

Friday, February 05 2010 19:16 GMT+2
Your time is 19:17:53

ESCAPE FROM THE CITY: İznik – Istanbul’s best day trip

Font Size: [Larger](#)|[Smaller](#)

Wednesday, February 3, 2010

Rich Carriero

IZNIK- Hürriyet Daily News



There are few short-range trips from Istanbul as convenient, and none as rewarding, as a visit to İznik. Lying just across the Marmara Sea, set on the shore of a lake and surrounded by olive groves, this small city enjoys a place of some significance in classical and medieval history.

Transportation and lodging are cheap and abundant. The food is savory and the people proud and amiable. Consider a trip to İznik a requisite part of appreciating western Anatolia’s varied landscape and enjoying a hands-on experience of the Byzantine and Ottoman legacies.

How to get there?

To reach İznik from Istanbul, simply take a Fast Ferry from the city’s Yenikapı terminal to Yalova. The trip costs 13 Turkish Liras and takes about one hour. Yalova is a major junction point for buses heading throughout Turkey. Outside the ferry terminal you will find mini buses offering connections to the surrounding towns. The İznik minibus costs 7 liras, takes about 45 minutes and leaves regularly.

As the minibus approaches along the lake shore, you’ll pass through one of the city’s gates. One of İznik’s most attractive features is the double ring of 10 meter walls that surrounds the city. The walls are perforated in places to allow for the passage of modern roads, but the city still preserves the four main gates. Arranged like the points of a compass, the gates take their names from geographic features on those sides of the city. The northern and southern gates are named for the two largest adjacent cities: Istanbul and Yenişehir. The Gol Kapı (lake gate), is named for the cigar-shaped Lake İznik, which abuts the city on the western side. The most impressive gate is the Lefke Gate, which once defended the city’s eastern entrance.

No one really knows when the first walls were built, but would have been early on as İznik was a frequent siege target. The walls of today’s city are of Roman design. Each inner gate is constructed of marble: a classic Roman arch adorned with carved reliefs. The outer gates are more Spartan and are overlooked by massive watch towers.

What to do?



City Brief on Facebook

Become a Fan

MOST POPULAR

MOST COMMENTED

- ▶ Greek church in Bodrum to be restored
- ▶ The EU paints itself into a corner in Cyprus
- ▶ Japanese experts say human breath damages Hagia Sophia
- ▶ Questions linger over Swiss assurance for normalization talks
- ▶ Turkish Cypriot leader criticizes European draft report on Turkey
- ▶ Sovereign debt fear haunts Europe
- ▶ Turkish dairyman creates brand from scratch
- ▶ European NATO allies pressed to find Afghan trainers
- ▶ Spinning the bridge between East and West
- ▶ Annulled Turkish security protocol takes center stage

Most of the city’s principle attractions are located around the city center. In the time of Alexander the Great, the symmetric pattern of roads and walls was laid out; one could actually see the four gates at once from the monument located in the center. The heart of modern İznik is a more prosaic traffic circle, but life in town revolves around it nonetheless.

Iznik is an important place in Christian history. Once called Nicaea, İznik provided the setting for the First Ecumenical Council in 325 AD. Convoled by Emperor Constantine, the council sought to settle the thorny Arian controversy and gave rise to the Nicene Creed – a formal statement of the Christian faith still in use today.

The city’s archaeology museum provides many fine examples of İznik’s other notable contribution to history – tile work. İznik has been an important ceramic center for centuries. During the Ottoman conquest of Anatolia, Persian ceramic workers were forcibly relocated to İznik where they introduced a fusion of Chinese and Persian design to Turkish craftsmen. During the zenith of the Ottoman Empire, the kilns in İznik produced the tiles for the grand mosques of Istanbul. İznik tiles are renowned for their quality and color – particularly the shade of crimson known as İznik Red.

A walk around town reveals many other sites worth mentioning. Many of the city’s mosques are very old and still bear Seljuk simplicity. The Green Mosque, notable for the green tiles that line its minaret, is the best example. Older mosques persist in a state of ruin but are worth visiting as well. Finally, any visit to İznik must include a stop at the Roman theater. The İznik Theater is by no means the largest, most ornate or most beautiful Roman theater in Europe. Approaching from the street it looks more like a construction site and, sadly, the ground is lightly strewn with garbage. But, once you turn the corner the grand form of the ancient theater comes into view. Sitting on the highest steps provides an excellent view of the walls and, unlike monuments in Istanbul or Ephesus, you’ll probably have the place to yourself.

Where to stay?

Iznik is best experienced over the course of a two-day trip. The best hotels are located on the lake, while there are other accommodations in the center. The room rates are reasonable everywhere, though you’ll pay a little more for a lake view. Camlik Motel not only offers quality lodgings but its restaurant also serves up what may be the best fish dish in Turkey. The Camlik restaurant’s specialty is a fish kebab made from a lake fish called yayın. The meat is white, tender and succulent, especially when paired with the flavor of seared vegetables. Such a meal is the perfect close to a day of sightseeing in one of the greatest attractions around Istanbul.


No Comment



PRINTER FRIENDLY

READER COMMENTS

WRITE A COMMENT

Verification code  Write the code above. (Can't read code? Refresh)

Display Name: (required)

Your Email: (required)

E-mail is required in case we need to communicate with you. It will not appear on the website and will never be used for any other purposes.

Comment:

Comments policy: The Daily News seeks and supports freedom of expression and this commitment extends to our readers. Constraints include comments judged to be in violation of Turkish press law. We also moderate hate speech, libel and gratuitous insults.

Hurriyet Daily News and Economic Review, A Member of the Dogan Media Group, Published by Hurriyet Gazetecilik A.S.

© Copyright 2009 Hurriyet Daily News and Economic Review. All Rights Reserved.

[Home](#) | [To Top](#) | [User Agreement and Privacy Policy](#) | [Rights and Permissions](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Company](#) | [About News Room](#) | [RSS](#) 