



To experience a famous world center where European Christian culture blends with Middle East decor, senior travelers should visit historic Constantinople, now Istanbul. It's well worth adding it to your bucket list.

There are several ways to get there, depending on whether on a journey including other countries, or to go directly to Istanbul. There you should spend several days roaming the ancient metropolis.

Istanbul is also an intellectual center, filled with cafés where single travelers can meet others and discuss world events. For visitors who love to dance and party, the city is an international hot spot, featuring theaters, bars and clubs of all types. From some U.S. cities, you can book non-stop flights to Istanbul's Ataturk Airport via Turkish Airlines. After arriving, you'll be impressed by the beautiful surrounding harbor and the modern buildings among domed cathedrals and mosques.

If you prefer an ocean route, an example is a Celebrity Cruise 11-night round-trip from Rome. It schedules port visits in Italy, Greece and Turkey, with a two-day stay in Istanbul. You can tour historic sites and savor the city's food and culture. Cabin prices for the cruise start around \$800 per person based on double occupancy.

Because of its European and Middle Eastern mix, Istanbul is one of the most diverse cities in the world. With a population of 14 million, it's Turkey's largest metropolitan area, primary

seaport and financial center. For nearly 20 centuries, the former Constantinople was the nation's capital.

A great start to a senior traveler's itinerary in Istanbul is to visit the Old City, and stroll through the historic area. The journey will take you back more than 2,000 years as you walk among the structures relics of Greco-Roman, Byzantine and Christian eras.

One of the most interesting places to visit is the Hagia Sophia Museum in the Eminonu District. The structure was built in the year 360 A.D. as an Orthodox Greek cathedral, and was also a Muslim mosque and Catholic church. In the 1930s, it became an official national museum, reflecting the range of religions that were worshiped there.

Next stops are the Archeology Museum, the Old Eastern Works Museum and the Enameled Kiosk Museum. All are filled with amazing artifacts. Another great museum is the Museum of Turkish Carpets, which presents the world's greatest collection of antique carpets.

Solar Beach is a popular destination in Istanbul. Other than lolling in the warm sun, during the day senior travelers can find all kinds of action sports as well as clubs, bars and restaurants. At night, they can explore discos and rave parties.

If you plan to stay in Istanbul for several days, consider the Anzer Beach Hotel. It has beautiful views of the harbor and large heated indoor pool. The nearby beach is private for hotel guests. Room prices range upward from \$100 a night. Anzer Beach Hotel, E-5 Karayolu Uzeri No. 144

For a restaurant where local families eat, Kahvedan may be your choice. In addition to Istanbul folks, Kahvedan attracts businessmen and tourists. The outdoor seating area is great for people watching.

Prices are relatively moderate: a three-course lunch with wine, beer or raki brandy costs about \$10. The menu is very eclectic, including American, Asian and Spanish dishes. Kahvedan, Cihangir Akarsu Street No. 1/1A, Beyoglu, [kahvedancafe.com/en](http://kahvedancafe.com/en)

Turkish Dance Night at Hodjapasha is a great cultural evening. The ornate building was originally built in the 15th Century as a traditional Turkish men's bath house. It offers live music with a variety of traditional dances from various regions of the country.

They include the Whirling Dervish, belly dancing, mock sword fights and much more. Including snacks and drinks, the price ranges upward from \$25, and is great for senior travelers looking for authentic Istanbul entertainment. Hodjapasga Culture Center, Ankara Caddesi Hicapasa Hamam Sok No. 3B. [hodjapasha.com](http://hodjapasha.com)