

IZMIR

Stretching along Turkey's Aegean coast, this cosmopolitan city blends antiquity with modernity, and has much to offer the hungry visitor. Tristan Rutherford gets stuck in

Why go? The tale of Turkey's third city is one of migration. Sephardi Jews brought *boyoz* pastries stuffed with artichokes and tahini, while Levantine traders nibbled nettle, chickweed and over 100 edible herbs from across the Mediterranean. The cacophonous Kemeralti Bazaar – one of Turkey's oldest – highlights more recent flavours: think mint soup, *lahmacun* pizza and *gevrek* bagels from the Caucasus, Muslim Balkans and Turkey's wild east. Most foodies jet in during spring, when Izmir's regional flavours bloom, along with its citrus trees. The pedestrian-friendly 'Pearl of the Aegean' is also the nation's leading street-food city. Hop along to find *miçye tava* mussel skewers, *katmer* cheese puffs and *sambali* semolina-almond desserts. Pleasant highs tickling 25C make May ideal for pootling before the full-blown blaze of the summer months.

What to do Fuel up with a strong cup of Turkish coffee and make your way to the breezy Kordon promenade, Izmir's answer to the Rive Gauche or Las Ramblas. It crowns an unashamedly liberal city that looks seaward for culture and cuisine: pious Easterners scorn the settlement as 'Infidel Izmir'. Expect bike paths, kite flyers, kissing teens and wine bars pouring local pinot noir. A block inland, whitewashed Greek streets house squid'n'ouzo tavernas, ancient churches impose, and just past the labyrinthine Kemeralti Bazaar with its stalls, tea gardens and artisan boutiques, is an agora used to store olive oil and feta cheese when Marcus Aurelius sat on the throne in Rome. Amble amid its remains or pop into the Izmir Archaeology Museum izmirmuzesi.gov.tr which shows artefacts from the seafaring suburb of Teos. The ultimate sunset spot is the Asansör lift (from the French *ascenseur*), built back in 1907. A rickety ascent opens onto panoramic views from a vintage café.

Where to stay A little outside of the city centre, Club Marvy 00 90 232 797 6364, clubmarvy.com is a gem of a resort with twin sandy beaches (one adult-only). It harvests its own fruit and presses its own olives into oil. This year sees the arrival of Buono. Italiano by Michelin-starred Italian chef Cristina Bowerman, which

sources ingredients from Degimren Farm, the region's first organic orchard. Swissotel Efes Izmir 00 90 232 414 0000, swissotel.com is sited betwixt every culinary and cultural highlight. The hammam, pools and press-your-own pomegranate juice machine are a bonus. Key Hotel 00 90 232 482 1111, keyhotel.com is all about the sea views. Their 250-bottle wine list includes vintages from the Roman-era vineyards of Urla. In 2018 eco-chic Gaia Alaçati Hotel 00 90 232 729 7777, gaiaalacati.com opened to reveal upcycled furnishings including a bar made from old lamp posts.

Where to eat and drink Authentic cuisine is best found in the city's *lokantas* (backstreet point-and-order restaurants). Billur Et Lokantası 00 90 232 445 0524 offers *tulum* goat's cheese patties and *köfte* followed by pumpkin dessert. Upscale Balmumu Dükkan 00 90 232 421 20 24 highlights Izmir favourites in attractive surrounds, cooked by *usta* (master chef) Ahmet Bey. His tahini soup and 'pasha' *boreks* could grace an Ottolenghi tome. For naughty thrills, hit Kokoreççi Asım 00 90 232 462 0214, where offal expert Asım cranks out lamb intestines spun over a rotisserie grill. His *kokoreç*, served in a warm bun with tomatoes and onions, is ranked as a make-or-break hangover cure. For seafood, head to Sakiz Alsancak 00 90 232 464 1103. Try cold and warm mezze options followed by a fish main (like *çupra* sea bream baked in salt). Zeynel Ergin Gevrek Firini bakery 00 90 232 403 4004 is great for *simit* breakfast bagels, Izmir olives and grilled halloumi.

Time running out? A five-minute drive from Izmir's airport are the rippling vineyards of Isabey winery, in business since 1942. Now more popular as a vine-choked restaurant, it serves sumptuous steaks paired with its own famed sauvignon blancs. isabey.com

Trip tip Turkey's first Slow Food city, Seferihisar, sits atop the archaeological site of Teos. Non-local products are banned at its popular street market. Instead, traders hand-stitch garments, produce their own jewellery and reinvent local seafood specialities to serve up (menus include conger eel kebabs).

Resources

Visit Izmir is the local tourist board. Its website couples recipe guides and history lessons with videos and practical information about visiting Turkey's most easygoing city. visitizmir.org

Further Reading

Levant by Philip Mansel (John Murray, £8.99) tells the tale of Eastern Mediterranean trading hubs Izmir, Alexandria and Beirut.

AVERAGE DAILY TEMPERATURES AND RAINFALL

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Lows	3	4	6	10	13	17	20	19	16	12	8	5
Highs	11	12	15	20	25	30	32	32	28	23	17	12
Rain	4	3	3	2	1	0	0	0	1	1	3	5

Clockwise from top left: pigeons flock to Konak Mosque; a birdseed hawkker in Konak Square; local olives with lemon; boats bob in the harbour; Izmir's coastline; adding olive oil to a plate of greens; an old cobbled street; a regional sauvignon blanc; catch of the day; balcony views; a woman holds a tray of *simit*; produce in the market; skewers on the grill



Photos by Carl Pendle