



## OUTCAN Guide | Life in Istanbul, Türkiye

### **LOCATION**

**Country:** Türkiye (Turkey)

**Town:** Istanbul

**Base:** Consulate General of Canada

**Entry/Exit requirements:**

- 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:**
- Canadian passport holders no longer need a visa to visit Türkiye for up to 90 days within a 180-day time frame.
- Green/Red Passport holders, still require a valid visa issued by the Turkish Embassy.
- If you have dependents (children) over the age of 18, you must discuss their residency status with host-nation support. As children over the age of 18, are no longer considered “dependents” in Türkiye, it may be challenging to obtain a residency card.

### **POPULATION**

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

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

- Minorities include Laz people, Kurds, Zazas, Abkhazians, Bulgarians, Pomaks, Yuruks, Tatars, Jewish people. Small foreign population.
- Türkiye 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 = 22.71 TRY (February 7, 2024).

Inflation rates remain high at 64.86% in consumer cost.

### **QUALITY OF LIFE**

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

- Türkiye 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. Foreigners will be deported.
- 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.
- 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.
- Please consult the Canadian Travel Advisory for the different zones within Türkiye that have higher risks, that travel is not recommended or even forbidden <https://travel.gc.ca/destinations/turkiye>
- 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.
- 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 are numerous stray dogs and cats in Istanbul. 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.
- The Islamic culture, – may have traditional gender-roles (particularly for women) that are different from Canada.
- There are 1-2 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.
- Employment is extremely limited through CFMWS. Families should plan to be a single-income family for the duration of the posting. [CFMWS | MFS | OUTCAN Europe | CFMWS](#)

- If working remotely for a Canadian organization, you cannot occupy office space. You must work from your home.

**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, French even more difficult to find.
- Private Hospitals have an international department. The Doctors will speak English; however, receptionists, nurses and aids usually do not.
- The pharmacy in GK stocks a variety of medications and may be able to provide assistance with obtaining prescription drugs that are not available.
- The Canadian Medical Clinic in Geilenkirchen is responsible for the healthcare of all Canadian military members in Europe and can be accessed.
- All bills associated with the care of dependents are the member's personal responsibility and are to be claimed through PSHCP. [PSHCP Member Portal \(pshcp-msh.ca\)](http://pshcp-msh.ca)
- **Special needs:** extremely limited in English or French.
- It is highly advised that the family consult with Medical Screening Officer in Canada and / or the Canadian Element to ensure that the required services are readily available in either English or French before accepting a posting.

**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 Istanbul International Community School (IB) for grades JK-12, British International School of Istanbul (IB) JK-8, 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.
- For an approved list of schools, please contact Children's Education Management at: [CEMGEE@forces.gc.ca](mailto:CEMGEE@forces.gc.ca)
- [Children's Education Management - Canada.ca](http://Children's Education Management - Canada.ca)
- [Gestion de l'éducation des enfants - Canada.ca](http://Gestion de l'éducation des enfants - Canada.ca)

**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).

- Türkiye 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 Türkiye tightly controls traffic at the borders with Iran and Iraq.
- Türkiye is modernizing its main railroads and has introduced a high-speed corridor between Istanbul and Ankara.

## **RESOURCES AND AMENITIES**

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

- No physical centre. Families in Istanbul are supported by the Remote Team:

[MFSE.Remotes@cfmws.com](mailto:MFSE.Remotes@cfmws.com)

### **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 depends on location. Please note that if you bring a cell phone with you to Türkiye, you will need to register the phone and pay the associated taxes within 90 days of arriving. Ask your sponsor for further information. Turkish SIM cards only work within Türkiye. For travel, it is recommended that you purchase an e-SIM card.

## **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 nor is it legally recognized.

### **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 (2023)
- [https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/publications/2023-european-semester-country-reports\\_en](https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/publications/2023-european-semester-country-reports_en)
- Canadian Travel Advisories
- <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories>
- CIA World Factbooks (One Pagers from the US)
- <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/Türkiye-turkiye/>
- Living Abroad (from Gov.UK)
- <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/Türkiye>

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

- MFS(E) Social Worker: [MFSSocialWork@cfmws.com](mailto:MFSSocialWork@cfmws.com)
- CAF Social Worker: [GKMedicalClinic@forces.gc.ca](mailto:GKMedicalClinic@forces.gc.ca)
- MFS(E) Team: [MFSE.Remotes@cfmws.com](mailto:MFSE.Remotes@cfmws.com)
- MFS(E) Regional Office: +49 (0) 2451 717 173, [MFS.Europe@cfmws.com](mailto:MFS.Europe@cfmws.com)