

SUMAHAN ON THE WATER

TURKEY

Léa Teuscher retreats from the bustle of Istanbul's giant bazaar, finding sanctuary in a converted factory with a modern twist and breathtaking views of the Bosphorus



Only at Sumahan will you wake up to the striking panorama of the Bosphorus' bustling waters, Istanbul's elegant domes and the immense Bogaziçi bridge. Perched on the Asian side, this former 19th-century Ottoman distillery (which once provided the Sultan with his favourite spirit) is located in the charming neighbourhood of Çengelköy. A perfect place to soak in the traditional Stamboulia way of life, it neighbours old wooden houses, seaside promenades and fish restaurants. Owned by a family of architects and interior designers since the 1930s, the old factory has recently been transformed into a boutique heaven. Original features, such as the warm brick walls and steel beams, are now enhanced by contemporary furniture and carefully chosen accessories. In the library, chill out on a cosy sofa next to a roaring fire and browse the shelves lined with volumes on Turkish art and culture. In the bedrooms, named after famous towns on the Bosphorus, the palette of blues, whites and greys is carefully chosen to mirror the stunning views. Attention to detail is essential in such minimalist space: a clever window, with a blind between the glass panels, means you can enjoy both a bath and a view. The grey marble in the bathrooms and Turkish baths are the same you will see at the Topkapi Palace; make sure you pay a visit to the hotel's hamam and marvel at its bold, contemporary furnishings. The stylish but cosy atmosphere continues in the riverside café. There you'll be offered a scrumptious Turkish breakfast with marinated olives, sesame bread, cucumber salad, honey, fig jam and cheeses washed down with plenty of strong tea or coffee. Fish should be on the agenda at the hotel's Kordon Restaurant, renowned for its fresh Mediterranean seafood dishes. Try the steamed shrimps and octopus salad before finishing off with a delicious bowl of figs.

Why go To relax in Asia and party in Europe; be enchanted by Istanbul's old town and its forest of blue minarets; watch the ships roll in between the cold Black Sea and the warm Sea of Marmara.

What to take A bag large enough to hold a couple of carpets, a set of elegant glass teacups, crowds of kilim bags, tons of spices, and whatever else you might fancy from the city's giant bazaar.

Who to bring Baklava enthusiasts with good bargaining skills.

Best room The loft suite. Spread over two levels, it comes with views over the sparkling straits, its own fireplace and Turkish hamam.

Details Sumahan on the Water, Istanbul (00 90 216 422 8000; sumahan.com). Double rooms from £105, breakfast included.

FIVE UNMISSABLE THINGS TO DO

- Take a ferry across the Bosphorus Straits. The boat trip from Üsküdar is just long enough to enjoy a glass of sweet black tea.
- Visit the stunning Hagia Sophia museum and finish in time to hear the call to prayer sang by the nearby Blue Mosque's muezzin, afterwards echoed by other mosques in the area. Magic.
- Stop in Eminönü for a snack. Bite into a sesame bread ring, grab a bag of roasted chestnuts, or munch on a grilled fish sandwich cooked by a fearless chef on a bobbing boat moored by the ferries.
- Stroll down the pedestrian Istiklal Caddesi for a spot of shopping and people watching. Hop on the tiny, quaint tramway on the way back up and spot the impressive Art Nouveau buildings.
- Enter Topkapi's harem, the private apartments of the Ottoman sultans, and be dazzled by the opulent interiors and ornate tiles. □