




Fancy some baklava in Beyoğlu?

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by Omega Love



They say New York is the city that never sleeps, but I can assure you it's actually Istanbul. Mad, beautiful, chaotic, raw — perhaps best handled in small doses. What started as a one-way ticket to Istanbul for four days, turned into a three-week adventure, during which I discovered a few places whose stories deserve to be told.

Who am I?

I am a fairly last-minute person I guess. And when it comes to travelling, I waver between two bipolar personalities. First, the one that researches and reads all about a country, the culture, the currency, the clubs. The second is a more laid-back, I'll *figure-it-out-when-I-get-there* type of personality — an excitement borne out of the unknown.

For my trip to Istanbul, I adopted my type-2 personality and went blindly into making decisions without any research. That's how the address for my trip came to be Lakerdacı Sk., Beyoğlu — a literal 1 minute 27-second walk to the famous Galata Tower. Whilst the tourist attraction tower didn't impress me in the slightest (giving my honest opinion guys), unbeknown to me, this neighbourhood (Beyoğlu) was the ideal place to stay. The old town offers the sublime relics of the past, but Beyoğlu is the bopping place of the modern Turk.



Photo by [abdurahman iseini](#)

We all experienced the constraints of being stuck indoors all day, not just physical but mental too — thanks 2020. When you look back, what was the first thing you wanted to do when you finished work everyday? Go outside, right? It's the same for me — as a full-time, remote writer I'm used to working indoors all day but when it hits that 6pm mark, creator's block has set in and it's my time to explore the city I'm in.

It's Monday, I've heard the call to prayer at least a few times today already and I'm stepping out from work on the hunt for some of the city's famous baklava. As I wander through my local streets, I'm in awe. Istanbul's not for the faint-hearted — be prepared for a sensory overload, but if you're looking for a city that will challenge you, this is it. There is noise spilling out from everywhere — street vendors, Arabic musicians, ice cream sellers

from everywhere — street vendors, ARABIC musicians, ice cream sellers banging and clanging their spatulas, honking scooters and the harmonic mix of international languages. I see luxury fakes lining the pavements, stark evil eye charms summoning me into souvenir shops and rainbow-coloured Turkish delights that tantalise my eyes and stomach. There's an unreal vibrancy to this city.

After an hour of familiarising myself with these hustle-filled streets, I took a few lefts and rights which brought me to a quieter part of the city, and that's where I found the *Galata Frida House Café*.

Galata Frida House Café

There are very few people inside which might normally be a worrying sign. But the waiter is at the entrance smoking, nonchalant and not trying to convince me to come inside — I like that, it's a rarity in Istanbul. The first thing that captivates me as I take a seat is the intensity of colours, everywhere. The murals on the walls, the tablecloth, the patterned floor, the book covers that line the myriad of shelves; it's bright but serene. Naturally, I tried the Turkish tea and baklava and it seriously hit the spot. The baklava sat on a moist bed of honey and the bitterness of the tea contrasted nicely against the layers of filo pastry and pistachio. Even now, I can mentally journey back to sitting there, in the cafe, feasting on this delicious baklava and cleansing my palate with an aromatic Turkish tea.



Vavelya Cafe

The buzz of Istanbul doesn't stop, especially in the Galata area. Not even at 11.30pm on a Tuesday night. To get the most out of this city, you've really got to immerse yourself in its evening strolls, pastries-driven culture. So that's exactly what I did.

A few minutes walk from my AirBnB, I came across this modest café where I could only hear Turkish being uttered by a handful of locals. *Vavelya Café* was a great find — the waiters were chill, the Havuç dilimi was beyond brilliant and the chai latte was phenomenal. You know a place is good when you feel the need to return. A balmy Sunday morning gave me the perfect opportunity to come back for breakfast, and again, I felt at ease surrounded by a few local Turkish families and enjoyed a traditional breakfast with

by a few local Turkish families and enjoyed a traditional breakfast with panoramic views of the Bosphorus and the old city.

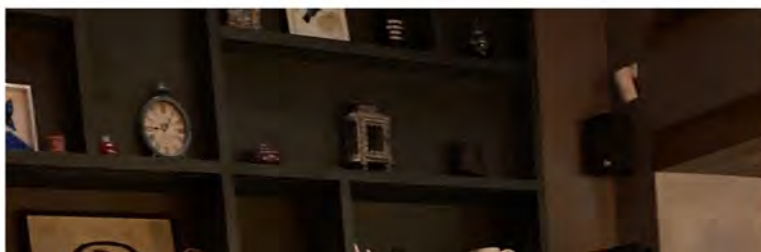


Le Cuisot Bistro

Cue Dave Brubeck's Take Five

Hear that? That sultry, alluring jazz music. It's playing out from somewhere in the distance. We're scurrying to find it. It was none-other than the elegant, Belgian-inspired, *Le Cuisot Bistro*.

In all honesty, I preferred the drinks over the heavy meat dishes but that's just personal preference — my partner devoured our plates. The live jazz quartet and buoyant atmosphere are what made this place incredibly special and of course, Carlos, the owner of *Le Cuisot*. He's earned himself a strong name in the culinary world, having opened a restaurant in Germany, served as the private chef of a Belgian Minister and brought his international flair and flavours to his restaurant in Istanbul.





While we were having dinner, Carlos invited us to the live Cuban music night the restaurant was hosting, and we gladly accepted. Come Saturday night, this place transforms from an upscale European restaurant to a lively taverna in central Havana. This ended up being my favourite night in Istanbul, and the night progressed on to a dilapidated, semi-illegal nightclub known as 'Back Street' in Taksim. But that's a whole different story.

In any case, every Thursday they have live jazz music, so if that's your scene and you don't have anything to do between 7.30–10.30pm in the middle of Istanbul, my advice would be, head to *Le Cuisot*.



Unexpected Istanbul

I usually think if a place doesn't challenge you, it won't change you. One of my big dreams is to travel to Istanbul to become a better musician. I love the jazz scene in Istanbul and

my big drivers to travel is to become a better version of who I am. Istanbul is a city that requires strength, patience, and potentially ear plugs, so go prepared with at least that bit of knowledge.

Like I mentioned at the beginning of this piece, I travelled to Istanbul with no expectations, no real clue what I was letting myself in for, and with no knowledge of what places to see or do. I just wanted to be able to say I've lived in the city where East meets West. I can't call myself any type of expert on this enigmatic city but if you're most interested in a decent bit of baklava in the most dynamic part of Istanbul, then my [Bimble list](#) is worth a save. :)

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we're feeling 2022!

by Georgia Gibson



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