

³² There are two bridges, GALATA BRIDGE and ATATURK BRIDGE. You are looking at GALATA BRIDGE right now. ATATURK BRIDGE is farther to your right and closer to the TUNEL subway. I will be talking about GALATA BRIDGE whenever I refer to one.

because Turks get into authenticity like it is nobody's business.³³ You could only share one order of *baklava* for two, preferably with cream and not nuts, although pistachio gets a pass, because this shit is heavy. Nuts, sugar, pastry. And the Greeks were claiming to have originated this³⁴, as if they can handle this much sugar. Deeper, there is *Beş Altı Kirvem*, for even more *tantuni*, which is just a Turkish enchilada. Deeper, there is the yellow *French Passage*, it is so cute, because KARAKOY is the next big thing, but as with any gentrifying place there is some juxtaposition, like a Lomography type store, but a really useless version of it, right next to a travel agency with unhip people.

But it has been a year, so much more interesting things may have popped up.

Back where you came from, at the GALATA BRIDGE, next to the small port for the ferries, you can get a fish sandwich, and eat it on the bridge, looking at the *Maiden Tower* on the right.³⁵ Transient places are always the most fun to sit at. There are better fish sandwiches fresh off the boat (oh shit did i just say that?) if you cross the bridge and end up in EMINONU. *Hamdi*, a building of a kebab restaurant, has excellent kebabs and an even better view, and some ancient form of coaster to keep your *RAKI* cold without diluting it with ice.

EMINONU is fun to walk around. There is a place I can't remember the name, but apart from that there are a bunch of good places for *tavuk göğsu* and other desserts. SPICE BAZAAR is a rollercoaster. You enter from one end and get through the other with a bunch of spice bags in your hands. Get roasted chickpeas. Get other nuts too if you want to, they are the best. *Süleymaniye Mosque* is also great, made by the most famous Ottoman architect, Mimar Sinan. Closeby is a small square-ish neighbourhood called VEFA, housing a high school that is older than a century, along with *Vefa Bozacısı*, probably the same age, where you can drink *boza*, a drink made out of I don't know what (checking now it reveals fermented wheat) where you put those chickpeas you have bought from the SPICE BAZAAR and drink it. The sour taste (but not that sour), I know realize, comes from the fermentation, that yields alcohol. I had only heard the rumours that people in Ottoman times used to drink it in the hopes of getting shitfaced.

If you cross the ATATURK BRIDGE, and walk to the right, you will end up in BALAT, which was the Orthodox Christian central of Istanbul.³⁶ There is a lovely church

³³ Alright so there is something called "Eastern bastard/scoundrel", not a person but an act, where the ruse is right in front of your face, liked Dumb Starbucks, and if you still buy it you are the idiot so no remorse. This turns into a battle between restaurants like Ray's Pizza's in New York, but there are also blatant offenses to one's eye.

³⁴ Yo now I realize that I saw this on the Turkish news, and it might just have been sensationalist or inciteful media. Hm. Because we definitely own *baklava*, and our competition can only be with the Lebanese or Israelis.

³⁵ The *Maiden Tower* has the laziest myth: A king who was afraid of her daughter's fortune of her getting killed locks her in a tower, only to have her die from a snake (symbolism!) that comes in a fruit basket (symbolism harder!). Ugh. Give me a fucking break.

³⁶ You see... Turks are very nationalistic... and they tend to kick people out a lot of their neighbourhoods. We have had our own kristallnacht, right on İSTİKLAL AVENUE, against any other ethnicities.

next to the water, a red (seriously, red) Christian high school a bit up the hill, and many things to discover. Try to find a white, Greek-looking small abode-ish cafe, menu with chalkboard, and have tea on its balcony. Ask for fresh apricots.

BALAT is fucking crazy, because it contains so much history and I don't know any of it. Neither do the other Turks. Behind BALAT is western FATİH, and that contains more of a Muslim history. If you go to western FATİH please don't wear short skirts, they tend to get uppity about it. But if you go middle FATİH³⁷, explore a small waterway, look at all the old buildings, stumble upon a huge mosque out of nowhere, you should eat a *Büryan kebab* at *Siirt Şeref Büryan Kebab Salonu*. Get open *ayran*³⁸. Beyond that is *Özkilis Kebab & Lahmacun Salonu*, and Kilis is where the best *lahmacun* -our real answer to pizza- comes from. Try to get *lahmacun* while you're in Istanbul. It may fuck up your stomach, so might as well share one.

Okay so I don't know what is past BALAT that well. You can only take the tram or some buses to the western depths of FATİH, where shit gets very interesting historically, but not so much about the religious folk and the bland Soviet-era (another Union that didn't probably want us) buildings, or to the south, where there is AKSARAY, a less interesting and more crowded type. These places are probably pleasant, there are great local eats there, but there's also just too much cement.

However, there is SULUKULE, which has a gypsy population, and is amazing to walk around. Be careful though. Check the playlist for a rap from Sulukule against gentrification.³⁹

Anyhow, to your west, next to the water, there is EYUP, another historic but still-religious neighbourhood, and there are amazing things to see, including Istanbul's only amusement park (Istanbul has its cute lunaparks, but an amusement park is a big deal) where I have read that there are many Arabic tourists. I think Islamic Arabic tourists are an eyesore, but they can also be part of the cultural, and even historic?, experience.

I don't know if you will make the trek. If you do however, maybe take a bus or something, you will end up in GOLDEN HORN. It is a small inlet that Istanbul loves for some reason and promotes constantly. Maybe it's because it is very peaceful. Anyhow, at EYUP, there is the *Pierre Loti Tea House*. Pierre Loti was this French writer and he supported the Turks in our independence war, so everybody is now like "Yooooo Pierre

³⁷ Okay enough of this New York terminology for Istanbul neighbourhoods, but FATİH is basically all of this tiny peninsula, give or take BALAT (because Christians), AKSARAY (dunno why), and a few other ones. It is named after Mehmet the Conqueror, who was hellbent on capturing Italy after sacking (what a weird term) Istanbul when he was 21 and his death was celebrated with parades in Italy! Holy shit! No wonder his name is all over the place!

³⁸ In the wake of my recent epiphany about Turks and yoghurt, here is *ayran*, our drink made out of yoghurt and salt. Just to get it out of the way, we also have *cacık* which is watered down Greek *tzatiki*.

³⁹ I love Turkish hip hop. It's gangsta, wordy, and quite stupid sometimes, but the political/social effect it brings along is wondrous, from Turks in Germany reappropriating slurs against themselves to finally someone not making a love song in Turkish.

Loti is so dope, he wrote about Istanbul and we love him too!⁴⁰ⁿ. So there is a teahouse with a cable car where he usually was when he was alive and in Istanbul.

INTERMISSION

So this is it for this walk, but this can be achieved in two hours in a day. Not experiencing all the things, but you can definitely walk down İSTİKLAL AVENUE or some other road down TAKSIM every day of your stay.

So, if you take the T1 tram to Bağcılar, you will end up in WALK 2. If you stop at the SIRKECI station however, first go to HOCA PASA STREET to *Hoca Paşa Pidecisi* or to the other restaurants. I haven't been, but they are apparently so good that you can't go during lunch hour because all the working people go there. And then-

I'd like to take a very personal moment to talk about something.

I love *çiğ köfte*.

Çiğ köfte used to be raw meat that is ground with spices until it is manually cooked. Now it can only be sold as vegetarian, with bulgur rice as ersatz meat, due to regulations, but I don't care. You wrap it around lettuce and squeeze a good amount of lemon as the spicy and the fresh mix. Wrap it around some Turkish tortilla shell⁴¹ and add scallions if you're really crazy, and you've got a stew going, baby!

I love it.

I love you too. A lot.

You know I do.

But I love *çiğ köfte* more than anything else.

It is a spicy wild ride with every plate, but with a bidet you just don't care.

There was a franchise of a *çiğ köfte* place that opened in New York that sold it around 2012 and I was so happy. I would tell my friends that New York had everything, even my favourite food.

The next year it was gone. It was the fall when the rents were too damn high.

I was shattered.

Back in June, I took a forty minute subway ride up to the suburbs of Toronto, into a small Turkish strip just to eat a mediocre attempt, a cheap imitation.

May Allah forgive me because I glut on *çiğ köfte*.

And at SIRKECI, in the midst of all the old buildings, through a small alleyway in the street across the giant post office, there lies *ÇİĞ KÖFTECİ ALİ USTA*, Master Ali the *Çiğ Köfte* Maker.

If you ask about him around they will tell you. For he is truly a master and not only in *çiğ köfte*. He puts on a show to the people on the line, throws lemons and lettuce in your own personal *çiğ köfte* bag without looking, gives out free samples, keeps you busy and entertains a ten person line, all the while serving his customers.

⁴⁰ Many old French writers have been to Istanbul, wrote their impressions, and have influenced Orhan Pamuk. There's also "Midnight Express", but we don't like to talk about that.

⁴¹ We really do have a lot in common with Mexican cuisine. Beans and rice, a lot of meat, spicy sauces, tortillas, our little tacos etc. Hm.

It is awesome.

If, by chance, you ever find yourself SIRKECI, get a small *çiğ köfte dürüm* from him. For me. For *çiğ köfte*.

INTERMISSION

WALK 2: THE HISTORICAL WALK

So, you have a bunch of sights to see at Sultanahmet first. Don't walk on KENNEDY CADDESI even though it is near the water. Keep it as a reference point for when you get too far and not end up around the sea. However, the *Armada Hotel* close to the south end has amazing unlimited weekend breakfast, except for omelets, I think, and also a view of the *Sultanahmet Mosque*. You can walk through EMINONU and through the SPICE BAZAAR, to down south for the GRAND BAZAAR, which actually just means "Closed Bazaar" in Turkish. Or you can take the tram to SULTANAHMET.

GRAND BAZAAR is a festival, nearly every street is named after a trade, but near a Garanti Bank ATM, there is a calligrapher on the stool and in the middle of a corner. His name is *Adnan*. He is bald, and wears a necklace sometimes. I sat with him a couple of times trying to learn calligraphy. Nice dude, but I had an opportunity to tour Anatolia so I took it. If you see him, tell him I'm sorry and have him get you tea while you listen to one of his stories that are not very interesting, but make up an interesting man.

GULHANE PARK is lovely, the *Archeological Museum* is kind of eh, but it has the Trojan Horse in it.

TOPKAPI PALACE is fucked up. It contains religious artifacts that are brought in amongst nearly every the part of the empire. Treasury, arsenal, many guest rooms, and a beautiful harem. Check the wooden connecting balconies in the interior squares of the harem, they were used for the sultan to sneak into his concubines' rooms without alerting anyone else, who would be the guards and his mother. The effects of women on Ottoman politics (well, probably in any kind of politics, but especially when they weren't represented in a theocracy or a monarchy) were immense, but that is just a fraction. Istanbul's (well, probably any kind of whitewashed history) is not as juicy as the Russians', but it is still salacious and very controversial in today's social standards of Turkey.

Konyalı Restaurant in the palace is okay and probably expensive. You can get tea at *Aya İrini*, close to the exit, but that may be overpriced too. But who cares when 1 Dollar equals 3 Turkish Lira? Fuck it, go to this other *Konyalı* at KANYON (see WALK TK). This is a different one and doesn't suck. Amazing, but really expensive food and service where you get treated like kings.

Just being at the SULTANAHMET SQUARE (I have now found out it is also called HIPPODROME) is absolutely fascinating, simply because of the two biggest

mosques, the *Sultanahmet Mosque* and *Havah Nagilah*. The latter used to be a basilica, then it was a mosque, and now it is a synagogue because we love Jews.⁴²

Go to the *Basilica Cistern*. It seems romantic for me for some reason.

And then we would be pretty tired so we'd go up to the second floor of *Sultanahmet Köftecisi Selim Usta* for meatballs.

And that's it for the old city. Walking around is pretty over here as well.

WALK 3: THE OTHER SIDE

Anatolian/Asian Istanbul is a more local and relaxed Istanbul. Apparently even *ISTIKLAL CADDESİ* is overrun by Arabic tourists in the last year, so this (and definitely WALK 4) can be the breath of fresh air you are looking for.

You can cross the Bosphorus Bridge with the metrobus, taking it from *Gayrettepe Metro Station* to the end of the line in *Soğütlüçeşme*. You can also take a cab and back, and say that you have crossed to Asia, some of my friends have done that. But my favourite⁴³ way to cross is by the ferry.

You take a bus on the downhill road to the left of *The Marmara* to *BEŞİKTAŞ*, see the stuff I have wrote about fleeing by, the bus takes a left when it reaches the bottom, and after *Dolmabahçe Sarayı*, on your left there will be *AKARETLER* with its Gossip Girly cobblestoned uphill road lined with fancy hotels up to some place in WALK TBD1, go through and finally you will reach the little chaos of *BEŞİKTAŞ*. When you get off the bus, if you go towards where the McDonalds is you will be treated to one of the busiest markets.

Once you enter, the further left you go you will encounter the fish market. Get fish meatballs at one of the restaurants hidden behind the counters.

All around, *BEŞİKTAŞ* will not be very interesting, but at least the backstreets and the daily hustle can be a small diversion. There is a park higher up, and the buildings around it are nice, but that's all. There is a *Tatlıses Çiğköfte* (and you know how much I love *çiğköfte*) somewhere at the back, but even that is not worth the walk. Soon, *BEŞİKTAŞ* will eventually have to lead uphill, which leads to *MASLAK*, and that walk is both weirdly pleasant and arduous, filled with trees at some parts, and some vintage car stores for some reason, but the top never feels that satisfactory.

That's why you're taking the ferry to the Asian side.

The first ferries you will see take you to *ÜSKÜDAR*, which is an old neighbourhood, there are some interesting places for restaurants, mainly the *Sabancı Öğretmen Evi*, which looks out into the Bosphorus, and *Trabzon*⁴⁴ *Kültür Derneği*

⁴² Speaking of synagogues, and not joking this time, there are some synagogues in *BALAT* close to the water, some in *KARAKOY*, and one in *EMINONU*. Haven't been, dunno if you can go.

⁴³ I really don't know why I use the British spelling. The American (let's not get into Canadian English) spelling is harsher. I like it too, but I like the flow more.

⁴⁴ *Trabzon*, a city along the eastern Black Sea, is the most racist place in all of Turkey, which is weird because it was one of the few Christian Byzantine places left when the Ottomans took over. The shift's effect must have been so powerful, enduring 500 years so

(*Culture Foundation*), which is on top of a hill, and has amazing food. BAGCILAR is a less interesting cousin, more religious, although I'm sure there are quaint, old mosques⁴⁵ and a palace there as well. There is one huuuuuge mall with an IKEA, containing an open air mall with all your mediocre, franchised food joints (Turkish people hate new things, so even a shitty bistro can open in many many locations because people think it is good and fancy enough for their tastes), and one closed mall, which looks like a black spaceship, because it is jet black and no windows look outside. My dream is to take over an abandoned mall one day⁴⁶, squat in it for some time, vandalize, get my anger out against the malls, then create a paintball venue where there are many many different rooms (all the now-empty stores), give them weird colors like glow in the dark, shut the paintball venue after a couple of years and turn that abandoned mall into the best nightclub the world has ever seen. A lot of DJs, playing in rooms varying in different sizes, colored differently, next to a bunch of resting zones. Legally or illegally, I plan on doing this in the apocalyptic future of Istanbul. A massive warehouse/openair/anywhere rave in the second summer of love in Britain is the place I would want to travel in time.⁴⁷

Anyhow, the ferry that you should take lies at the end of ferries, in a building called KADIKÖY ISKELESİ (PORT TO KADIKÖY). The ferries are every half an hour. Try to sit outside and get tea while you look at the seagulls. There used to be independent vendors for all kinds of stupid gadgets, but they are gone now. Maybe someone will sing.

Speaking of ferries, I know you dig doing the subway, and we will do a bit of subway-ing in the future (until then the tram is the most subway thing at your arsenal), you should see how a one-time 30-minute travel by ferry is different from a brisk subway ride that changes at every stop. It is a contrast to think about.

So you have arrived at KADIKÖY. Get past the first few roads where the cars come from, and you will reach the KADIKÖY market. To your right, before going up SOĞÜTLÜÇEŞME CADDESİ (AVENUE) is a much better version of the BEŞİKTAŞ market, much better fish (go to *Kadı Nimet Balıkçısı* [fish restaurant] and get everything, from *lakerda* to seaweed, and order shrimp or fish in cheese and butter, we call it *güveç* [güvech], and dip that bread in the sauce like there is no tomorrow), one of the best restaurants in Istanbul called *Çiya*, where there are both native, weird delicacies (cherry meatballs, for starters) and straight up kebab, so don't go to the kebab one and go to the

that people from Trabzon have swayed in one end of the Muslim spectrum to never come out of it again.

⁴⁵ The municipality have been building mosques like crazy. You will notice them too.

This wasn't the case before, even though we still had a bunch of them. Now the mosques are empty because there are not enough Muslims in Istanbul to fill that many. Oh the irony... or just a logical conclusion to a stupid decision.

⁴⁶ Just like mosques, we have an abundance of malls too. It's a mantra: "A mosque and a mall in every kilometer."

⁴⁷ Listen to *Screamadelica* by Primal Scream. It is the album made for the MDMA experience, but also one of the most unique, drugged up, energetic, diverse albums ever. It might seriously be the best ever. Also great to dance to during the first half.

table d'hote one. Get a piece of everything, ask what they are, have some more *ayran*⁴⁸ and get *katmer*, the thin, silent killer of Turkish desserts. Add *ekmek kadayıfi* (literally bread soaked in sugar) on top of it and then nap at a park. For a real local experience, go to *Yanyalı Fehmi Restaurant*, same deal, simpler food, small space, but very interesting experience.

After you are done with the market, and maybe have checked out the old bookshops to the far right of the market, go back to where you came from and take SOGUTLUCESME AVENUE to the bull sculpture (if you get lost, just ask for the bull sculpture) with the balls, and take an immediate right to General Asım Gündüz Avenue, but actually we call it *Bahariye*. There is an old opera venue, *Süreyya Opera House*, right across one of the few other *Saray Muhallebicisi*s in Istanbul that is not associated with the one in İSTİKLAL⁴⁹. Going through *Bahariye*, if you let the road take you down to the shore, or just take a right from the avenue and explore the back streets (where there is a bootleg DVD shop called *The End*, which is absolutely my favourite store in Istanbul because they sell copied Blu-Rays for 3-4 bucks a piece. There are a couple of other stores like this in the vicinity, and this is why I love KADIKOY. Bookstores and DVDs. Wow, I just remembered another DVD store my uncle used to frequent. Shit's crazy. You wouldn't find that in the European side anymore.), you will be at MODA, the loveliest place in all of Istanbul. It is very neighbourhoody, but also provides a lot of culture and interaction. I once walked a blind woman who told me to "ask for Blind (whatever her name was), everyone knows me here." But also it contains some more DVD stores, an eminent theatre stage by Turkey's most famous actor around the world,⁵⁰ Haluk Bilginer, who had a stint as the Turkish cab driver in the BBC soap opera *EastEnders*, which went on for more than twenty years and probably still going on. Just checked, still going on.

Anyone who is hip, but also bored of CIHANGIR, is moving to MODA, so there is a huge overflow. People love the mild weather and the green shoreline⁵¹ at the end of *Bahariye*.

MODA has a lot of diverse bars as well, not in type or concept, just plain weird. *Karga Bar* is where the old timers used to hang out, it changed places I think, or I might be lying, you never know what to trust in this guide anyhow, but along with the other bars in the vicinity it is something of an artifact. Check them out.

Back at the beginning, to your right, you can easily take one of the minibüses - vans who write *Bostancı* on them in the front- to the farther coastal line. There is

⁴⁸ You can have *ayran* anywhere, even from a store, but whenever I specify the *ayran* someplace it means that this is especially good. You should at least try it, because it is a very interesting drink. Foreigners don't like it, I love it.

⁴⁹ So, here's a strange tidbit. Istanbul's current governor comes from a wealthy family and they own *Saray Muhallebicisi*, but just like the Güllüoğlus, they have split. So one *Saray* is like the one in *Bahariye*, shabby, old, nostalgic, while the others have glass spoons hanging down as the epitome of modernity. The governor owns the modern ones.

⁵⁰ Except for *Turhan Bey*, if American exposure counts, but he was born in Austria, and we have a bunch who are like that. Check the athletes of European countries and Turkey brought from abroad.

⁵¹ I have found out that the correct term would be "banks", but I worry that you will confuse it with a monetary bank, so "shoreline" it is!

KALAMIS, with a pleasant marina that is kind of spoiled by now, there is SASKINBAKKAL, SUADIYE, and some others. But the main thing is that wherever you get off the minibüs, to your right you will have the Bosphorus, and the coast is great to walk on at night. *Definitely get beers at the SUADIYE Migros Market and sit at DALYAN PARKI at night, which is on the coast. Everybody does it on weekends, some bike, some play football.* Because otherwise you will drink the same old shitty beer in whatever KADIKOY (yes we are still at KADIKOY) has to offer. "If you can't change the beer, change the scenery," I always say. If you go in the daytime, you can shoot balloons off in the sea with a pellet pistol.

Or you can walk uphill (yes, even uphill on the other side) and get to BAĞDAT CADDESİ, a very special place for Anatolian Turks, as this is an avenue as famous as İSTİKLAL in Istanbul, but not as touristy. Parallel avenues are greener and more residential. It is not historical at all, but, again, once the night falls and the cars whiz pass you in dim light, you get caught up in walking.

If the boats have stopped working, or you're tired of walking, you can take a minibüs from BAĞDAT CADDESİ to TAKSIM at night.

WHAT IF YOU HAD A BONUS DAY IN ISTANBUL

Hey. So. I'm sorry if this is too much for a couple of days in Istanbul. But I really wanted you to see the entire city for what it is, at least from my perspective. So, if you think that this detailed tour guide will ruin your trip to Greece⁵², and decide to extend the stay in Istanbul for a couple of more days instead, here's what you can do:

Istanbul has some (what is the placeholder for a quantity between 3-5? "a few" is too little and "several" is too much, and "some" feels just weird.) islands ("ada") along the Asian side, and they are all cute as shit. You can reach them from KABATAS ISKELESİ, which is between TAKSIM and BEŞİKTAŞ.

Büyükkada: Main dude. A bit touristy, the walk along the side of the sea is particularly pleasing a couple of times, but there is nothing behind it and you can take a carriage up the hill for *Aya Yorgi Church*, which is kind of worth it, but not too much. Orhan Pamuk and my therapist (not related) live on this island, so I feel old Istanbul creeping in the streets.

Heybeliada: Get fish, get ice cream, done.

Burgazada: Eh. Some expats. Literal horseshit. Recorded the psychedelic jam band at a weird psychedelic music festival once. I also had recorded a video of the coastal walk for Ellen⁵³ if you want to see what you're missing. But imagine nothing else than a

⁵² Nah, it will be great. Very relaxing. Many public beaches. Some protests to spice it up.

⁵³ So you might think what I'm doing is crazy, but last year I have recorded the entirety of my walks in Istanbul and in Turkey for someone I love. It is going to be featured in a movie. People I love make me do these kinds of impossible feats, so blame it on yourself if you think this is excessive. At the same time, how excessive can knowledge get?

band on an outside stage, playing amongst a bunch of tables in a very stereotypically kitsch, Eastern European fashion, and it doesn't seem that much fun anymore.

Kınalıada: The little local one. Not much to see here but the majority of the islander Armenians live here.

If you really want to go, you should go when the sun is setting down because there is something very relaxing and simple about the post-5pm mood of looking at the sea, wherever you may be, as the day is ending. Maybe it's because the sea will turn into black and out of sight soon, unlike the lit shores. Touring the islands takes a lot of time but not that much to go back to the city before the night hits, even if the last ferry at midnight usually has a drunk opera student sing a song in baritone on one end.

P.S. I have gotten the reports of the islands being overrun by Islamic Arab tourists, so maybe you should just do the next walk instead.

WALK 4: WHAT YOU REALLY SHOULD DO IF YOU HAVE A BONUS DAY IN ISTANBUL (AND IT IS NOT TOO HOT, BUT ALSO, FUCK IT)

Okay this is real. It involves a lot of walking, and even if you take the bus to the select neighbourhoods you will have to walk around. Get ready, because here comes the coast!

This is the entire European coastal tour. It has never been featured before, not to my knowledge at least, but it is one of the most rewarding days with the most diversity. This would probably be my choice of walk if I had any chance.

Take the bus that goes to BEŞİKTAS down the hill, to the left of The Marmara. Once you see the sea, get out of the bus, turn left, and walk forever. That's it.

You will first be at KABATAŞ, the pink building to the right used to be an old cinema. Now you can only look at the photos on the left, surrounded with leaves. They are rare photos of Atatürk, but who cares?

Drink tea in the cafe by the edge across *Dolmabahçe Sarayı*, do all of the market things in BEŞİKTAS that you have read above at WALK 3, walk past it to ÇIRAĞAN, where one of the most famous hotels with the best view is there, called *Çırağan Sarayı (Palace)*. Try to get in and pretend to be rich tourists going to a wedding at the outside ball area.

On the opposite side there is the *Yıldız Park* with another palace at the top and a Jewish graveyard at the back. Dunno if it is a coincidence.

Galatasaray University is next to *Çırağan Sarayı*, maybe you can get in and walk around. Haven't been, must be old.

And then you arrive at ORTAKÖY with the first sense of a town bustle. Definitely walk along the cobblestoned market roads between the sea and the first iteration of cars on the street. Get *kumpir* at one of the stands. Get a *gözleme*⁵⁴ from a different stand and compare. Or just go to *Destan* at the beginning of the street across the

⁵⁴ Our own quesadilla with potato or cheese! The culinary connection grows!

stands that sell *kumpir* and order one while smoking *nargile (hookah)*. The top floor is nice.

Get out, get waffles at the last stands. There must be an old man selling *midye dolması (filled clams with rice and raisins)*, they are as delicious as they are dirty. Ask where the vendor is from. I'll bet you anything -even your coming to visit me in Montreal- that the vendor will be from the city of Mardin.

If you go during the daytime, old booksellers will be across the mosque on the side of the stands. Sit at the edge of the sea near the mosque and look across. Check the mosque if it is finally renovated and open. Sit at the shore cafes where they really pursue you to an annoying extent, just play a game of backgammon and go to the Bomonti bar next to it.

ORTAKÖY is amazing. It has all kinds of food and lounging opportunities in a small area. It even has a good kebab restaurant called *Kırçıçeği*, that is open not 24, but 25(they actually write this on their banner, and I have no idea why, even if it is just a joke, because it just doesn't make any sense-)/7, perfect for 2am *işkembe* (tripe) soup to get over drunkenness. The main road going uphill goes through Princess Hotel, where there used to be an video arcade (no video arcades left in Istanbul anymore), to a wide, hence manageable hairpin road going uphill to ULUS and to WALK TK.

Leaving ORTAKÖY, going below the *Bosphorus Bridge*, kind of going "whoa", a famous nightclub called *Reina* appears amongst closed doors. It has the closest proximity to the sea with a view of the Bosphorus. You might like Turkish pop songs eccentric enough to dance to, I don't, but if I did, and if I could tolerate shitty crowds, I would dance here until the morning. If they kicked you out at 4am, I would take a bus to TOPHANE and smoke *nargile* as the sun was coming up.

Sortie is another club that I haven't been to and I'm sure there will be millions on this half a mile of a strip. The traffic gets crazy at night and on the weekends right around here, so be careful.⁵⁵

I don't know, I really like the outside to be close to the sea without obstacles anyhow. Less people. That's why if you walk past Kuruçeşme Arena (a nostalgic concert venue, its value bolstered by its view having ferries bring people into the concerts from the Asian side) to ARNAVUTKÖY, you will be treated to the benches that will provide the widest and the calmest view of the Bosphorus from this side.⁵⁶

The road forks for a short time before converging on what is built upon the shore for newer houses. After that ends, to your left there will be a nameless gate arched with branches. That's my high school, *Robert College*, right next to a Korkmaz Yiğit Anadolu Lisesi, another high school. You can spot the former from the latter. Go up to the security

⁵⁵ Okay so I can't believe this is the first time I'm talking about Istanbul's traffic. It ranks as the worst, and honestly, whether you are in the outskirts of the city or on the Bosphorus Bridge, the whims of Istanbul's traffic is very fickle, and can hit anytime, anywhere. It sucks. Try not to be above ground sometimes. But also you will be fine as long it is not rush hour or it just looks shitty.

⁵⁶ Weirdly, in the end, when we look at our cities, or their skyline, we look at the stillness of the buildings. I do at least. It gives a sense comfort in its grandeur. Looking at the Asian side is a nice feeling.

guards and tell them you know a student to get in, maybe even give them my name and try to call an administrator. Go up the road, there is a nearly ruined Armenian church to your right as the way curves upwards to a middle ground where you can see the high school buildings sitting on top of a slope with a banister in the middle. It is huge, and used to be an all girls American missionary school, opened as a conceding to America for something (or just ass kissing) in the late 19th century. Made co-ed in 1950s and now under the Turkish ministry of education, it still has an American headmaster along with a Turkish headmistress. The exterior of the buildings (especially the flowers above the main hall, the first building you will see) are prettier than the insides. So instead of wasting time indoors, go up to the plateau through the way next to the white house (how we casually [and not humorously] refer to the white rubber dome), check the small fountain on the side, go up some more, check the teachers' houses, go further to the open track field, walk to the right end and look at the Bosphorus. It is one of the best places for the scenery.

Go back down all the way and turn left towards ARNAVUTKÖY, a historical neighbourhood with diverse residents, until we kicked them all out of the country in the last half of the 20th century. Some still remain, old owners of shops, because our deal is with the Kurds now.

At ARNAVUTKÖY, along the main part where the statue is, go to *Köfteci Ali Baba* for meatballs, go to *Adem Baba Balıkçısı* for fish, or for a fish sandwich because we're in a hurry. They don't serve alcohol anyhow. Fish goes with *rakı* and long dinners, and many other ARNAVUTKÖY restaurants can testify to that. That's also an experience shared with the Greeks, but theirs are a little better because they also have pork and sweeter ouzo is supposed to taste better with fish.

Whatever you do, go to *Bodrum Manti*, and get a half and half of normal *manti* (tiny Turkish dumplings) and fried (!) *manti*. Get *çiğ börek* (meaning "raw", but no it's not, it's actually really hot) to complement.⁵⁷ Or, you can have the same meal, but from another "chef opened up a new restaurant, but this is Turkey, so it's not like he's changing anything, but only renaming it" perspective, at *Casita*. The fried *manti* is called a *Feraye* over there, I think, and it may be named after a woman. There are quite a few dishes in Turkish cuisine named after women. I think that's a beautiful and reverent thing.

Walk even more, past the lighthouse and fishermen and kids jumping into the water and you will be at BEBEK ("baby", but we never make that connection), one of the fanciest neighbourhoods of Istanbul. It is even fancier now because of the nouveau riche, a kind of hot club vibe at night with several large cars blocking traffic as they are waiting outside a fucking restaurant called Lucca, which is the hotspot for some reason. Regardless, BEBEK is lovely during the daytime. Ah, fuck it, even at night the park along the sea is beautiful and not that noisy. I'd say go to *Bebek Kahvesi*, the oldest and the shabbiest cafe around here, but now it has become very expensive, so, and for the love of god I cannot believe I am actually saying these words right now, go to the fucking Starbucks next to the *Bebek Hotel*, and go down the stairs to the sea-patio. It is incredible.

After a thorough cleanse of self-immolation of being soiled with Starbucks, go across the street, walk a bit, and buy almond paste at *Bebek Badem Ezmesi*, go across, get

⁵⁷ In Turkish, a complement for food, most likely bread, is called "katık" (added on). It's my favourite word in the language.

a waffle from *Abbas Waffle*, and eat them all on the bench where the sea-side buildings end. Check the old, once seaside manors to the side of the road, sometimes you can get in the abandoned ones. BOĞAZIÇI UNIVERSITY's south entrance is there, but that's elaborated in WALK TK.

As you are walking towards the second, northern bridge in front of you, Istanbul's old city will end with the RUMELİ ("Greek hand" ... don't mention it.) HİSARI, shaped like Fatih Sultan Mehmet's signature (who names the nearby bridge). From here to Fatih, this was Istanbul. These places you are at right now were villages. ARNAVUTKÖY means Albanian village, and it was probably a village on the outskirts of the city.

Anyhow, climb up the RUMELİ HİSARI, feel kind of "eh", go down, cross under the bridge to EMIRGAN, look to your left at *Sabancı Museum*, belonging to one of Turkey's prominent families. Go up the stairs, turn around, and chill on the bench looking at the Bosphorus. Turn around once more and get in the manor if there is a good exhibition going on, there usually is, and they know how to use the space well.

After that's done and you're back at the sea, walk even further, past Emirgan Korusu, which is honestly kind of a shit park⁵⁸, Turks really don't know how to make parks, and you will be at İSTİNYE. You might want to hop on a bus for this part, because even though the view is beautiful, you will still get tired of it after walking for an hour. The bus may go along the road that has a branch leading up to the American Consulate, painted in desert sand marines uniform, on top of a hill (and I don't know when it got named) called "The Eagle's Nest".

Still on the bus, look across the Bosphorus for some still seaside manors.

Get off at TARABYA, when you reach a wider area that has a steep and perpendicular two-way road connecting to it on one side. *Anzer Sofrası* specializes in Black Sea dishes and it is the best. Get more *mihlama*.

The last neighbourhood on the walk is SARIYER, another local neighbourhood with old businesses, especially food and groceries. Get some *börek* at *Sarıyer Börekçisi* and a more authentic *su muhallebisi* at *Sarıyer Muhallebisi*. We are not too creative with our names.

Okay one last thing. If you go past Sarıyer you need a car, so you probably won't, but let me tell you what is there. Back into the land there is *Kemerburgaz* along the *Belgrad Forests*, which are enormous. More space than all of our walks combined. *Kemerburgaz* houses some old villages but also newly developed modern and expensive lifestyles with separate houses in building complexes outside of the city. I love those places because they exist in another reality. Very idyllic, like a contemporary suburb. However, they are also the opposite of lively, locked into their own apartment complexes, like gated communities, we call them "sites" in Turkish, all connected by a recently built square with the same franchise restaurants opening next to each other. Being at *Kemerburgaz* makes me want to cry. All the empty places do. Any kind of suburb pangs

⁵⁸ I mean, we just went there as one Turkish Language class one afternoon because it was the last class of the day and we were seniors. There is a manor at the top but I didn't find it that interesting. Maybe the weather was too hot. Or I don't know, I would choose the sea to look at if I can, even if I don't like to be in the sea a lot. The Bosphorus is not that wide, but we like calling it the sea. We even corrected Axl Rose when he called it a river.

me to go full on, sobbing, thumping on the ground. I don't know how much sadness is involved, it's just a breath stopping reaction.

The same goes for whatever is left on the coast. There is *Koç University* with a spectacular view of the forest, RUMELİ KAVAĞI with its non-alcoholic but top notch fish restaurants that look at the Black Sea and also the legs of the future third bridge across the Bosphorus, and finally, *Rumeli Lighthouse*. Never been, must be nice, but also must be only that.

The Current Outskirts of Istanbul Now

So, basically, how Erdoğan and AKP got to power was promising a dream to jaded Turks who always want to believe in something, so why not mild Islam, and then actually did a lot of stuff for Turkey, like building modern, bland (no judging, that's just what they are) houses all over the cities, higher GDP and GNI, more businesses and whatnot. But they have always emphasized their development in transportation⁵⁹ all around Turkey.

And they have introduced Istanbul its real subway system after a hundred years. Istanbul's railway map has become a spider web in the last fifteen years, above and under ground. Metrobuses are rapid buses that have their own lane with very little construction necessary, and I have no idea how nobody thought about this before, especially for Istanbul.

They advertise these new gated communities (I once said "urban⁶⁰ ghettos" and you asked me whether I knew what a ghetto was.⁶¹) and cement high rises outside of the city and build the transportation lines to go with. Istanbul might burst soon because there is no activity in these areas. Just malls and apartments filled with people who go to work in the city during the week. New York can at least expand, Istanbul's downtown doesn't want to.

But even though Istanbul has a lot of people, they are so much the same that you stop looking at them. Stance, clothes, anything. And you haven't seen how crowded a metrobus can get with them.

Especially in a metrobus, even when it is empty, there is a constant anger waiting to get out. Nobody fights but everybody is shiftier for no reason. It's weird.⁶²

⁵⁹ Though now it makes sense why they emphasize building roads constantly, because illegal deliveries also go through them. This may just be selective cognizance, but I believe that smaller countries are craftier and always think for a reason when they do something. The United States has a million of other countries to deal and also do shady stuff with, and that's why its social system is so fucked up. The US cannot handle its society when it is thinking about other countries.

⁶⁰ You probably thought I was referring to black people, but "urban" is a wrong word for them in this gentrifying age. I was using it as upper-ish middle class with a mortgage.

⁶¹ I also once compared Istanbul to my first lover and a heroin addict. You told me I had no idea what a heroin addict acts like.

⁶² One cute public transportation is the minibus, which is essentially a van that departs whenever it is full. We literally call them "it-is-full" in Turkish. In the front window, the

Metrobuses go to the most common outskirts of the European side. The last stop is the closest to my dad's house, amongst a bunch of others that are not sold yet. It is certainly a sight at one or two stops before with the housing development around the lake, though I wouldn't recommend it. Maybe just take it to an early stop before you think you can't handle it, and then ride the other metrobus back.

WALK TK

You can take most of this walk to in a twelve-minute ride taken from TAKSIM to the LEVENT subway station. The subway, the metro, the only mode of transportation I have left out above, is the most interesting line for what you find in New York's subways. As also mentioned above, the public transportation is not interesting in Istanbul, yet this is the most diverse crowd you will see. It's not the best, but it may keep you busy for the time being.

If you'll walk the walk, let's go.

But let's be honest. If you will pick a different walk after the first two, this shouldn't be it. Walks 3 or 4 are better suited for what you want. You will never do this walk, even though it contains a few interesting places, though not as dense. You will never do this walk, but if you know Istanbul well enough you can visualize.

Turn your back to The Marmara at TAKSIM, go through GEZİ PARKI, and keep following that direction to HARBIYE. HARBIYE houses a lot of the old formal-ish buildings, some remains of the protest, the huge Hilton Hotel where you can take a glorious shit and look at the Bosphorus though not at the same time.

The road forks after a mile, splitting into *Cumhuriyet Caddesi* and *Vali Konağı Caddesi*, left and right ways respectively. You will have two avenues until you end up in the same place:

Cumhuriyet Caddesi: You will go through OSMANBEY. It contains a lot of the restaurants and shops you have seen before, though they may have acquired a better sheen now. At night there are prostitutes prettier than movie stars further away from subway station, pre-op men who may never become post⁶³. Despite the car traffic, it is a lonesome avenue at night.

Above this avenue, whenever you take a left, I'm sure you will encounter a lot of old Istanbul history amongst the buildings, but they are probably harder to find, or just reflected in the exterior now.

After a dreg, the avenue leads to ŞİŞLİ, a neighbourhood that also houses MECİDİYEKÖY, which is hell on earth in the summers. I have seen the sun melt the

top name indicates the first, the bottom name indicates the last stop. V eful in the next walk for its detours. Cash only.

⁶³ Some just seem to like it that way. I hate to give a "suggestion for P " here, but you really have to watch this great movie called *Tangerine*, about a pre-op transgender prostitute on a rampage searching for his cheating boyfriend. It has real transgender actresses and shot on an iPhone with a bumpy synth soundtrack.

tarmac on the main square where the buses rest. The vapor blurs your vision like a mirage, and the only thing you can see are just people coming at your way from workspaces. Awful buildings and even worse construction are everywhere.

Ali Sami Yen Stadium is torn down, now a glass skyscraper of a resident building complex is being built there, probably unaware of the abandoned mall across called *Astoria*. The residences of the mall (yes, there are residences at malls) are still operating, which make for an interesting contrast.

Vali Konağı Caddesi: With the military barracks to your right and a French missionary school *Dame de Sion*⁶⁴ to your left, you start the avenue. Wherever you turn left, you enter NİŞANTAŞI, one of the wealthiest neighbourhoods in Istanbul. There are stores, more stores, and some old buildings spread in the middle along the backstreets of the area. I can only recommend checking the buildings out, going to *Galata Muhallebicisi* to eat desserts for the last time, check the lower streets for clothing companies that only sell in bulk and advertise in Russian.

The last chance to turn left to enter NİŞANTAŞI is called the *Reasürans Passage*, which, again, nothing that interesting, but at least it is something.⁶⁵

If you don't turn left, you will end up in *Cemil Topuzlu Open Air Theatre*, and it really is huge, maybe you can look through the gates, walk around the conference center across from it. At the closest side of the theatre, descending the stairs, is a weird circus-like thing that must be a club, but I have no idea what it is, though it might be worth checking out.

Right next to *Cemil Topuzlu*, a road for cars winds down. It is a melancholic car ride, with one nearly empty mall that houses Istanbul's few alternative theatre groups, car dealerships, and a road that seems to lead nowhere yet. Actually it leads to DOLAPDERE, an old but shitty neighbourhood with *Bilgi University* with its cute campus and once-alternative art scenes.

Next to the said road is a park called the *Maçka Park*, laid with marble and people who run their dogs. Lovely park, but an even better to watch the concerts happening in the venues at the end⁶⁶.

I have no idea how you will continue the walk after *Maçka Park*, so let's just imagine that you have taken the subway instead, from TAKSIM to the LEVENT station. After you get out of the subway station, when you are facing a high-rise/mall called

⁶⁴ An unfortunate detail: My high school can be proud of injecting American-style individuality to its students, but places like *Dame de Sion* have history classes where they talk about Kurdish massacres in all honesty and teach a more accurate version of Turkish whitewashed history.

⁶⁵ Wow this walk is more boring than I thought it would be. It's just pretty to see old buildings, but not that worth it after Walk 1.

⁶⁶ There are two: One was at the end of the park and you could actually watch the concert for free there. The second is further away, a stadium and a rarely-used Ritz Carlton is between the park and the venue, which is amongst old gas depots. The depots are metal frames that form a cylinder, where inside enormous bubbles filled with gas to distribute to the city were contained in a rubber balloon. Fascinating.

Metro City on the other side of the road, you can turn right and take a bus down to TARABYA, that's the steep road perpendicular to WALK 3.⁶⁷

If you take the hypothetical bus to TARABYA, you will see *Kanyon*, an aesthetically pleasing mall if there ever was one. It is also higher end. The *Konyali* restaurant is one of the best, I've only been at lunch and even then they serve you sherbets! A rolling tray with three different kinds! The currency rate is through the roof⁶⁸ to allow you to enjoy this classy meal.

Further, there is Sapphire, a really dumb mall, haven't been inside, I'm just judging its terrible ski jump idea. This area is called 4th LEVENT. Nobody knows what happened to 2nd and 3rd Levent⁶⁹, where they are designated, but you can pass through them without knowing when you get lost between the 1st and the 4th, admiring the charmed life of residential and somewhat green neighbourhoods.

Beyond 4th LEVENT is MASLAK, the corporate capital of Istanbul. You might have spotted the close group of skyscrapers from afar. All the banks, corporations, younameit have their main offices here, and it is actually a very nice bit of skyline away from the old city. There is a huge car repair site with tens of different repairmen and their businesses. I actually like walking around MASLAK if I have to pass through.

After MASLAK, the road splits into two, the right goes to ISTINYE, where *Istinye Park* is a very fresh mall with its high, open ceilings and white tiles. It's the same shit as any other mall, but the whole experience feels a bit better. Plus, it has the only IMAX (not important enough to capitalize but gotta respect the trademark) in the city, or so it was back in the day. The subway line also ends nearby.

The left takes a long time to find an aqueduct and lead into Kemberburgaz. It's usually empty, and it's a shame I don't know how to drive otherwise I would have come to these places at night just for a second and drive elsewhere. Shit, I really need to get a licence.

Anyhow, you will not go this way. Sorry for the mall tangents I would have said, but that's what these parts have become.

So once more with feeling, for the last time, you are facing Metro City across the road. You have gotten a *çiğ köfte dürüm* at the *Tatlıses Çiğ Köfteci* booth at the metro exit.

⁶⁷ Not that you should do it, but you turn to left and go to BEŞİKTAŞ from the downhill Barbaros Bulvarı (Boulevard). There is a huge cemetery, where it writes "Every living being shall taste death." at the entrance, so you know what to expect before going inside. The boulevard also features the newest mall, Zorlu (named after the conglomerate family), that has fancy restaurants like Jamie Oliver's thingy and low ceilings and the feeling that it is very unnecessary. Across the boulevard are *Tat (named after another conglomerate family) Towers*, that stopped their construction when the family head died and the children were warned to not to tear it down by a fortune teller. So the inside of the building, which can only be seen at night, simply features two Turkish flags siding an enormous portrait of the family patriarch. It is the creepiest place.

⁶⁸ Oh shit this is so weird, Greece still uses the Euro! Get your fanciest dinners in Turkey.

⁶⁹ It's kind of like the 124 in "Beloved". It blew my mind when a friend pointed that out.

You turn around. Behind you is a row of restaurants and a bar (SpongePub... Heheheheh) that lead around a corner to a huge square with every side a different row of shops. The benches are particularly nice to sit on, though I never did, because I always passed through the square, never rested. Still, it must be nice to kill time sitting on a bench and looking at pigeons on a cloudy day.

You are going to go forward, but you have to choose a side. To your left are trees and residential LEVENT, to your right is the strip, NİSPETİYE CADDESİ.

I wish we could dissipate and walk through all the streets of residential LEVENT. It is the closest you can get to a grid system in Istanbul, and it pays off because there are so many streets to walk on. Green, filled with interesting houses with weird designs, parks, large and leveled urban parks where kids play basketball sometimes, where you can watch the sunset on a lookout next to a hip advertising agency house⁷⁰ if you go far left, seriously, it just feels nice to be around so many trees lining the road when Istanbul has none of it. Sit at a park. There's one with a quarter pipe and it is really cute.

NİSPETİYE CADDESİ, on the other hand, starts with the dingy Melody Passage, where a great movie theatre called *Movieplex* had floors of theatres. It is gone now, but nobody has claimed the space. Further down the avenue, opposite of where the cars are going to, there is *Marmaris Büfe* where at 4am people come from clubs at BEBEK to eat tongue or beef sandwiches⁷¹, or its rival *Öztürkler*, with the same menu but half a Lira cheaper, or another çığ köfte place *Elazığlı Ahmet Usta*, or *Namlı*, a good restaurant for kebabs, or further down the avenue there is (if still there) one of the only taco places in Istanbul called *TacoFit*⁷², and after *Tathises Kebap* (for a better kebab than *Namlı*, and you can get çığ köfte as well) you see the three blue towers of *Akmerkez*, one of Turkey's first malls, changing the game, trailblazing not just with an attitude, but a declaration in mall styling, a four floor triangle, with residence and business towers on the corners. Right now they are bankrupt and creating outdoor seating next to traffic as a desperate plight for customers. Back in the day though... this was the real deal. Touristic or not, malls are a very important part of Istanbul.

If you take a right from where you reach Akmerkez, you get to ULUS, and old but now modern and residential neighbourhood with a Jewish (?) cemetery and a beautiful road down to ORTAKÖY.

⁷⁰ This is the weird part about residential LEVENT. There are only single, separated houses, but companies have bought some of them. My mother ran a children's computer learning school called Futurekids. It was a duplex with a cellar, and I had the best memories now that I think of it. How the light was inside, being there after closing time, eerie but captivating computer screen savers, the old bathroom of the house with a tub in it. There was life in that house without anybody being inside.

⁷¹ Turkish sandwich culture is very rich, from toasted nutella and bananas (Leyla, a lovely Turkish female name) to meat on top of meat like *yengen* ("your aunt") or *Rambo*. You drink a fruit mix called *atom*, sometimes they put in honey and chocolate as well if you really want to get fucked up. Get the *ayran*.

⁷² Not good, even if by now you would think that Mexican food in Turkey would be great.

If you go forward with Akmerkez to your right, and take the right lane when you reach ING Bank, you go down ARNAVUTKÖY slope. It's a lovely walk, going downhill through old, untouched houses of tarnished wood.

Somewhere between these two paragraphs above is *Robert College*.

So, from the left of ING Bank, you can continue from NİSPETİYE CADDESİ, Istanbul's nouveau riche central with the now closed, but once celebrity filled T.G.I. Friday's, its current P.F. Chang's with two horse statues accompanying two bodyguards and valets, all amongst car dealerships, small food joints, a couple of bars, pumping engines of fast cars that people flaunt, but can only go slowly because of the traffic.

NİSPETİYE CADDESİ (AVENUE) leads to BOĞAZIÇI UNIVERSITY,⁷³ my high school's once all-boys version, now one of the best, co-ed, but also academically conservative universities of the country. Strangely, while my school is private, Boğaziçi is a public university where my friends can change a major whenever they want and add two more years. There is the main green area, surrounded with the old buildings, and the view of the Bosphorus further down below... It's weird because it is so close to the city and carries that chaos, as if you are still in high school.

Fortunately if you take a right at any point of NİSPETİYE CADDESİ between *Akmerkez* and *Boğaziçi University*, you will realize that the avenue is actually at top of a hill and walk down the steep *Bebek Slope*, a long slope without too much space for the pedestrian, but with beautiful sights of open land, especially with the shops close to the bottom.

If you take a left, you will be walking through even more residential Levent, but farther out. I have always wanted to show someone these places at night. There are a bunch of stray dogs that are vaccinated and neutered by the municipality; they sleep under streetlights, and you can just sit at one of those small parks and just be away from the chaos of it all.

Okay there is one last thing left, and it is the most indulgent of them all. This was all indulgent, because this is my Istanbul, I don't know what you wanted when you asked for recommendations, you may have asked for a list but I don't want to give you that because I don't want you to be a stranger in my city. Or I wanted to record whatever Istanbul was for me in the summer of 2014, perhaps now it has changed a lot and will only remain as a memory. You wanted to crack open my brain, we did that in and for New York, but my other half is Istanbul, and so here you are, with me but not alongside me.

From where you were at before, on NİSPETİYE CADDESİ and *Akmerkez*, you take the road down across Akmerkez and go downhill from Zeytinoğlu Caddesi. After passing two streets, you will see a stone wall to your right enclosing an apartment complex with yellow and light burgundy/orange colored buildings. That site, *Sarı Konaklar*, is where I live with my mother. It was one of the first of its kind and my father got us the house after the divorce. It still wasn't cheap back then, and I didn't know how privileged I was. I had a nice childhood, some outdoor activity, and good friends, and the

⁷³ So I just saw this online, the new subway line from LEVENT to BOĞAZIÇI UNIVERSITY is in operation. So you can actually see these sights while you can eschew the noisy avenue. Wow.

complex is pretty to walk at night because I would treat it as a dreamland since it has a few bizarre wooden sculptures around.

But the best part isn't in there. If you follow Zeytinoğlu Caddesi to the last yellow building that is outside the apartment complex. It looks like it belongs to the houses where I lived at, but it is a theatre where I went to weekend acting school, *Akatlar Kültür Merkezi*, for five years from when I was seven. More than the school or the acting, what interested me were the backstage, the balcony around the concessions stand, the small studios, one of them with a large shelf blocking an incomplete room behind it, the other opening out to the tiniest garden next to cars blazing.

Outside, from one of the far sides, you can access a two tier wooden patio, connected by stone stairs. There is a fountain that still runs, but there have been no events, no gatherings, and no activity in this place. Sometimes there are empty beer bottles, but they may be from many years ago if nobody has even cleaned it.

Finally, between the entrance to the theatre and the carpark, there is a narrow ramp⁷⁴ that goes up to a semicircle of an empty area, facing floor to ceiling windows with nothing inside, maybe once a gallery, above you can see some kind of office activity through the windows, but nothing specific. To the far left, around the empty interiors there are some stuff stacked up against a wall, you can lay your back to them and enjoy your prime spot for the billboard in front of you, next to a view of *Sarı Konaklar*.

At night, this semicircle is my favourite place in all of Istanbul. I even put it in my movie just because I wanted to. Even at daytime, nobody ever comes here, nobody asks you what you are doing if they ever find you. You can sit down, drink, smoke, not that I do any of these over here. Seriously, I just enjoy the serenity. Simply being there gets me high, though I wouldn't mind smoking as well.

I have been here with friends, but I was mostly here when I was alone, after theatre school, when the sky is getting dark early in the winter and I am waiting for something, maybe for my father to pick me up, but he is late, but it is okay, because even the cold weather is wonderful here.

However, with whoever I have been here, whatever I have done, I never thought I truly shared my passion and love for the place with anyone until now, because now you know what my Istanbul is. One part illuminates the next, and this goes on forever. Thank you for taking this river of a journey, even if it was only on paper.

Phew!

This is really it! It's over, ladies and gentlemen!

This was very fun to write, so thank you for the idea, even if you didn't ask for it. It must be the blessing and the curse of being an inspiring person.

And you're welcome, obviously, for an excessive, yet as fantastic, tour guide.

Come visit me in Montreal.

⁷⁴ There are actually two, one is straight while the other one curves. I have no idea why there are two. Wheelchair access also doesn't make any sense since there are no stairs.

But first enjoy Istanbul. It's not everyday that one's first and last loves meet.

Hopefully, in another city,

Derin

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