

Jewish Heritage Sites in Turkey

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A report prepared for the Quincentennial Foundation in 1992 on the 500th anniversary of the arrival in the Ottoman Empire of Sephardic Jews driven from Spain by the Spanish Inquisition.

(Note: access to the interiors of buildings mentioned herein is strictly controlled for security, and must be arranged in advance by application to the Chief Rabbinate:
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ISTANBUL

After the Turkish conquest of Constantinople in 1453, Sultan Mehmet II ("the Conqueror," 1451-1481) encouraged immigration to repopulate the city. Jewish communities were invited to take up residence at **Hasköy**, on the eastern bank of the Golden Horn. Under Sultan Beyazit II (1481-1512), Jews persecuted in Spain and Portugal were encouraged to establish themselves in the Ottoman Empire. In Istanbul the new immigrants settled mostly near the **Balat** quarter on the western bank of the Golden Horn where a Jewish community had existed since Byzantine times. Jews also settled in villages along the western shore of the Bosphorus.

Galata

The area around the Galata Tower in Beyoglu is of prime interest to visitors touring the Jewish interest sites. The neighborhood has bustling street life, the synagogues have great historical and artistic value, and all sites are within easy walking distance of one another.

The history of Jewish life in Galata begins in Byzantine times when this was a walled city separate from Constantinople. Galata was inhabited and ruled by the Genoese, who had among them numerous Jewish families. After the Ottoman conquest of Istanbul in 1453, Jewish life in Galata was enlivened with the arrival of many new settlers, especially during the reign of Sultan Beyazit II. From the 1500s onward, Galata was mostly Jewish. As recently as a few decades ago, the Galata quarter rang with the songs and street-game chants of Jewish children speaking Judeo-Spanish. Today most of Istanbul's Jews live in more desirable residential quarters, though Galata's synagogues

are still of great importance to the city's Jewish community. Sites in Galata include the office of the Chief Rabbinate, the Neve Shalom and Italian synagogues, the Zülfaris Synagogue Museum, Schneider (Tailor) Synagogue gallery, a Jewish elementary school, and the Kamondo staircase.

GETTING THERE

Galata is built on the steep hillside which stretches between Karaköy on the Golden Horn, and Beyoglu on the heights above. The cylindrical Galata Tower (*Galata Kulesi*), topped by its conical roof, is a convenient landmark.

From Taksim Square: Galata is easily accessible from Taksim Square. Take the restored turn-of-the-century *tramvay* (tramway) which runs from Taksim to Tünel Square along Istiklal Caddesi. The fare is the same as on a city bus. This avenue, the former Grande Rue de Péra, is lined with historic diplomatic posts, handsome old houses, fashionable boutiques and upscale restaurants. The tram ends its run at Tünel Square.

From Tepebasi: From hotels on Mesrutiyet Caddesi (Pera Palas, The Marmara, etc.) walk one long block west to Istiklal Caddesi, then turn right. You can take the tramway, or simply walk for five minutes to Tünel Square.

From Other Districts: Take a bus, taxi or ferryboat to Karaköy, then ride the Tünel, Galata's little two-station underground train, from Karaköy up to Tünel Square. The Tünel was built by French engineers in 1875, and modernized several decades ago.

WHAT TO SEE IN GALATA

The office of Turkey's **Chief Rabbinate**, Yemenici Abdülatif Sokak No. 23, is two minute's walk from Tünel Square. From the Tünel building, cross Istiklal Caddesi walking obliquely to the left, and walk 1-1/2 blocks along Ensiz Sokak to its end. Turn left, then right onto Yemenici Abdülatif Sokak, and the Chief Rabbinate is near the end of the street on the right-hand side, at no. 23.

The Chief Rabbinate has been here since 1876, when the sultan still reigned.

Under the Ottoman Empire, each of the many ethno-religious communities (*millet*s) in the sultan's domains observed its own religious laws. Each millet was governed by its religious leader (Chief Rabbi, Sheik-ul-Islam, Patriarch, Exarch, etc.) who was

responsible to the sultan for the good behavior of members of the community. Disputes between members of the same community were decided by religious community courts according to the religious laws and traditions of the community, without interference by the imperial government. The Ottoman millet system provided freedom of religion for all the empire's peoples and creeds.

After seeing the Chief Rabbinate, return along Ensiz Sokak to the Tünel building. Keeping the Tünel on your right, walk about 30 meters east and turn right onto Galipdede Caddesi. On the left-hand side just a few steps along the street is the **Galata Whirling Dervish Hall** (*Galata Mevlevi Tekkesi*). The *tekke*, a wooden building set in a lovely garden, served for years as a museum of Ottoman calligraphy (*Divan Edebiyatı Müzesi*), and is now — again — the setting for the Mevlevi *sema* (whirling dervish rite).

Continue downhill on Galipdede Caddesi past music and bookshops, to the **Galata Tower**. The tower was originally the high-point in the Genoese fortifications which protected the town of Galata during Byzantine and early Ottoman times. In the nineteenth century as the population of Galata spread outside these walls, the tower was rebuilt and used as a fire watchmen's post. In the 1970s, restoration and modernization gave it a new function as an observatory, restaurant and nightclub. After paying an admission fee, you can take an elevator to the observation platform to enjoy the panoramic views of Galata, the Golden Horn, the Bosphorus, and old Istanbul.

From the Galata Tower, walk northwest along Büyük Hendek Caddesi to the **Neve Shalom Synagogue**, at no. 67, midway between the Galata Tower and Sishane Square. This is one of the larger synagogues in the city, designed and decorated in a modern style. Inaugurated on March 25, 1951, it is used for major functions of the community such as weddings and funerals. The *bema* and ark are at the front of the hall, with seating around three sides. In September, 1986, Arab terrorists staged a bloody attack with guns and grenades on worshippers in the synagogue, killing 23. The Turkish government and people were outraged by the attack. The damage has been repaired, except for several bullet holes in a seat-back, left as a reminder. Neve Shalom is attractive, important to the life of today's Turkish Jewish community, and significant because of the tragic event.

Leave Neve Shalom, turn right, walk a few steps and turn right again onto the short, narrow lane called Lakerdaci Sokak. At no. 12 is the **Musevi I. Karma İlk Okulu**, a Jewish primary school under the aegis of the Turkish National Education Ministry. Though the entrance to the school is around the corner from the Neve Shalom synagogue, the buildings actually adjoin.

The larger street parallel to Lakerdaci Sokak is Sair Ziya Pasa Sokak. From the school, go to Sair Ziya Pasa Sokak and turn right, walking downhill. A few blocks along is the

Italian Synagogue, on Sair Ziya Pasa Sokak at the corner with Laleli Cesme Sokak. It was founded in the 1880s by Istanbul Jews who, because of factional disputes within the community, placed themselves under the protection of the Italian ambassador. There are two entrances to the synagogue, the main (front) entrance on Sair Ziya Pasa Sokak, and a side entrance at Laleli Cesme Sokak No 8. The front entrance should be used in order to appreciate the synagogue's Gothic-like façade and marble staircase. The interior is appealing, harmonious, and well preserved, with double hanging arches in the balcony, a deep dome with stars and stained glass windows, and Turkish carpets on the floor.

From the Italian Synagogue, walk east and north along Laleli Cesme Sokak to the Galata Tower, turn right, and walk down Camekan Sokak, keeping to the left when the street forks. It's a ten-minute walk up steep streets and down from the Italian Synagogue to the next point of interest. Along the way you wander through the daily life of Galata: workshops, groceries, housewives hanging out laundry, children playing in the narrow streets or making their way to and from school.

Go down the stairs on the left-hand side of Camekan Sokak and at the end of the steps you come face-to-face with the **Ashkenazi Synagogue**, Yüksek Kaldirim No. 37, on a steep pedestrian street descending the hill from the Galata Tower to Karaköy. Inaugurated in 1900, the façade of the building is especially imposing, with three Oriental arches and octagonal rosette windows. Inside, the floors are of marble, the lofty dome is painted with stars, and the elaborately-worked ark, of dark wood, blends eastern European and Arabesque styles. The synagogue is well-kept and attractive.

From the Ashkenazi Synagogue, go back up the steep steps to Camekan Sokak, turn left, and descend steeply to the **Kamondo Staircase**, a graceful curved double staircase joining the lower end of Camekan Sokak to the thoroughfare of Bankalar Caddesi (also called Voyvoda Caddesi). The staircase was built in the nineteenth century on the order of the Kamondos, the Jewish community's most prosperous family.

From the staircase, turn left and walk downhill along Bankalar Caddesi to Karaköy Square. The **Zülfaris Synagogue** on Haracci Ali Sokak, dating from 1671, has been restored as a museum of Turkish Jewish life. This synagogue was the main venue for weddings and funerals until the construction of Neve Shalom.

Balat

This is another of the quarters in which Jews were settled after their expulsion from Spain, enlarging a community which had lived here since Byzantine times. Today Balat is a working-class district on the shores of the Golden Horn. Though it once had as many as

nineteen synagogues, only two of importance remain, the famous Ahrida, and the neighboring Yanbol. The site of a Jewish school is close by, and Or Ahayim Jewish Hospital is several hundred meters to the northwest, within walking distance. Also in this district are the cast-iron Bulgarian Orthodox church of St. Stephen of the Bulgars, the Kariye Müzesi (Chora Church with Byzantine mosaics) and the ruins of the Byzantine palace known as Tekfur Saray.

GETTING THERE

Balat is on the southern shore of the Golden Horn, between the Atatürk and Fatih bridges. If you plan to visit the Kariye Müzesi with its 14th-century Byzantine mosaics, and the nearby Tekfur Saray Byzantine palace, you may want to visit these places first, then walk one kilometer downhill to the Ahrida and Yanbol synagogues.

To get to the Kariye Müzesi, take a taxi, or the Metro from west of Aksaray Square to the Edirnekapi station. When you reach Edirnekapi, ask for directions by saying simply *Kariye*. The museum is only a two-minute walk east of the main street; neighborhood people will happily point the way through the maze of tiny streets.

For walking directions from the Kariye Müzesi to the Ahrida synagogue, see the description of the Kariye Müzesi, below.

To go directly to the Ahrida and Yanbol synagogues, take a bus or taxi to Balat. The street on the southern shore of the Golden Horn bears several names as it meanders along; in Balat it is named Mürsel Pasa Caddesi. Take a bus or taxi along Mürsel Pasa Caddesi to the Köprübasi bus stop and walk up Çiçekli Bostan Sokak, the short, narrow street heading southwest. Cross the first street, Hizir Çavus Köprüsü Sokak, and at the second street, Vodina Caddesi, turn right. Walk four short blocks along Vodina Caddesi to the Ahrida Synagogue, which is on the left-hand side at no. 9, behind the metal door topped by a marble plaque with Hebrew inscription.

WHAT TO SEE IN BALAT

The **Kariye Müzesi**, or Chora Church, was originally built as the 'Church of the Holy Saviour Outside the Walls' or 'in the Country', because the original early fourth-century church on this site was indeed outside the walls built by Constantine the Great. It was enclosed within the walls built by the Emperor Theodosius II in 413, less than 100 years after Constantine, and has been 'in the city' for 1550 years. For four centuries after the Ottoman conquest of Istanbul it served as a mosque (Kariye Camii), and is now a museum because of its priceless mosaics.

The building you see was built in the late 11th century, with lots of repairs and restructuring in the following centuries. Virtually all of the interior decoration—the famous mosaics and the less renowned but equally striking mural paintings—dates from about 1320.

The mosaics are breathtaking. The first ones are those of the dedication, to Jesus and Mary. Then come the offertory ones: Theodore Metochites, builder of the church, offering it to Jesus. The two small domes of the inner narthex have portraits of all Jesus's ancestors back to Adam. A series outlines Mary's life, and another, Jesus's early years. Yet another series concentrates on Jesus's ministry.

In the nave are three mosaics: of Jesus, of Mary as Teacher, and of the Dormition of Mary (turn around to see this one—it's over the main door you just entered).

South of the nave is the Parecclesion, a side chapel built to hold the tombs of the church's founder and relatives. The frescos, appropriately, deal with the theme of death and resurrection.

On the south side of the Kariye Müzesi is a small hotel, the Kariye Oteli (tel. 524-8864 or 524-9806), housed in a renovated Ottoman mansion. The hotel's garden restaurant is a pleasant spot for a meal or light refreshments.

Just across from the Kariye Müzesi is a cafe, an old Istanbul structure restored, like the Kariye Oteli, by the Turkish Touring & Automobile Club. Stop for a snack or beverage on the patio on the ground floor, or on the neighbouring shady terrace with its dovecote.

From Kariye, head west to the city walls, then north again, and you'll soon come to the **Palace of Constantine Porphyrogenetus**, the Tekfur Sarayı (tehk-FOOR sar-rah-yuh).

Though the building is only a shell, it is remarkably preserved for a Byzantine palace built in the 1300s, and is currently undergoing restoration.

Return to the Kariye Müzesi. Facing the front door, go to your left around the building on Kariye Türbesi Sokak and downhill to Sultan Çesme Caddesi, where you turn left. Follow Sultan Çesme Caddesi downhill; it changes names to become Kürkçü Çesmesi Sokak, and continues to the base of the slope, where it becomes Vodina Caddesi. Just past the intersection with Hacı İsa Mektebi Sokak, on the right (south) side of Vodina Caddesi, is the Ahrida Synagogue.

Most famous of Istanbul's old synagogues, the **Ahrida Synagogue**, also called the Okhrida, is at no. 9 on the street officially named Vodina Caddesi, but often called Kürkçü Çesme Sokak. The Ahrida and nearby Yanbol are said to take their names from the towns in Macedonia from which their founding congregations migrated in Byzantine times. The foundations of the Ahrida may date from the late 1400s, or may be even older.

The first building was thought to have been built in the early 1400s, but a disastrous fire in the 1600s did extensive damage. In 1694 the sultan issued a decree calling for its reconstruction. The work was done in the Ottoman Baroque style popular at that time, the so-called "Tulip Period" in Ottoman artistic and court life.

During the extensive restorations carried out in 1990 and 1991, remnants of architectural details from the 1700s and 1800s were discovered. Architect Hitsrev Tayla, in charge of the restoration work, has included many of these earlier details in the final plan so as to symbolize the Ahrida's long and illustrious history.

Besides the synagogue's fascinating architecture, be sure to examine its priceless furnishings, including the *bema* (pulpit) shaped like the prow of a ship, said by some to symbolize Noah's Ark.

Yanbol Synagogue, Dürkiye Sokak no. 16, directly opposite Kamis Sokak, is less than a block from the Ahrida. Ask for the shop of Korin Hanim (*Koh-REEN hah-nuhm*), "Madame Corinne," who holds the keys. The Yanbol's interior is similar in appearance to the Ahrida before restoration, though the decor here seems more unified. Paintings in the dome are said to portray the Macedonian town of Yanbol, from which members of the original congregation came.

Walk back to the shore road along the Golden Horn, turn left, and walk 500 meters to the **Or Ahayim Jewish Hospital** (also called the Balat Musevi Hastanesi), Demirhisar Caddesi, built in 1897. A 120-bed hospital attended mostly by Jewish physicians, it's located in the swath of parkland created in the mid-1980s to beautify the Golden Horn's banks. The adjoining clinic has recently been restored.

If you return to Eminönü along the shore of the Golden Horn, you pass the Bulgarian Orthodox **Church of St. Stephen of the Bulgars**, on the left-hand side of the road. Built of cast iron, it was made in Vienna, floated down the Danube on barges to the Golden Horn, and bolted together here in 1871. It is still used for services. For a visit, find the caretaker, who is usually somewhere near the church.

Hasköy

In Byzantine times these south-facing slopes on the north/east shore of the Golden Horn were covered in rich vineyards and forests. After the Ottoman conquest the sultans came to hunt and to enjoy the natural beauty of the area. In later centuries an imperial shipyard and arsenal were built on the shore, and residential areas were constructed farther up the slope. Much of the Golden Horn's northern/eastern shore is now devoted to shipbuilding and other industrial and naval activity. Hasköy, a district on this shore, has the Jewish

Home for the Aged, the Kamondo mansion, a large Jewish cemetery which includes the Kamondo mausoleum, and the imperial Ottoman pavilion called the Aynalikavak Kasri.

GETTING THERE

The Home for the Aged and Aynalikavak Kasri may be most easily reached by taxi. Tell the driver to take you to the *Hasköy Polis Karakolu* (police station) or the *Beyoglu Belediyesi Sükrü Urcan Spor Tesisleri* (athletic facilities), which are well known. From these sites you can continue by taxi, or walk for ten minutes. Though Hasköy is on a hillside, the climb is not excessively steep.

WHAT TO SEE IN HASKÖY

The Jewish **Home for the Aged** (*Ihtiyarlar Yurdu*), Hasköy Mektep Sokak no. 10, is a handsome classical stone building originally constructed in 1874 by the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* as a modern European-style school. The Home is located on a quiet street in a residential district with vibrant street life. As you walk to the school, picture these narrow streets as they were a century ago, alive with the sounds of Judeo-Spanish, and dotted with small synagogues.

From the police station, go northwest up the steep hill, keeping the athletic facilities on your right. Look for a sign reading *Ihtiyarlar Yurduna gider* ("This way to the Old-Age Home.") Turn right onto Okmeydani Caddesi, go one block, then turn left onto Keçeci Piri Cami Sokak. Walk along this street to a little park; turn right at the far side of the park onto Hasköy Mektep Sokak ("Hasköy School Street;" another sign marks this turn), and the Old-Age Home is one short block up on the right.

Founded in May, 1860 in Paris, the Alliance Israélite Universelle was a mutual aid and protection society. Its mission was to promote closer cooperation among Jews throughout the world; to protect Jewish communities which were under pressure; and to promote Jewish community life through culture and education.

In the Ottoman Empire, the Alliance established schools first in Baghdad and Damascus, then in Volos, Edirne and Salonica. Istanbul and Izmir, with their large Jewish communities, had several schools each. This school, in Hasköy, was opened in 1874 for Jewish girls. The curriculum included sewing, knitting, cooking and other aspects of home economics. Many other Ottoman towns received schools as well. An agricultural school—the first one in the system—was opened in Jaffa, in Ottoman Palestine, in 1870. Though targeted at the Jewish community, the schools accepted non-Jewish students as well.

A minute's walk southeast of the Hasköy police station along the Kasimpasa-Hasköy Yolu is **Aynalikavak Kasri**, an imperial Ottoman pleasure pavilion open from 9:30 am to 4 pm (closed Monday and Thursday).

Several centuries ago an imperial naval arsenal was established at Kasimpasa, southeast of Hasköy, and near it a shipyard (*tersane*). The collection of imperial hunting lodges and pleasure kiosks at Hasköy became known as the Tersane Palace, after the shipyard. A wooden palace built on this site by Sultan Ahmet III (1703-1730), and restored by Selim III (1789-1807). What you see today is the work of Sultan Mahmut II (1808-1839).

With its *Lâle Devri* (Tulip Period) decoration and Ottoman furnishings, the pavilion gives a good idea of what life was like for the Ottoman ruling class in the eighteenth century, when Hasköy was a thriving Jewish neighborhood. The pavilion's gardens and grounds provide a welcome respite from the city's concrete landscape.

From Aynalikavak Kasri, take a taxi to the foot of Bahriye Caddesi, right on the shore of the Golden Horn in the neighboring district of Kasimpasa; tell the driver to take you to the *Deniz Kuvvetleri Güney Bölgesi Komutanligi* (or simply show him that phrase in this guide, as it's difficult to pronounce). The imposing stone building on the right-hand (northwest) side at the Golden Horn end of Bahriye Caddesi is the former **Kamondo Mansion**, now used as the headquarters of the Turkish Navy's northern region. The house — actually a small palace — was built by the wealthy and influential Kamondo family. When the last of the Kamondos died without heirs, the mansion was willed to the Turkish government. As a military installation, it is not open to visitors, but even from the outside, in its beautiful situation on the Golden Horn, it is impressive.

To view the **Kamondo Mausoleum** you must take a ride on the *Birinci Çevreyolu*, the expressway which skirts the central area of the city to the north of Hasköy. Tragically, the path of the expressway passes directly through the midst of the large **Hasköy Jewish Cemetery**. The Kamondo mausoleum is set prominently on a hill just to the north of the roadway, a short distance northeast of the Golden Horn, especially when travelling westbound.

Sisli

Sisli (SHEESH-lee) is a prosperous residential and commercial district 2-1/2 km north of Taksim Square. Two Jewish interest sites, the Sisli Beth Israel Synagogue and the Italian Jewish Cemetery, are worth visiting here.

GETTING THERE

Take a taxi to *Sisli Meydani* (Sisli Square), then continue northward a few hundred meters (by taxi or on foot) along Abidei Hürriyet Caddesi to the Italian Jewish Cemetery, marked by a monumental gate set above the roadway on the east (right-hand) side.

WHAT TO SEE IN SISLI

Behind the Baroque entrance to the **Italian Jewish Cemetery** are tombstones engraved with names and epitaphs in Italian, English, French, German, Russian and Latin. (If the gate is not open, look for the caretaker.) Many famous Istanbulis of the nineteenth century are buried here. The cemetery was founded originally to serve 400 Jewish families who had emigrated from the Crimea to Istanbul in 1854-55, but it was later dedicated to the use of the Italian Jewish Association by order of Sultan Abdülaziz. The cemetery is well kept by resident custodians, and is still used for burials. It makes an interesting visit, and yields special insight into the history of the city's Jewish community.

From the cemetery, it's over one kilometer (a 20- or 25-minute walk) to the Beth Israel Synagogue. The heavy traffic is noisy and chaotic, and you may want to take a taxi.

The synagogue is half-way between Sisli and Harbiye, on a little street two blocks west of Halaskargazi Caddesi. From the Italian Jewish Cemetery, go south on Abidei Hürriyet Caddesi through Sisli Square, and continue southward along Halaskargazi Caddesi to Rumeli Caddesi, which is a major cross-street, but unmarked by street signs. (Look for a large branch of the Yapi Kredi bank on the southeastern corner; also, the Borsa Lokantasi is on the east side of Halaskargazi Caddesi just north of Rumeli Caddesi.) At Rumeli Caddesi, turn right (west) and go two blocks to Efe Sokak, and turn right again. The synagogue is a few doors down on the right-hand side; look for the police guard's booth.

Sisli Beth Israel Synagogue, Efe Sokak No. 4, is a modern building of central importance to the present-day Jewish community of Istanbul. The building was purchased and converted to a synagogue in the 1952. Its long barrel-vaulted "nave" with two side aisles reminds some of church architecture, but in fact the building used to be a garage. Decoration is simple and handsome. Unlike the more historic synagogues of the city, located in neighborhoods with dwindling Jewish populations, Beth Israel is located in a desirable middle-class residential area, and is usually active with worshippers every day. Though not heavy with historical or artistic importance, Beth Israel is the center of the city's Jewish life today.

Ortaköy

In the nineteenth century, many wealthy Istanbul families had summer houses in Ortaköy (OHR-tah-keuy), then a Bosphorus village. Today Ortaköy has become part of the Istanbul metropolis, and is a fashionable place to live, winter or summer. Though the Jewish orphanage here is gone, and the historic Etz Ahayim Synagogue building burnt in 1941, there is still a synagogue here, and many other historic Ottoman sites in the vicinity.

On the day you visit Ortaköy, you may also want to visit other historic sites along the southwestern Bosphorus shore such as **Dolmabahçe Palace**, **Yıldız Park** and its kiosks (especially the Sale Köskü), and the great fortress of **Rumeli Hisari**. In Yıldız Park, just south of Ortaköy, the Malta Köskü, once an imperial rest house, is now a delightful place for lunch or refreshments, and the smaller Çadir Köskü is good for snacks and beverages.

GETTING THERE

Ortaköy lies just beneath the western pylon of the southernmost Bosphorus Bridge. Though the most pleasant way to reach it is by Bosphorus ferryboat from Eminönü, there are only a few boats per day. Most visitors come by taxi or bus; buses marked for Ortaköy or Bebek are best.

Etz Ahayim Synagogue is on the shore road (Ortaköy's main street) quite near the well-known Ortaköy Camii (Ortaköy Mosque), to the south of the bridge pylon.

Riding northward along the shore road from Dolmabahçe and Besiktas, the shore road passes some palatial buildings (on the right-hand—east—side), including the Çiragan Palace, now converted to become the palatial Çiragan Palace Hotel Kempinski Istanbul. After the palatial buildings, the shore road travels between high walls and trees, finally entering the commercial district of Ortaköy. The synagogue is just at the point where the road bears to the right; coming by taxi, ask to be let out near the Ortaköy Camii. (If you find yourself at the Ayios Fokas Orthodox church, you've gone 1-1/2 blocks too far.

WHAT TO SEE IN ORTAKÖY

Etz Ahayim Synagogue, Muallim Naci Caddesi no. 38, is on the shore road just across from a little street named Muvakkit Sokak. Originally constructed in 1660, a disastrous fire destroyed the original synagogue in October, 1941. Luckily, the marble ark survived the fire and remains in place, in what is now the garden, as a historic monument. The neighboring *midrash* (study room) was converted for worship after the fire, and is now the synagogue.

Come out of the synagogue enclosure, turn left, then left again, and walk along Osmanzade Sokak toward the Bosphorus. This warren of little streets between the shore road and the Ortaköy Camii is a popular district for artists and students. Galleries, art boutiques and antique shops are everywhere. Along the shore, open-air cafés are crowded in good weather with people of all ages who've come to enjoy the sun, the view, and conversation. Besides the shore cafés, there are several more upscale places to have a meal or a snack.

The **Ortaköy Camii**, officially known as the Büyük Mecidiye Camii, was built in 1854 by Sultan Abdülmecit to replace an earlier mosque from 1714. The sultan used the same architect on this mosque as on the elaborate Dolmabahçe Palace. You can visit the mosque whenever it's open, although it's best not to visit at or shortly after prayer-time (the time of the müezzin's call).

Haydarpaşa

The suburb of Haydarpaşa ("HIGH"-dar-pah-shah), at the southern end of the Bosphorus on the eastern shore, is famous as the Asian terminus of trains coming from Anatolia to Istanbul, and as the site of the historic Selimiye Barracks, where Florence Nightingale worked. The Haydarpaşa quarter is now a residential suburb of Istanbul. The Hemdat Israel Synagogue is among the city's most beautiful, and is certainly the most interesting Jewish site on the eastern shore of the Bosphorus.

You may want to plan a full day's excursion to the Asian shore of the Bosphorus, visiting the synagogues in Haydarpaşa and Kuzguncuk as well as the Beylerbeyi Palace and Çamlıca hilltop lookout. If time is short, you can make a quick visit to Haydarpaşa, then return to the western shore.

GETTING THERE

The finest way to get to Haydarpaşa is by **ferryboat** from Karaköy. Take the Zeytinburnu-Kabatas tram to Karaköy, and board a ferry for either Haydarpaşa or Kadıköy; they depart every 15 or 20 minutes from the dock just east of the Galata Bridge. During the 20- to 25-minute crossing you can enjoy views of the Bosphorus, the Sea of Marmara, the city, and especially of the buildings on Seraglio Point: Topkapi Palace, Hagia Sophia, and the Blue Mosque.

The castle-like **Haydarpaşa Railroad Station** on the Asian shore was built after the earlier station (1903) was destroyed by fire in 1917. It looks German, as well it might: it was a present to the sultan from Kaiser Wilhelm II. On a hill to the north of the station

stand the huge walls and towers of the **Selimiye Barracks**. During the Crimean War (1854-1856) the Selimiye was used as a military hospital for British casualties. It was here that Florence Nightingale established the practices which became the foundations of modern nursing.

At Haydarpasa, leave the ferry and walk to the right around the railroad station. Walk along this road for eight or ten minutes as it bears to the right, following the curve of the bay; or take a taxi. If you arrive by ferry at Kadiköy, leave the ferry and walk to the left, keeping the bay on your left-hand side.

Coming from either dock, you will soon be on Rihtim Caddesi, on the eastern side of the bay near a large open lot filled with minibuses. Cross to the inland (eastern) side of Rihtim Caddesi. Directly opposite the minibus lot, several streets go uphill to the east; one of these is Izzettin Sokak. Go up Izzettin Sokak, passing Kasim Aga Sokak, Nizami Cedit Sokak, and Basakçi Sokak on the right. When you come to Süngertasi Sokak, stop; Hemdat Israel Synagogue is directly opposite Süngertasi Sokak. Look for the doorway leading to a passageway; the synagogue is on the left (west) side of the passageway.

WHAT TO SEE IN HAYDARPASA

Hemdat Israel Synagogue, set in the quiet residential area of Yeldegirmeni Mahallesi on Izzettin Sokak at Süngertasi Sokak, was first used for prayers on September 3, 1899. In the late 19th century, inter-ethnic strife was becoming common in the sultan's domains as ethnic nationalism gripped the various peoples of the empire. The Jewish community suffered most from attacks by Greek Orthodox factions, one of which maneuvered to have a military unit sent from the Selimiye Barracks to halt construction of the synagogue. Sultan Abdülhamit II discovered this injustice and had it corrected. In his honor the synagogue was named Hemdat, "He who is compassionate (to Israel)," a play on the sultan's name "Hamid," which means "compassionate."

The interior of the synagogue is a large, harmonious space rich with arabesque painting and a marble ark, all lit by large crystal chandeliers. The arabesque painting was renewed in 1990-91. On the north side of the synagogue is a lovely garden.

Kuzguncuk

Northeast of Üsküdar on the eastern shore of the Bosphorus lies Kuzguncuk (KOOZ-goon-jook), just south of the eastern pylon of the Bosphorus Bridge. Two synagogues here played an important part in the life of the Judeo-Spanish community in Istanbul. Though Kuzguncuk once had a large and active Jewish community, there are few Jewish residents today, and the synagogues here are heavily used only on holidays and special occasions,

though they are customarily open for worship on Shabbat. If your time in Istanbul is short, you can omit these two from your tour.

If you get as far as Kuzguncuk, you should make the effort to see nearby Beylerbeyi Palace, one of the nicest Ottoman palaces.

GETTING THERE

Kuzguncuk is a residential suburb just south of the eastern pylon of the southernmost Bosphorus Bridge. Though one can take a taxi to Kuzguncuk from any part of the city, it is less expensive and far more enjoyable to cross the Bosphorus by ferryboat, every 15 minutes from Karaköy to Haydarpaşa or Kadıköy, or from Eminönü or Kabatas to Üsküdar, and then to take a taxi, minibus or bus north for the short ride to Kuzguncuk. İcadiye Caddesi, the location of the synagogues, is the main street heading inland, right in the center of Kuzguncuk. If you go by minibus or bus, get off at the Kuzguncuk stop, which is right at İcadiye Caddesi.

WHAT TO SEE IN KUZGUNCUK

The **Merkez Synagogue**, İcadiye Caddesi no. 9, also called the Beth Yaakov Synagogue, just southeast of the shore road on the left-hand side, is entered from a courtyard by marble steps beneath a small Victorian porch. The marble-floored interior has walls painted with *tromp l'oeil* “stone” panels, but it is the synagogue’s interior dome which attracts attention with its paintings of scenes from Israel. The ark is at one end of the hall, the *bema* (or *teva*) at the other end. The synagogue, though obviously historic and interesting, suffers from a bit of mustiness due to infrequent use.

The other synagogue to see in Kuzguncuk is up the hill on İcadiye Caddesi. The Merkez and the Virane synagogues were informally known as the *Kal de Abaso* (“Lower Synagogue,” the Merkez) and *Kal de Ariva* (“Upper Synagogue,” the Virane).

The **Virane Synagogue**, Yakup Sokak No. 8, is less than 300 meters southeast of the Merkez along pleasant tree-shaded İcadiye Caddesi. Continue up İcadiye Caddesi to İcadiye Hamam Sokak and turn right; Yakup Sokak is a short dead-end street on the right-hand side of İcadiye Hamam Sokak. The Virane is smaller and less impressive than the Merkez, with walls covered in wood-grain contact paper, and little chandeliers. It is an intimate space, obviously quite old, and interesting though not impressive. Entry is through a small courtyard past the *midrash* (the ground floor of the synagogue), then up a flight of steps to the synagogue proper, on the upper floor.

Farther east along Icadiye Caddesi is the Kuzguncuk Jewish Cemetery, which is still in use.

Only 1-1/3 km (one mile) northeast of Kuzguncuk on the Bosphorus shore stands **Beylerbeyi Palace**, a “small” summer palace built on the orders of Sultan Abdülaziz (1861-1876). Take a taxi or bus north to the Çayirbasi stop, then walk a few steps south to the palace entrance. It’s open from 9:30 am to 5 pm, but closed Monday and Thursday. It's a delightful, if ornate, building with a fountain in the main salon, the usual sumptuous chambers, Bohemian crystal chandeliers, Sèvres and Chinese vases, and pleasant gardens. The palace was often used as a guest house for visiting royalty. Empress Eugénie of France, Shah Nasruddin of Persia, Grand Duke Nicholas of Russia and other worthies enjoyed its comforts. Sultan Abdülhamid II, namesake of the Hemdat Israel Synagogue in Haydarpasa, was deposed in 1909, and spent the last years of his life (1913-1918) under house arrest at Beylerbeyi. Much of the furniture in the palace was made by the sultan himself, who was an accomplished amateur cabinet-maker.

Üsküdar, Kuzguncuk and Beylerbeyi have many good **waterfront restaurants**, just right for a pleasant lunch or afternoon snack during sightseeing.

Princes' Islands

Some historians say the Princes' Islands, a half-hour’s voyage southeast of Istanbul in the Sea of Marmara, were named for their use as a place of exile for wayward or inconvenient Byzantine princes. In Turkish, they're simply called *Adalar* (ah-dal-LAHR), “The Islands.” In the 19th century these delightful islands became a favorite summer resort for wealthy Istanbul families, most of them non-Muslim. Intricately-decorated Victorian villas and a few hotels still harbor well-to-do summer residents, and many more visitors come on day excursions from the city.

As in the past, Jewish community life on the islands is limited to summertime, when synagogues on Büyükada, Heybeliada and Burgaz Adasi are open on Shabbat. There is also a Jewish summer camp on Burgaz. Jewish interest sites are thus fairly limited, and an outing to the Princes’ Islands must be looked upon as a pleasant excursion with minor Jewish interest.

GETTING THERE

Access to the islands is by ferryboat or hydrofoil from Kabatas. Büyükada and Heybeliada are most easily reached. For Burgaz, one must either wait for a ferry run which stops at all the islands, or must backtrack from Büyükada or Heybeliada.

Motor vehicles are prohibited on the islands (except for essential emergency vehicles), so transport is by bicycle, horse-drawn carriage, or on foot.

WHAT TO SEE IN THE ISLANDS

Büyükada, largest and most interesting of the islands, has the **Heshet Le Avram Synagogue**, Pancur Sokak No. 13, open in summer only. A day-trip to Büyükada can also include a horse-drawn carriage tour of the island and perhaps lunch at a waterfront restaurant.

Heybeliada also has its **Beth Yaakov Synagogue**, open in summer only. This island is also the home of the Turkish Naval Academy.

Burgaz, the second island out from Istanbul (after Kinali), is of less interest to tourists, as most services are keyed to local summer residents. **Burgaz Midrah Synagogue** is open in summer only, as is the Jewish children's **summer camp**.

BURSA

The Jewish community in Bursa dates from Byzantine times. After the Ottoman conquest of Bursa in 1324, Sultan Orhan issued an order that the Jews of Bursa be permitted to build a synagogue, the Etz ha-Hayyim. It was used for worship for over 600 years.

Since World War II and the foundation of the State of Israel, the Jewish community in Bursa has dwindled. Of Bursa's many synagogues, only two remain active. Of these the more impressive and easier to visit is the **Gerush Synagogue**, a short distance northwest of the center of town.

GETTING THERE

From the Ulu Cami (Great Mosque), walk for 10 or 15 minutes, or take a taxi or bus westward along Atatürk Caddesi, Cemal Nadir Caddesi and Altiparmak Caddesi to the Çatal Firin bus stop, across from the Sabahettin Pasa Camii. Sakarya Caddesi, a pedestrian street lined with seafood restaurants, was once the main thoroughfare of this small Jewish quarter. The synagogue is several blocks down on the left-hand side. Light, airy and attractive, it has an unusual pattern: a circle of columns around the *bema*, which is in the center of the room, the columns supporting a dome. Benches for worshippers are along the walls; the ark is, of course, opposite the entrance, and there are attractive stained glass lights over the entrance door. The Gerush has been well maintained and no doubt frequently renovated during its 500 year history, probably most recently in the 1700s. The synagogue's Torahs were brought from Spain by Sephardic immigrants five centuries ago.

Should you want to have a seafood lunch after your visit, try the restaurant named **Arap Sükrü**, one of Bursa's most famous. The **Misi Wine Shop** is known for the quality of its local wine, made in a village on the outskirts of Bursa.

IZMIR

Through much of Ottoman Izmir's history, it had a thriving Jewish community much larger than that of today. Though the community is smaller now, it is no less active. There were once nine synagogues in use along Havra Sokak (Synagogue Street) in Izmir's bazaar; three are still in service. As in Istanbul, this city's Jewish community has largely moved to the more desirable residential quarters. The Karatas Synagogue and modern Alsancak Synagogue demonstrate this trend.

Bazaar

The historical heart of Izmir's Jewish life was in the synagogues of "La Judiera," the area of the bazaar where the synagogues are located and where some Jewish merchants still

work. La Judiera is near the intersection of Gazi Osman Pasa Bulvari and Anafartalar Caddesi, a short walk from the intersection of Fevzipasa Bulvari and Gaziosmanpasa Bulvari, known as Çankaya. The best time to visit the synagogues here is on Saturday morning, when all are open for worship (two of the three are closed during the week).

GETTING THERE

From Çankaya, walk south on Gaziosmanpasa Bulvari/Esrefpasa Caddesi to Anafartalar Caddesi and turn right (west; the turn is just past the Kiraz Is Hani at no. 88). Follow Anafartalar Caddesi 50 meters into the bazaar, bearing left at the first “Y”, then turning left on the second little street on the left, which is 927 Sokak.

WHAT TO SEE IN THE BAZAAR

Though officially named 927 Sokak, this used to be known as **Havra Sokak**, the “Street of Synagogues,” because of its nine small, active synagogues which served the Jewish merchants and artisans who worked close by.

First along Havra Sokak is the **Seniyora Synagogue**, at 927 Sokak no. 77. It may take its name from Doña Gracia Nasi, Duke Joseph Nasi’s mother-in-law and aunt, who was known as La Señora, and who endowed many synagogues in the Ottoman lands. The Señora is the most active of the remaining synagogues on Havra Sokak, open every morning. It’s a simple but pleasant and interesting building, almost two centuries old, with obvious historic value.

The building to the left of the Señora’s doorway (as you face it) was once a synagogue, but the space is now occupied by a business.

Next along Havra Sokak is the **Kadosh Mizrahi Synagogue**, 927 Sokak no. 73, open only on Saturday morning.

A short distance farther along is the **Shalom (Aydin) Synagogue**, 927 Sokak no. 38-C, reached through a short passageway used as storage for a shoe shop. Because of this use, the synagogue’s steel outer door is often open during shopping hours, allowing visitors at least to take a look through the synagogue’s glass doors, even if the synagogue is locked. The Shalom, like the Kadosh Mizrahi, is normally open only on Saturday morning.

Alsancak

The modern quarter of Alsancak is among Izmir's most prestigious addresses. The **Musta Bey Synagogue** is a new building constructed to serve those who now live in this fashionable neighborhood north of the Izmir International Fairgrounds.

Karatas

This neighborhood one kilometer southwest of Konak Square holds several interesting sites, among them the Beth Israel Synagogue, Beth Shalom Social Club, Karatas Hospital and the Asansör.

GETTING THERE

Easy access is provided by Mithatpasa Bulvari, the main coastal boulevard going southwest. Karatas Beth Israel Synagogue and the Asansör are only about 100 meters (110 yards) apart, a short, easy walk.

WHAT TO SEE IN KARATAS

Beth Israel Synagogue, Mithatpasa Bulvari no. 245, is a handsome Ottoman Victorian-style building dating from about 1900.

After visiting the synagogue, walk one block inland and around the rear of the synagogue, turning left. About a hundred meters along this street is the **Asansör**, a nineteenth-century funicular which once took passengers from the shore road up the sheer rock cliffs to the desirable residential district above. Inscriptions above the door in French and Hebrew declare that the elevator was constructed by Nissim Bey.

Izmir's **Archeological and Ethnographic Museums**, between Karatas and Konak, are worth a visit if time allows, as is a drive up to the fortress atop **Kadifekale**, the hill overlooking the city and the bay.

SARDIS

Ancient Sardis was the capital of the Kingdom of Lydia, whose most famous king was Croesus (560-546 B.C.E.), famed for his wealth. Croesus was the first monarch to mint coinage, introducing this useful invention to the world. During its heyday as a Roman

city, Sardis had a very large and prosperous Jewish community which may have been established here in much earlier times.

GETTING THERE

The ruins of Sardis lie less than 90 km (56 miles) east of Izmir, a ride of 75 minutes along the main highway eastward to Salihli and Ankara, through rich fields of sultanas (small white grapes), figs and tobacco. To get to Sardis, you can join an organized tour (contact your hotel, or any travel agency in Izmir), rent a car, or take a bus. Buses depart Izmir's mammoth bus station (*Yeni Garaj*) every 30 minutes for Salihli; tell the driver you want to get off at *Sart*.

The ruins of Jewish interest lie just off the north side of the highway in the village of Sartmustafa. On the south side, one kilometer from the village, are the impressive ruins of the Temple of Athena. Starting early, the excursion to Sardis can be done in a morning or an afternoon; allow at least an hour, preferably two, for seeing the ruins.

WHAT TO SEE IN SARDIS

Though Sardis plays no role in the history of Jewish immigrants who came to the Ottoman Empire from Spain and Portugal, it is of interest because of its extremely large and rich **Roman synagogue**. In ancient Sardis, Jews held seats on the city council and important offices in the Roman civil administration. Remains of the beautiful and richly-appointed synagogue dating from the 200s C.E. have been uncovered and restored; much of the funding for restoration came from American Jewish individuals, congregations and philanthropies.

Visitors to the site approach the synagogue along the **Marble Way**, a main street lined with shops, many of which were owned by Jewish merchants and artisans, as signs indicate. The synagogue itself, of which only the floor, some walls and columns remain, is of grand proportions, with wonderful mosaic floors and colored-stone wall decorations.

Beside the synagogue is the restored façade of the Roman **gymnasium**, or school, a very impressive two-story structure.

On the south side of the highway, don't miss the opportunity to see the remains of the great **Temple of Artemis**, of gigantic proportions.

Snacks and drinks are available in the village.

OTHER SITES

The historic sites described above are the most interesting and accessible. Turkey has many other Jewish sites as well.

On the outskirts of **Manisa**, near Izmir, is the **Moris Sinasi Cocuk Hastahanesi**, or Moris Sinasi Children's Hospital. The hospital's founder, Moris Sinasi, was born in Manisa in 1855, and left for Alexandria, Egypt in 1870 to seek his fortune. Taking a job with a tobacco exporting firm, he prospered, and went on to the United States in 1890, where his prosperity increased. He returned to the Ottoman Empire in 1903 to marry a lady from Salonica. Moris Sinasi died in 1929. Three years later, his wife traveled to Manisa to establish the hospital which bears his name, and which was his gift to his native city.

To find the hospital, take the Izmir-Manisa road and look for signs on the right as you approach the outskirts of Manisa.

Several other Turkish cities and towns have historic synagogues which are open for worship. In **Ankara**, the Samanpazari district has a historic synagogue which is due for restoration. In **Çanakkale**, there was a small Jewish community until quite recently, and one may still see some building inscriptions and other signs of Jewish life. **Edirne** once had a very large and prosperous Jewish community; now dwindled to only a few families and one grand synagogue, now awaiting restoration. **Bergama** had a Jewish community of longstanding and great importance, but today almost nothing remains of its buildings.

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