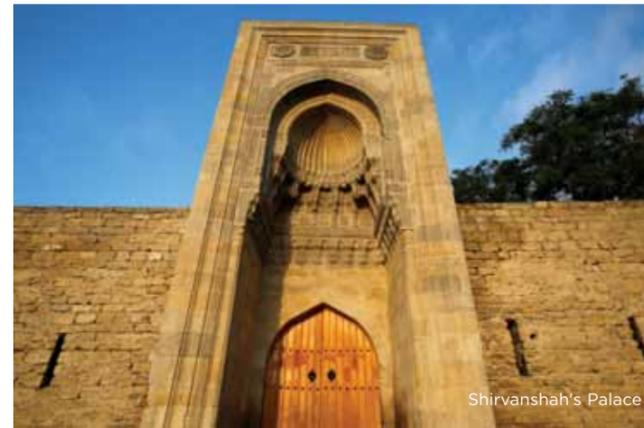




Yachts and boats dock in Bodrum

# THE GREAT ESCAPE

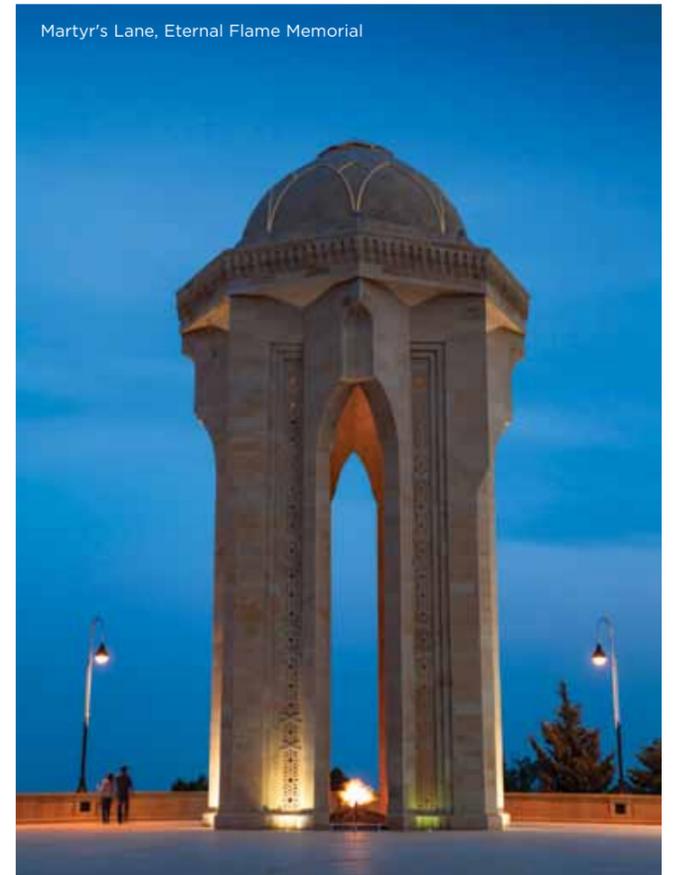
As the warmth of summer arrives, travel to Baku, Istanbul and Bodrum, three stunning coastal destinations rich with history



Shirvanshah's Palace



Vendors selling inside the Walled City



Martyr's Lane, Eternal Flame Memorial

## First stop: Beautiful Baku

### Experience Beautiful Baku

If you stand at the top of Maiden Tower, the whole of Baku will stretch out before you. On one side, there will be the spacious European-style promenade with its groomed trees, the Caspian Sea glinting blue beyond it. On the other side, there are the cobblestone streets of Baku's UNESCO World Heritage site, the Walled City. Beyond that comes a mix of limestone baroque buildings, glimmering modern structures, and Soviet architecture. The overall effect is that of a city at once beautifully historic and delicately modern.

Locals have many stories about the 12th century Maiden Tower. Its name comes from being untouched, goes one. A beautiful maiden leapt to her death from the window, claims another. Like many things in the city, the exact nuances have been lost with time.

Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, is filled with such historical delights. Inhabited since the Palaeolithic period, Baku's background stretches across Zoroastrian (an ancient fire-worshipping religion) and Arabic, Persian and Ottoman. Walls from the 12th century line the inner city. The 15th century Shirvanshah's Palace, with mosque and mausoleum and ancient Turkish bath, rests on one side.

Buildings, created primarily in limestone, reflect a range of reigns and styles. Baroque designs stand beside imposing Soviet structures. French bal-

conies linger near lavish constructions made by 1920s oil barons during the first oil boom. All of this is set against large open streets.

Simultaneously, Baku is modern. You need only visit the city at night to know as much. Once the sun goes down, many of the historical buildings light up. The National Arena, newly built for the first-ever European Games and designed to fit just under 70,000 people, similarly shines. Its round exterior has been designed to feature an ever-changing light display.

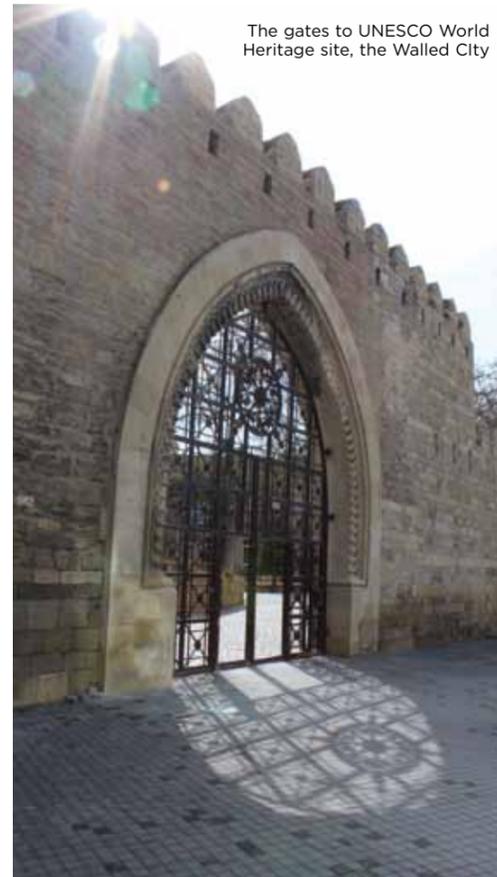
During the summer months, crowds of glossy locals flock to Baku's beaches. The rest of the year, they stroll along the waterfront promenade, relaxing in parks or watching the sun set over the sea. Together this mix of old and new creates a stunning city, one that still has the feel of a hidden gem, an undiscovered destination – a jewel glimmering against the Caspian Sea.

### Stay at Jumeirah Bilgah Beach Hotel

This spacious resort, just 35km from the city centre and 15 minutes from the National Arena, features panoramic views of the Caspian Sea. After watching the sun come up over the water, you can start morning with a leisurely walk around the hotel's private olive grove. Breakfast offerings include homemade jams (the pumpkin jam is particularly innovative) alongside warm breads and freshly cooked eggs. During the day, your children can play at Bilgah Beach



An ancient bathhouse in the Walled City



The gates to UNESCO World Heritage site, the Walled City



Traditional Azeri tea



A restaurant sells wine in the Walled City



The library at Jumeirah Bilgah Beach Hotel



Buildings near the Martyr's Lane, a memorial to Baku's fallen soldiers



Yuukai Restaurant

Hotel's waterpark (the largest in Azerbaijan) and private bowling alley while you relax with a soothing massage at Talise Spa, or stroll along the glamorous beach-front promenade sipping a chilled glass of champagne. A traditional Azeri tea ceremony in the Piano Bar and Lounge, featuring sweetened compote and strong tea in clear glasses, is great for that mid-afternoon boost. Then dinner at Yuukai restaurant makes the perfect end to the evening. From there, surrounded by gold interiors and looking out across the city, you can savour Asian food cooked in a contemporary style as the sun goes down.

**Explore with Ker & Downey**

With a focus on luxury tours, this USA-based group has won numerous awards. Private guides are on-hand to recommend everything from transfers to where to eat for lunch. Bespoke itineraries are entirely possible. In Baku, Ker & Downey's regional tour company, Tika Tours, will send a personal guide and private driver to your hotel. Expect an in-depth knowledge of history and politics, allowing for useful insight into both the history and modernity of Baku. KerDowney.com, Tikatours.com

**Visit in June**

With the European Games running from 12 to 28 June, a trip to Baku has never been timelier. Visa processes have been streamlined to encourage foreign visitors, and the US dollar has become stronger in recent months. In summer, Baku's beaches truly shine.

**Taste test pomegranates and caviar**

With the Caspian Sea producing around 90 percent of the world's caviar, Baku is the place to try the finer fish in life. The region is also known for its succulent pomegranates. Eat them fresh by the handful, or as a juice at Jumeirah Bilgah Beach Hotel.

**Apply for a visa**

You will most likely need to apply for a visa to visit Baku. The rules vary on whether or not you're attending the European Games. If you are, you can apply for a visa on arrival. For exact details, visit baku2015.com.

**Insiders' insights**

**Three luxury experts reveal what essentials they pack when exploring the world**

**Deborah Harris, Managing Director, The Armory Show - Modern**

*An art expert who travels the world sourcing new pieces, Harris launched and now directs The Armory Show - Modern.*

**You always pack:** Comfortable shoes. I love to explore the city.

**Most precious thing in your bag:** My iPad, loaded with music and movies.

**Sunglasses or hat?** Sunglasses. I never get enough sleep on overnight flights.

**Top packing tip:** I always make a list with picture drawings of my outfits and accessories day-by-day and edit them down to essentials just before I pack.

**Fawaz Gruosi, de Grisogono**

*As founder of luxury brand de Grisogono, Gruosi is constantly travelling, helping him find inspiration.*

**You always pack:** Anticipation

**Type of bag:** One with a quality at par with its contents.

**Sunglasses or hat?** Definitely sunglasses.

**What luggage?** Checked luggage and a briefcase.

**Helena Flynn, British Airways Ambassador**

*As Head of PR for Europe, Asia Pacific, Middle East and Africa for British Airways, Flynn knows refined travel*

**You pack:** Pashminas, tablets, travel hair straighteners and portable ballet flats.

**Your bag:** My checked-in bag is a Rimowa case. I love the retro feel. My carry-on is a Porsche wheelie bag.

**Sunglasses or hat?** Sunglasses. They are a must for everyone.



The Blue Mosque



Hagia Sophia



Simit, a Turkish bread



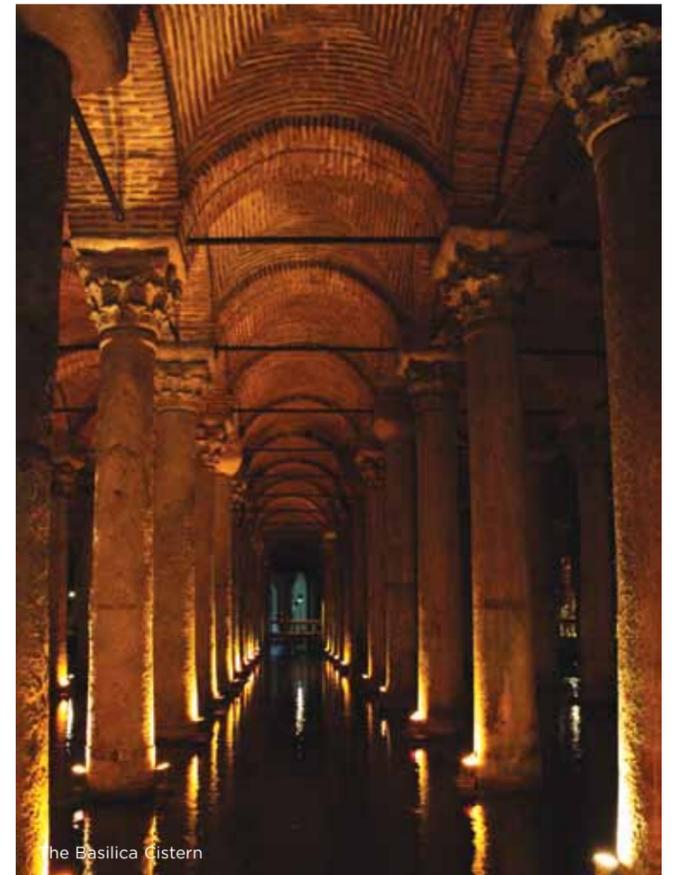
The oldest elevator in Turkey, at the Pera Palace Hotel Jumeirah



The view over the Bosphorous



The Pera Palace Hotel Jumeirah



The Basilica Cistern

## Second stop: 36 hours in Istanbul

**10am** After dropping your bags at Pera Palace Hotel Jumeirah, start your morning by heading across the street to Pera Museum. Along the way, grab fresh simit from one of the street-food vendors. These pretzel-like breads, rolled in sesame seeds and best eaten warm, make for an ideal snack. Within Pera Museum, you will find oil paintings looking at political ambassadors, sections exploring ceramics used with coffee, and a series of seasonally changing exhibits. [en.peramuzesi.org.tr](http://en.peramuzesi.org.tr)

**11am** Walk just a few blocks down to Istiklal Avenue. One of the most famous shopping streets in Istanbul, this spacious pedestrianised road features fashion stores, restaurants, antique bookstores, cafes, and boutique shops. In winter, the air fills with the smell of warm chestnuts roasted on open grates by street-food vendors; in summer, there's corn and simit. A red tram passes by throughout the day, with children daring each other to hop on the back. If you look, you might spot Pamuk's 'Museum of Innocence'.

For a snack, it's worth stopping into one of the many shops that sell traditional Turkish Delight. When made fresh, this sticky sweet takes on a soft, moreish texture. Many pieces are rolled in coconut, studded with pistachios, or filled with cream; and at the shops along Istiklal, you can taste test to your heart's content. If you're still hungry, stroll down to the Flower Passage. Here cosy restaurants nestle against small shops selling trinkets.

**1pm** Back at Pera Palace Hotel Jumeirah, unwind from the bustling sights and sounds of Istiklal Avenue with a relaxed afternoon tea at Kubelli Saloon Tea Lounge. "We were the first hotel to introduce afternoon tea in Turkey,"

explains Pinar Kartal Timer, General Manager. "The hotel was a social attraction centre with afternoon tea, dance parties, and balls." Amidst red velvets and antique furniture, with heavy curtains draped against tall windows, you can savour a range of cakes, pastries, sandwiches and drinks. Options are displayed on a tall glass table decorated with flowers, meaning you can select exactly what you like. The air is often filled with the sounds of Ilham Gencer performing live on the piano.

**6pm** Walk down to Galata Bridge for sunset. While in the early morning this bridge is filled with a few anglers tossing their lines into the water, at evening the bridge provides a prime spot to watch the sun drop over Istanbul.

### Day two

**9am** Start your day by heading into the old part of Istanbul. Luxury Istanbul, a luxury travel specialist, will pick you up at your hotel with a private guide and driver. As you drive through Istanbul's busy streets (expect quite a lot of traffic, something Istanbul struggles with), your guide will talk you through the city's nuanced history. When it comes to often tourist-packed sites in Istanbul, your guide will have already sorted tickets. This, alongside with special queue-jumping privileges, means you spend more time exploring. [Luxuryistanbul.com](http://Luxuryistanbul.com)

**10am** Arrive at the Topkapi Imperial Palace. Built between 1460 and 1478 for Sultan Mehmet, this palace was once the primary residence for Ottoman

sultans. In 1924, it was transformed into a museum, and in 1985 became a UNESCO World Heritage site. Today it houses sacred relics, changing exhibitions, and a range of historical weapons. From the palace, you can enjoy stunning views out across Istanbul. [Topkapisarayi.gov.tr/en](http://Topkapisarayi.gov.tr/en)

**12pm** Walk the short distance to Hagia Sophia. A stunning example of Byzantine and Ottoman architecture, this sweeping structure mixes together Christianity and Islam. Built in the 6th century as a church by Emperor Justinian, the structure was converted to a mosque in 1453. In 1935, it became a museum. [Ayasofyamuzezi.gov.tr/en](http://Ayasofyamuzezi.gov.tr/en). Next stroll to the Blue Mosque, one of the greatest examples of classical Ottoman architecture. Inside walls are lined with blue Iznik tiles. A still-practicing mosque, you will be asked to remove your shoes and, if female, cover your head (with provided scarves) before entering. [Bluemosque.com](http://Bluemosque.com)

**2pm** Step across the street to the Basilica Cistern, one of the more unexpected sights in Istanbul. Built in the 6th century, this underground structure was originally designed to store water. When the Byzantine emperors relocated from the Great Palace, this structure was left forgotten for many years, becoming a derelict dumping ground of trash and junk. Today, after renovations in 1985, it is hauntingly beautiful, with large columns (many salvaged from ruined temples) arching through water and into darkness. Towards the back of the Cistern, two Medusa heads rest half-submerged in water.

**3pm** Make your way to the Grand Bazaar. Be prepared for chaos, noise, the rush of bodies, the smell of oils and leather, and all the vibrant intensity of one

of Istanbul's largest tourist attractions. In the bazaar, you can buy everything from slightly kitsch knick-knacks to handmade carpets and precious jewellery.

**7 to 10pm** Return to Pera Palace Hotel Jumeirah for a leisurely dinner at Agatha Restaurant. Food captures traditional Turkish elements done with a contemporary French and Italian flare. For starters, try the selection of Turkish hors d'oeuvres, which features vine leaves stuffed with plump rice and hummous so deliciously thick you will want to eat it with a spoon. Mains include tender salmon and slow-cooked beef. Particularly nice is a tender sea bass marinated in onion and milk, served like a kebab on a skewer. Once your meal is finished, a server will come around with a range of tempting Turkish Delight to add that final sweet-treat finishing touch. [jumeirah.com](http://jumeirah.com)

**Where to stay** Designed originally to house the glamorous travellers of the Orient Express, Pera Palace Hotel Jumeirah captures the beauty and charm of the old world. Today a certified hotel museum, the property has rooms dedicated to some of its most beloved guests: Ernest Hemingway, Greta Garbo, and Agatha Christie. Interiors are done with dark woods and deeply coloured rich velvets, hand-woven carpets and opulent chandeliers. Istanbul's first elevator exists in the property. Done in wrought iron and charmingly aged, the elevator is still available for use. Indeed, it's often the first stop upon arrival, as you can take the elevator up to your floor. Rooms are equipped with all the modern amenities. It's worth asking for a room on the sixth floor facing out over the Golden Horn. From your private balcony, you can watch the sun sink over Istanbul's distinctive skyline, slowly turning the Bosphorus gold. [jumeirah.com](http://jumeirah.com)

# Come fly with me

The lounge at Ataturk International Airport



It's not often that a lounge becomes a destination in itself. Turkish Airline's newly renovated lounge in Ataturk International Airport has achieved just that. Split across two floors connected by a spiral staircase, the lounge is delightfully decorated and impressively spacious. There are numerous food and drink stalls, a movie theatre, a golf simulator, individual luggage lockers, massage chairs, chefs meandering around offering fresh cheese boards, couches and tables and everything in between. One stand offers a mix of savoury nibbles (like roasted chickpeas, nuts dusted in cheese, sultanas, and sweetened almonds). Another has a mixture of custards and cakes. Yet another presents loose-leaf teas. One can spend a good 30 minutes just exploring the lounge's various options.

It's in this lounge that Turkish Airline excels, presenting the highlights of its luxury offerings. While not designed for overnight guests (the food stalls close during the night, and unless you are flying a very specific route, there is nowhere to

sleep comfortably), the lounge is perfect for those gaps in daytime travel. Other lounges available throughout Turkey and Azerbaijan are understandably smaller, but provide fast-track access (in some instances, directly from the lounge itself) to your flight, as well as all the Wi-Fi, nibbles, and beverages one could want.

In the air, Turkish Airlines does luxury the best on its international routes and larger carriers (as its off-peak planes are quite a bit smaller). On the A330 from Istanbul to Dubai, atmospheric lights cast the business class area in faded purples and blue. The food captures a delicious Turkish feel (think cheeses, olives, mixed mezzes, warm breads, and the ever-sweet Turkish Delight), the entertainment options are plenty, and the staff is friendly. The airline has numerous awards to its name (including 'Best Airline in Europe' in 2013 and 'Best Food in Business Class' in 2014), and with such offerings, it's easy to see why.

*Visit [Turkishairlines.com](http://Turkishairlines.com) to learn about flights between Dubai, Turkey, Azerbaijan, and more.*

The view toward Bodrum



## Third stop: Luxurious Bodrum

### The setting

Located in the south-western Aegean Region of Turkey, Bodrum refers to both the port city, and the eponymous peninsula district. The natural beauty of the area is undeniable; 174km of coastline creates the Bodrum Peninsula, dotted with tiny towns and fishing villages. Rising away from the water are hills covered in Cyprus and cedar trees. On clear days – and in the summer, most days are clear – you can just about see some of the Greek Islands from the Bodrum shore. A popular activity is to charter a yacht across. Houses and buildings are kept to a two-level maximum height. Most are painted white with blue borders. Locals like to say the reason is to keep scorpions out; seeing the blue, scorpions mistake the frames for water, and drop down out of fear.

Glamorous and chic, Bodrum city itself draws visitors every summer with its promise of yacht days and jazz night, of exclusive ‘in the know’ spots for seaside sundowners, of champagne sipped as the sun settles over the blue waters of the Aegean. If you like your evenings elite and your crowd well-heeled, this is the holiday spot for you.

### The shops and sites

Bodrum is known for the glamour of its beaches. Yet if you step away from the season’s trendy nightlife, from the yachts and high heels, you will find an area infused with history and Turkish culture.

Along Bodrum Peninsula sit a scattering of small villages, each with its own unique character. Myndos is particularly charming. This small village is little more than a series of waterfront cafes and casual restaurants. Wooden

chairs sit in the sand. On one side of the walkable stretch, a bakery sells traditional simit, Turkish pretzel-like bread rolled in sesame seeds. Warm from the oven, the crust is perfectly crunchy, the taste slightly salty. Meanwhile, Yalikavak, another Bodrum port town, is hailed as one of the key places to go for a glamorous evening. Expect mega-yachts, restaurants, and numerous high-end shops.

Then there are windmills, remnants from the 18th century. These stone-and-wood whitewashed structures face northwest to catch the coastal winds. Many are now derelict, crumbling delicately into long grass, but several perch on the hill between Bodrum and Gumbet, mostly intact. From there you can enjoy panoramic views of the city and the sea.

Within Bodrum itself, you can stroll down the waterfront peninsula to the Bodrum Castle. This charming structure, renovated in recent years, stretches back to roughly the 1400s. Today it houses the rather niche Museum of Underwater Archaeology. It’s worth passing quickly through the museum, then stepping back into the sunlight of Bodrum Castle to enjoy the fresh sea breeze and amazing seascapes from the high perch of the castle’s walls. Then head over to the Bodrum Amphitheatre. Completed during the Roman era, this scenic spot is only a short drive away.

As for shops, small stores dot each individual town across the Bodrum peninsula, but for luxury shopping, there are two places to go: The Palmarina, and the Bodrum Marina. In both, you will find a mixture of restaurants, cafés, antique jewellers, and high-end brands like Armani, Missoni, Cavalli, and Luxury Point.

**The expert**

Luxury tour operator Lightfoot Travel offers experts around the world. With a focus on tailor-made holidays, the company works through Aida Tours in Bodrum. Ozgul Kilinc of Aida Tours knows the high-end. From recommending the top nightclubs (this year, she recommends Barbeast) to private booking opportunities (note: both Bodrum Amphitheatre and Bodrum Castle can be booked privately), Kilinc is ready to give insight into luxury. “We are particularly passionate about our personal concierge service,” she explains. Everything can be designed to fit the individual. As for the Aida’s day tours, you can expect an energetic guide who is passionate about the region and determined to showcase what locals mean by ‘Turkish hospitality’. Aidatours.net, Lightfoottravel.com

**The hotel**

To enjoy the highest form of luxury, stay at the newly opened Jumeirah Bodrum Palace. This spacious property offers beauty, tranquillity, and luxury on the Aegean Sea. As you walk into the airy lobby, designed with marble floors and glimmering gold chandeliers, you can expect a feeling of decadence. Rooms continue this theme. While the exact design varies depending on your choice, each features impressive floor-to-ceiling windows, gold or silver accents, standalone Jacuzzi tubs, and private terraces. Space isn’t lacking; the property stretches across 110,000sqm and includes 57 swimming pools, the majority assigned to private villas.

During the day, you can enjoy a traditional Turkish bath at Talise Spa or in your room. If you are tempted by fresh air and the gentle sound of rolling waves, you can reserve a massage in one of several Maldivian-style treatment spaces. Meanwhile, your children can play at the multi-room kids club or splash around in a semi-shaded pool. When it comes time for dinner, allow Executive Chef Deniz Katranci’s team to prepare a feast. Dishes will capture local ingredients and seasonal fresh produce. Al Nafoorah in particular is a highlight, featuring traditional Lebanese dishes and relaxing outdoor shisha.

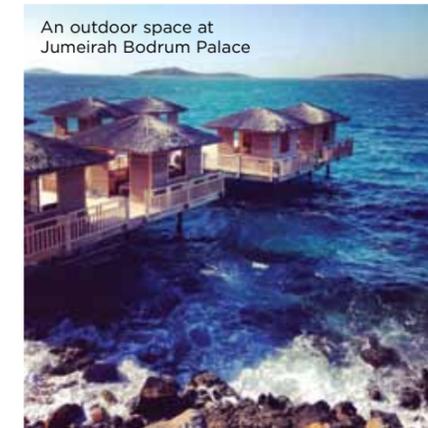
Currently there are several special packages available. The ‘Earn an Extra Night’ package allows you to stay for four nights and pay for only three. The ‘Turkish Delight’ experience combines a stay in both Bodrum and Istanbul. Stay for four nights at Jumeirah Bodrum Palace and be treated to an extra two at Pera Palace Hotel Jumeirah. For more information, visit jumeirah.com



Old windmills on Bodrum Peninsula



The view from Jumeirah Bodrum Palace



An outdoor space at Jumeirah Bodrum Palace



Stairs into Bodrum Castle

**The food**

**As told by Deniz Katranci, Executive Chef, Jumeirah Bodrum Palace**

The fresh fruits and vegetables in Bodrum are unbelievable. Pomegranates, when in season, are perfect. In July we start getting everything: watermelon, tomatoes, peppers, zucchini, spring onion, garlic, and potatoes of course.

If you visit Bodrum, you must try the seafood. We have a huge selection of seafood. We get four different seasons in Turkey, and we are here at the corner of the Aegean Sea. The fish that come in are tasty, as the water isn’t very warm. Try the local octopus, the red mullet and black sea bass. If you look out in the water, you can see smaller boats going along to get fish with the old method. On certain days in Bodrum, there’s a farmer’s market. You can find fresh teas, pastas, olive oils, cheeses.

One of my favourite dishes is octopus with beautiful fresh olive oil and herbs, the fresher the better. For dessert, it’s worth trying halva. Crumbly, made from tahini (sesame paste), this is a dense and sweet treat.

For us, culturally, breakfast is important. If you have a family, it’s a very family thing. We often will have fresh cheeses, warm breads, olive oil, or food cooked with olive oil, like artichokes. I also make sure to have fresh butter, real butter.

In the hotel, I’m leading a team of 70, which means I cook a bit of everything. I find our grilled meats particularly succulent, and enjoy our eggplant dishes. For me, cooking isn’t just about ‘cooking’. It’s a lifestyle. It’s a chance to create something new, to sometimes smell the soil, the fresh ingredients, and combine them into something different.