

Dolmabahçe Palace ⑦

Dolmabahçe Sarayı



Sèvres vase at the foot of the Crystal Staircase

Sultan Abdüü Mecit (*see p33*) built Dolmabahçe Palace in 1856. As its designers he employed Karabet Balyan and his son Nikogos, members of the great family of Armenian architects who lined the Bosphorus (*see pp137–49*) with many of their creations in the 19th century.

The extravagant opulence of the Dolmabahçe belies the fact that it was built when the Ottoman Empire was in decline.

The sultan financed his great palace with loans from foreign banks. The palace can only be visited on a guided tour, of which two are on offer. The best tour takes you through the Selamlık (or Mabeyn-i Hümayun), the part of the palace that was reserved for men and which contains the state rooms and the enormous Ceremonial Hall. The other tour goes through the Harem, the living quarters of the sultan and his entourage. If you only want to go on one tour, visit the Selamlık.



Imperial Gate

Once used only by the sultan and his ministers, this gate is now the main entrance to the palace. The *Mehter*, or *Janissary*, Band (*see pp126–7*) performs in front of the gate every Tuesday afternoon throughout the summer.



Swan Fountain

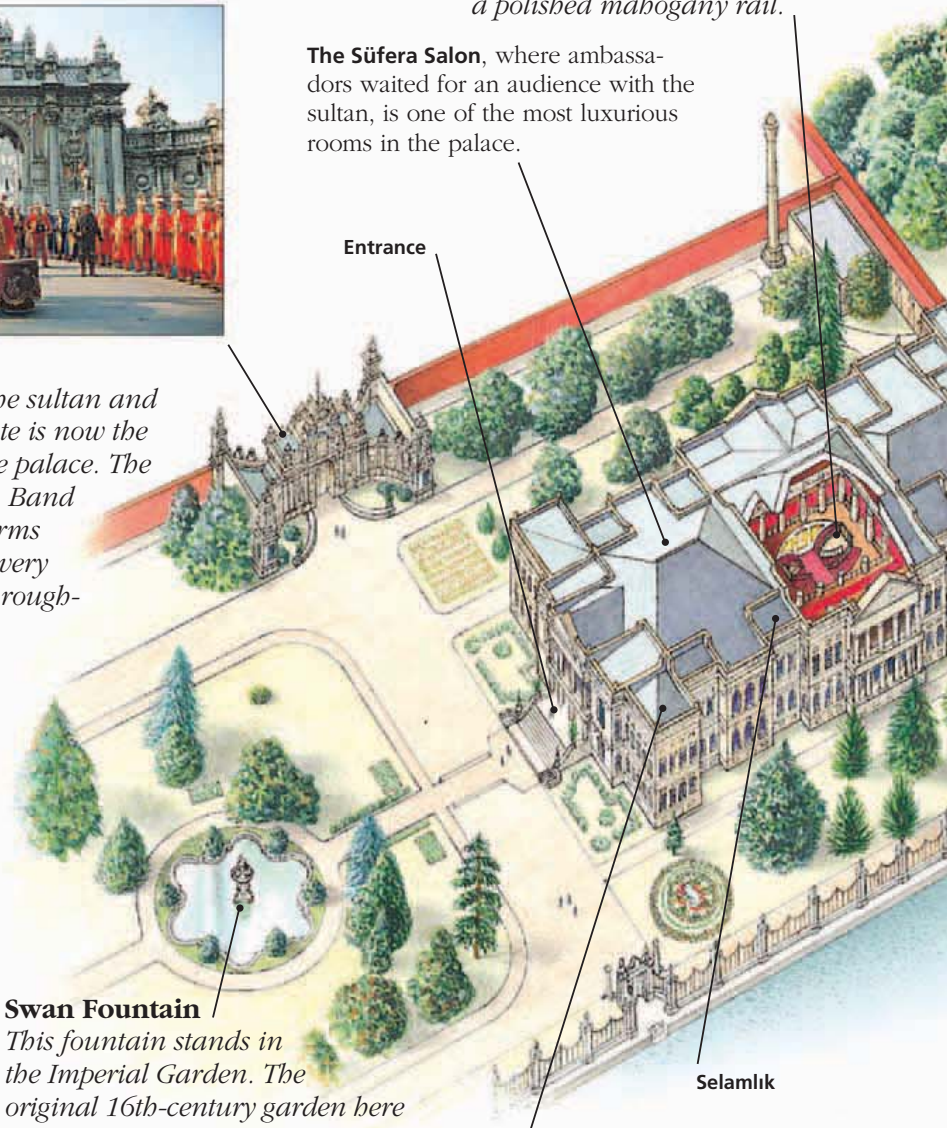
This fountain stands in the Imperial Garden. The original 16th-century garden here was created from recovered land, hence the palace's name, *Dolmabahçe*, meaning "Filled-in Garden".



★ Crystal Staircase

The apparent fragility of this glass staircase stunned observers when it was built. In the shape of a double horseshoe, it is made from Baccarat crystal and brass, and has a polished mahogany rail.

The Süfera Salon, where ambassadors waited for an audience with the sultan, is one of the most luxurious rooms in the palace.



Entrance

Selamlık

The Red Room was used by the sultan to receive ambassadors.



★ **Ceremonial Hall**

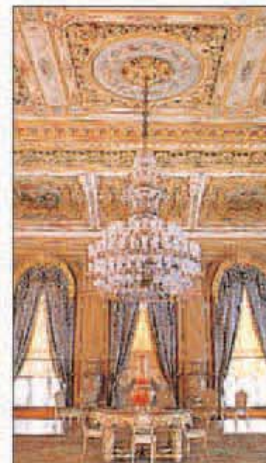
This magnificent domed hall was designed to hold 2,500 people. Its chandelier, reputedly the heaviest in the world, was bought in England.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Dolmabahçe Cad, Beşiktaş.
Map 8 B4. **Tel** (0212) 236 90 00.
 25E, 40. 9am–4pm
 (last adm) Tue, Wed & Fri–Sun
 (Oct–Feb: last adm 3pm).
 the first day of religious festivals.

The Zülvecheyn, or Panorama Room

Blue Salon
On religious feast days the sultan's mother would receive his wives and favourites in the Harem's principal room.



Harem

The Rose-coloured salon was the assembly room of the Harem.

Reception room of the sultan's mother

Main shore gate

Sultan Abdül Aziz's bedroom had to accommodate a huge bed built especially for the 150-kg (23-stone) amateur wrestler.

Atatürk's Bedroom

Atatürk (see pp30–31) died in this room at 9:05am on 10 November 1938. All the clocks in the palace, such as this one near the crystal staircase, are stopped at this time.



★ **Main Bathroom**

The walls of this bathroom are revetted in finest Egyptian alabaster, while the taps are solid silver. The brass-framed bathroom windows afford stunning views across the Bosphorus.

STAR FEATURES

- ★ Crystal Staircase
- ★ Ceremonial Hall
- ★ Main Bathroom