

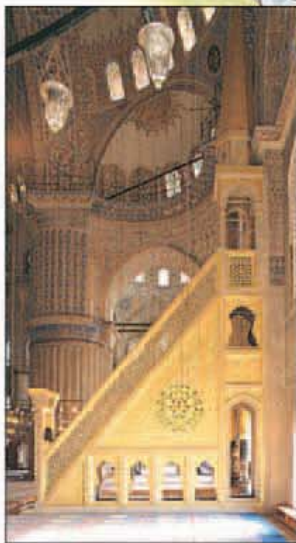
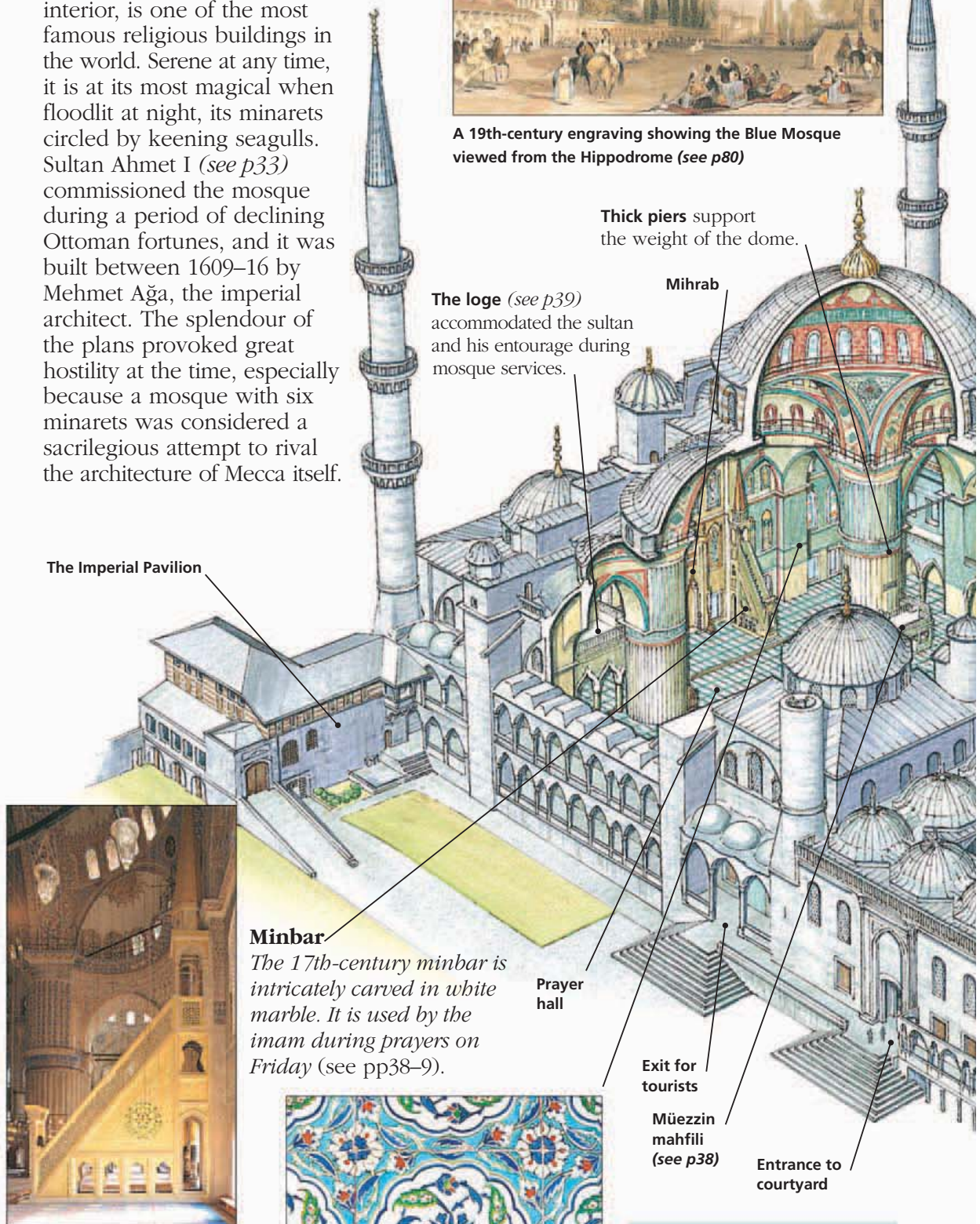
Blue Mosque 6

Sultan Ahmet Camii

The blue mosque, which takes its name from the mainly blue İznik tilework (see p161) decorating its interior, is one of the most famous religious buildings in the world. Serene at any time, it is at its most magical when floodlit at night, its minarets circled by keening seagulls. Sultan Ahmet I (see p33) commissioned the mosque during a period of declining Ottoman fortunes, and it was built between 1609–16 by Mehmet Ağa, the imperial architect. The splendour of the plans provoked great hostility at the time, especially because a mosque with six minarets was considered a sacrilegious attempt to rival the architecture of Mecca itself.



A 19th-century engraving showing the Blue Mosque viewed from the Hippodrome (see p80)



Minbar

The 17th-century minbar is intricately carved in white marble. It is used by the imam during prayers on Friday (see pp38–9).



★ İznik Tiles

No cost was spared in the decoration of the mosque.

The tiles were made at the peak of tile production in İznik (see p161).

STAR FEATURES

- ★ İznik Tiles
- ★ Inside of the Dome
- ★ View of the Domes



★ **Inside of the Dome**

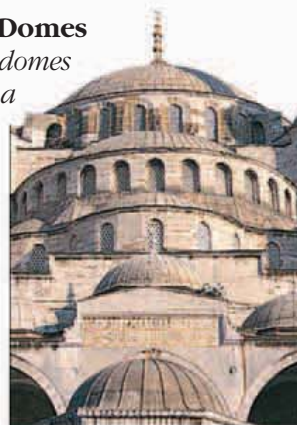
Mesmeric designs, employing flowing arabesques, are painted onto the interior of the mosque's domes and semidomes. The windows which pierce the domes no longer have their original 17th-century stained glass.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Meydanı 21, Sultanahmet. **Map** 3 E5 (5 E5). **Tel** (0212) 458 07 76. Sultanahmet. 8:30am–noon, 1:45–4:30pm daily. prayer times. **Son et Lumière** May–Sep: daily after dusk (see the board on Mimar Mehmet Ağa Caddesi).

★ **View of the Domes**

The graceful cascade of domes and semidomes makes a striking sight when viewed from the courtyard below.



Over 250 windows allow light to flood into the mosque.

Entrance

Ablutions Fountain

The hexagonal şadırvan is now purely ornamental since ritual ablutions are no longer carried out at this fountain.

Each minaret has two or three balconies.

Exit to Hippodrome

The courtyard covers the same area as the prayer hall, balancing the whole building.

Washing the Feet
The Muslim's ritual ablutions conclude with the washing of the feet (see p39). Taps outside the mosque are used by the faithful for this purpose.

