

FROM THE WEST END TO EASTERN CHARM

ISTANBUL

Istanbul literally separates what we know to be Europe and Asia – and celebrates both cultures with all their differences exquisitely. From shiny shopping malls, contemporary art galleries and *Vogue* magazines to 1 000-year-old hamams and spice markets, the city offers a new, revamped face alongside its ancient character. South Africans enjoy simple access to Turkey with an easy-to-print electronic visa and the rand-lira exchange rate isn't too terrifying. Then, of course, there are all the business opportunities that abound in Istanbul. From technology to the rag trade, the city beckons.

IF YOU GO...

STAY HERE

The Philippe Starck-designed and family-owned **Mama Shelter** (Mehmet Akif Ersoy Mh Hüseyin Ay Sk, 50, www.mamashelter.com, +90 212 252 0100) hits the spot as the perfect convergence of business and pleasure. The hotel, just off the famous Istiklas shopping street, has a rooftop offering views across the city, Michelin Star menus in the relaxed dining area, super-indulgent beds and technology-enabled rooms – a fulsome package for what you pay.

The five-star, business-friendly **Marti Hotel** (Abdülhakhamit Caddesi, 25/B, Taksim, www.martiistanbulhotel.com, +90 212 987 4000) is just off the now-famous Taksim Square and is a fashionable haven in the busy city. Designed by Zeynep Fadillioğlu, the interior's bold, but glamorous, echoing the grandeur of the Ottoman regime. Complete with hamam spa, rooftop gym and luxurious dining options, the hotel won't disappoint.

ARRIVE THIS WAY

There's a daily flight from Johannesburg to Istanbul with Turkish Airlines (www.turkishairlines.com) that takes approximately 10 hours. A taxi from Atatürk Airport costs about \$25 (about R225) to the city centre.

A whistle-stop guide to polar holiday opposites:

Istanbul, Turkey
and London,
UK

TREAT YOURSELF HERE

The oldest hamam in the city, **Ayasofya** (Cankurtaran Mahallesi Bab-1 Hümayun Caddesi, Sultanahmet, www.ayasofyahamami.com, +90 212 517 3535) has recently undergone massive renovations. Though its traditional feel is intact, it now boasts sleek, modern touches.

The photographic gallery, **Elipsis** (Hoca Tahsin Sokak, Akce Han 10, www.elipsisgallery.com, +90 212 249 4892), is owned and run by Sinem Yuruk. She's not only a fundi on this creative genre, but stages superb exhibitions.

FEAST HERE

Ops Café (Mumhane Caddesi Nimet Han, 45B, www.opscafe.karakoy.com, +90 212 245 0288) in the burgeoning area of Karaköy, near the ocean, offers a matchless lunchtime banquet of international dishes like wraps and burgers with signature Turkish flavours. Sitting on the sidewalk offers patrons a great opportunity to observe the locals walking by.

Also recommended is **Unter** (Kemankes Karamustafa Pasa Mh Karaali Kaptan Sk, 4, www.unter.com.tr, +90 212 244 5151), which combines European and Yankee indulgence with Turkish sensuousness. Delicious lasagne served with light Italian red wine under the vines in this establishment is a feast for both the tummy and the soul. Be sure to book, though, as the restaurant fills up quickly.

