



## OUTCAN Info Sheet 2020

### Istanbul, Turkey

#### LOCATION

**Country:** Turkey

**Town:** Istanbul

**Entry/Exit requirements:** Duty: Green/Red Passport, NATO Travel orders (NTO).

- Ensure Turkish immigration officials stamp your passport on arrival. Failure to produce a stamped passport is punishable by a fine, detention and deportation, and can lead to significant delays at departure.
- Dual Turkish-Canadian citizens must present a valid Turkish passport or piece of identification to enter the country.

**Other info to Consider:**

- Family (non-dependants) can visit but must purchase an e-visa prior to entering the country.
- Posting to the Consulate General of Canada

#### POPULATION

**Size:** Metropolitan area - 15 million (one of the most populated cities in the world).

**Ethnicity:** An estimated 80% of people in Turkey are Turkish.

- Turkey hosts the largest number of refugees worldwide; in Feb 2019, ~3.6 million Syrians and 370 000 other nationalities.

**Religion:** Muslim 99.8% (mostly Sunni), other 0.2% (mostly Christian or Jews).

#### LANGUAGE(S)

**Official language:** Turkish

**Prevalence of French or English speaking:** Very limited.

- Some establishments will have an English-speaking employee.
- A young and professional population may speak English, French and German quite well, but many of your neighbours/locals may not speak anything beyond Turkish.

#### COST OF LIVING

**Exchange rate to consider:** Turkish lira (TRY). 1 CAD = 4.52 TRY (Jan 2020).

#### QUALITY OF LIFE

**Climate and potential for severe weather, natural disasters:**

- Turkey is located in an active seismic zone. Landslides are possible in affected areas, and strong aftershocks may occur up to one week after the initial earthquake.
- Severe rainstorms can cause flooding and landslides, resulting in extensive damage to infrastructure and hampering the provision of essential services.
- Droughts, wildfires and snowstorms can also delay travel and disrupt essential services.

**Laws and Culture:**

- Penalties for possession, use or trafficking of illegal drugs are severe. Convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines.
- Although religious proselytizing is not illegal, some activities may be considered illegal and could lead to detention.
- Avoid physical contact, including holding hands, in public.
- Avoid discussions (including in social media) on historical and religious issues as well as on politics.

- Turkish authorities have detained and prosecuted large numbers of people over social media posts criticizing the government, state officials, president, and military operations—even when the posts were published in the past or while the author was in another country. Keep in mind the sensitivities, think twice before posting or reacting to online content criticizing the government, and restrain/limit your social media footprint.

#### **Safety and Security:**

- Pickpocketing occurs at airports, on public transportation and in other public places, particularly on public transportation and in large crowds or public markets. Foreigners could be targeted by thieves.
- Extremist groups regularly carry out attacks at border crossings and other locations in Syria close to the Turkish border. These attacks are indiscriminate, often result in deaths and injuries and spill over into Turkey. The Turkish government has declared some areas in villages along the border with Syria special security zones as part of military cross-border operations. Expect a heightened military presence and movement restrictions in these areas.
- The three-year ceasefire between the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) ended in July 2015. The TAF has conducted several air strikes against PKK targets in the Turkish–Iraqi border area. The PKK have launched deadly terrorist attacks against Turkish security personnel in several cities and regions in the south and southeast of the country. Curfews can be enforced without notice.
- Protests and civil unrest in several southeastern cities have led to violent clashes between police and protesters. Gunfire and small-scale bomb explosions have resulted in deaths. Other incidents have caused injuries and property damage.
- Avoid overland travel. If you must, drive during the day and stay on major roads. Do not use public transportation.
- On July 15 and 16, 2016, an attempted coup took place in Turkey. Conditions remain volatile and the situation can change rapidly, especially in large cities. Monitor local media and follow the instructions of local authorities.
- Expect an increased presence of security forces in large cities, random ID checks and roadblocks. Cooperate during ID checks and always carry your passport and visa or residence permit. Failure to produce these documents or non-compliance with Turkish officials during identity checks could result in fines, detainment or deportation.
- Turkish citizens belonging to certain occupational groups may be required to produce a letter from their employer when leaving the country. This may affect dual Canadian-Turkish citizens trying to leave Turkey.
- There is a threat of terrorism from domestic and international terrorist groups in Turkey. Many attacks have occurred throughout the country. Although most have occurred in the south and east, some also took place in major cities, including Ankara, Bursa, Istanbul and Izmir
- Increased security measures are in place throughout the country. Authorities have prevented several attacks. Turkish security officials may set up roadblocks or close streets when they receive reports on specific threats.
- There is a threat of kidnapping along Turkey's borders with Syria and Iraq, where Muslim extremist groups take advantage of porous borders and an unpredictable security situation to carry out operations. Groups such as Daesh and Jabat al-Nusra, who use kidnapping as a means of raising funds, may target the local population, foreigners and even foreign aid workers for kidnapping-for-ransom.
- There is a greater risk of sexual assault during the summer holiday period in coastal resort areas.
- Women travelling alone may be subject to some forms of harassment and verbal abuse.
- There are numerous stray dogs and cats in Istanbul, Ankara and other cities. Dogs often travel in packs and could attack pedestrians and joggers. Do not attempt to feed or pet stray dogs, as they might not be vaccinated.

#### **Level of isolation:**

- This post is considered remote, and has limited access to French and English; risk of feeling isolated is high.
- With the Islamic culture, it can take some getting used to - particularly for women regarding traditional gender-roles in Muslim culture
- There are 1-2 Canadian families in this location

## **HOUSING**

- The consulate can help you find a suitable home for your posting.

## **EMPLOYMENT**

### **Are there employment opportunities for spouses?**

- Due to tax and legal implications, spousal employment on the economy is not a realistic option.

- There are very limited employment opportunities available through CFMWS, so families should plan to be single income for the duration of the posting.
- Limited, language barrier.

**Op Tempo:** The op tempo will vary greatly depending on position. TD is possible.

## HEALTH CARE

**Access:** Modern medical care is available in major cities. Quality of care varies greatly throughout the country.

- Physicians and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for health services.
- English speaking personnel very limited, unless using the American, German International hospitals.
- The pharmacy in GK stocks a variety of medications and may be able to provide assistance with obtaining prescription drugs that are not available.

**Special needs:** extremely limited in English or French.

**Consideration for pregnancy / birth:** Health care for pregnancy and birth is available on the economy.

**Dental:** Dental care can be accessed in town. You are required to pay up front, and you can then claim your expenses.

## SCHOOLING

- Schooling is typically at Istanbul International Community School (IB) for grades JK-12, British International School of Istanbul (IB) JK-8, and Lycée Pierre Loti d'Istanbul for grades JK-12.
- British curriculum is only deemed compatible up to gr 8; access to British curriculum beyond gr 8 requires WG B approval.
- Should consider distance to International school when selecting a residence, catchment area and pick-up points for school bus or public transport.
- It is highly recommended that parents visit the school during HHT in order to view the facilities and introduce themselves to the staff.

**Curriculum vs. Canadian curriculum:**

- The Curriculum varies depending on choice of school.
- None of them offers Canadian history or geography.

**Resources for special need children:**

- Access is depending on language required (English/French), area of specialization and degree of support needed, it may be very limited.

## CHILDCARE

**Things to Consider:**

- Local daycares are available on the economy.
- Very few will provide childcare in English nor French.

## TRANSPORTATION

**Things to Consider:** Airport: Istanbul International (IST) Ataturk International Airport (ISL) and Sabiha Gokcen International Airport (SAW).

- Turkey has a modern road network that is constantly being improved. Uneven surfaces and poorly marked lane changes near construction zones, however, are common.
- Accidents are common. Reckless driving, perilous road conditions, inadequate lighting, poor signage and high traffic congestion pose hazards. Avoid driving after dark.
- If you are involved in an accident with a vehicle, do not move your vehicle, regardless of whether or not you are blocking traffic or anyone is injured. Wait until the police have made an official report.
- Pedestrians do not have the right of way.
- The Government of Turkey tightly controls traffic at the borders with Iran and Iraq.
- Turkey is modernizing its main railroads and has introduced a high-speed corridor between Istanbul and Ankara.
- The public transportation of Istanbul includes buses, metros, metro buses, trams, funiculars, cable car, shared taxis (dolmus), ferries and sea buses.

## RESOURCES AND AMENITIES

**Is there a Military Family Services centre available in that location?**

- No, under MFS(E) Riga & Remote.

**Psychosocial / Mental Health Resources:**

- Not at post, MFS(E) SW for dependants only, CAF SW/Mental Health Team for member and family are located in Geilenkirchen, Germany. Padre is located in Italy.

**Communications (e.g. Quality of Internet connection):** Quality of internet/cellular connection is depending on location

## ACTIVITIES

**Access to sports or other leisure activities:** Yes on the economy, but very limited in English or French.

**Availability of playgrounds:** Yes.

## RESTRICTIONS TO CONSIDER

**Are common law relationships recognized?** No.

**Are same sex couples recognized?** No. While not illegal, homosexuality is not socially tolerated in Turkey.

**Medications that are illegal in the country:**

- Use without a prescription of narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances is illegal.
- Cannabis is illegal. Possession is punishable by a fine or by imprisonment.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

- **European Commission Country Reports (2019)**  
[https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2019-european-semester-country-reports\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2019-european-semester-country-reports_en)
- **Canadian Travel Advisories**  
<https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories>
- **CIA World Factbooks (One Pagers from US)**  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html>
- **Living Abroad (from Gov.UK)**  
<https://www.gov.uk/topic/help-british-nationals-overseas/europe>
- **Consumer Price Index (CPI)**  
<https://data.imf.org/?sk=4FFB52B2-3653-409A-B471-D47B46D904B5>

**For more comprehensive information, please feel free to reach out to the resources below;**

- MFS(E) Social Worker : [Chebat.Myriam@cfmws.com](mailto:Chebat.Myriam@cfmws.com) or [Myriam.Chebat@Forces.gc.ca](mailto:Myriam.Chebat@Forces.gc.ca)
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