

Brilliant Expat Shopping in Turkey

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As you would expect from the nation that has an incredible metropolis located on two continents and which is the meeting point for the Islamic east and the Christian west, Turkey offers some spectacular shopping experiences, particularly in Istanbul.

We are not just talking about being able to kit out your property in Turkey at Marks and Spencer, Ikea, Harvey Nichols or Debenhams, which are all present in Turkey, but the ancient bazaars and amazing markets make for brilliant expat shopping in Turkey too.

So if you're an expat going to live in Turkey or you are escaping there for a holiday, where are you going to get the real shopping experiences?

The last stop on the ancient Silk Road, Istanbul is home to the Egyptian spice bazaar. Set up in order to generate funds for the Mosque next door, this bazaar has been keeping people living in Turkey up to their eyeballs in curry powder since 1663! But more than just curry powder, the spice bazaar is a Mecca of dried herbs, plants and holistic remedies not found anywhere else in the city. If the sight and smell of hundreds of mountains of colourful spices gets you in the mood to eat, you can lunch upstairs in the Pandeli restaurant, a remnant of the Turkish Empire with Ottoman stone and turquoise tiles. The food is incredible.

If fish is your fancy instead, then follow the smell of the sea to the Balik Pazari, or fish bazaar. The Balik Pazari has been giving British expats living in Turkey a change from bog standard fish and chips for years, with offerings of octopus from Bodrum, calamari from Antalya and prawns from Canakkale. There are plenty of chances to try out seafood meze and experience the sites and sounds of Turkish living, and the freshness of the produce is guaranteed.

Anyone travelling to or living in Turkey will have heard of the famous Grand Bazaar or Kapali Çarsi. This is one of the largest covered markets in the world. The Grand Bazaar has more than 58 streets, 1,200 shops and between 250,000 to 400,000 visitors daily. Dating from around 1455 and enlarged by Suleiman the Magnificent in the 16th century, the Grand Bazaar is everything that living in Turkey represents. Famous for its jewellery, pottery, carpets and spices, the bazaar is a riot of colour, noise and people.

Anyone entering the Bazaar needs to be ready for pushy salesmen desperate to show that their products are the best and the cheapest! Expect a hard sell from the salesman, but as any experienced expat living in Turkey will tell you, the answer to that is to bargain hard right back. Bargaining is all part of the Turkish culture, do not be embarrassed to try it and do not come out paying more than you are happy with.

You will see all kinds of objects on offer in the covered bazaar that would brighten up your property in Turkey or your home back in Blighty, but beware! You will need authorization for the purchase or removal of Turkish artefacts and antiquities. A receipt and official “museum export certificate” is needed to export such items from Turkey.

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