

What to Buy in Istanbul



Turkish
slippers

With its endless bazaars, markets, shops and stalls, Istanbul is a souvenir hunter's paradise. If you are seeking a bargain, jewellery and leather can be worth investing in. For something typically Turkish, there is a wide selection of ceramics and copperware based on the designs of traditional Ottoman handicrafts and arts. The city's antique shops (see p212) are also worth a visit. Istanbul is possibly most famous for its carpets and kilims (see pp218–9), but check the quality before you buy.

Copperware

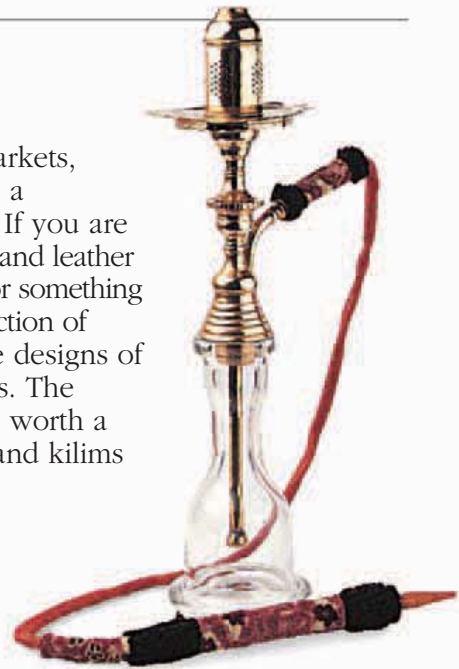
Antique copperware can be very expensive. Newer items, however, are also available, at more affordable prices.



Copper goblets



Antique copper
water ewer



Pipes

Classic nargiles (bubble pipes) are still used by older Turkish men. They make attractive ornaments even if you do not smoke.

Jewellery

Jewellery includes pendants made from gold, silver, semi-precious stones and other materials. A simple blue glass eye is said to ward off evil.



Blue glass-eye
pendants

Ceramics

Ceramics form a major part of Turkey's artistic tradition. The style varies according to the area of origin. Blue and white pottery is in the İznik style (see p161); other areas of production include Kütahya and Çanakkale (see p170).



Colourful
Kütahya ware



Green jugs
from Çanakkale



Blue and white
decorated plate



İznik-style tile



Miniature from the Grand Bazaar

Miniatures

Istanbul has a history of miniature painting, examples of which can be seen in the city's museums, especially Topkapı Palace (see p57). These tiny works of art, often depicting the sultan at court, were once bound in books. Those for sale are copies of originals.



Box inlaid with mother-of-pearl

Box with painted scenes on bone inlay

Handicrafts

Jewellery boxes crafted from wood or bone, alabaster figurines and other hand-made ornaments make unusual souvenirs.

Textiles

Hand-woven cloths, including ikat work (where the cotton is dyed as it is woven), fine embroidery and knits are just some of the range of textiles that can be bought.



Cotton ikat work



Embroidered scarves, known as oyalı



Çeşmibülbül jug

Glassware

This elegant jug is an example of the blue and white striped glassware, çeşmibülbül, made in the Paşabahçe works (see p147).

Local Delicacies

Delicious sweets such as halva, Turkish delight and baklava are very popular. A huge range of fragrant spices, dried fruit and nuts are sold loose by weight in the city's bazaars.



Halva



Nuts in honey



Turkish delight



Dried red peppers and aubergines



Mulberries



Sunflower and pumpkin seeds



Chickpeas



Apricots



Almonds



Pistachio nuts

Turkish Carpets and Kilims

The ancient skill of weaving rugs has been handed down from generation to generation in Turkey. Rugs were originally made for warmth and decoration in the home, as dowry items for brides, or as donations to mosques. There are two main kinds of rug: carpets (*halı*), which are knotted, and kilims, which are flat-woven with vertical (warp) and horizontal (weft) threads. Many foreign rugs are sold in Istanbul but those of Turkish origin come in a particularly wide range of attractive colours. Most of the carpets and kilims offered for sale will be new or almost new; antique rugs are rarer and far more expensive.



Carpets are made using three different combinations of material: wool on wool, silk on silk, or wool on cotton.

Weaving a Carpet

Wool for rugs is washed, carded, spun and dyed before it is woven. Weaving is a cottage industry in Turkey; the women weave in winter leaving the summer months for farming duties.

RUG-MAKING AREAS OF WESTERN TURKEY

The weaving industry in Turkey is concentrated into several areas of production, listed below. Rug designs are traditional to their tribal origins, resulting in a wide range of designs and enabling the skilled buyer to identify the area of origin.

CARPETS

- ① Hereke
- ② Çanakkale
- ③ Ayvacık
- ④ Bergama
- ⑤ Yuntdağ
- ⑥ Balıkesir
- ⑦ Sındırgı
- ⑧ Milas
- ⑨ Antalya
- ⑩ Isparta



KILIMS

- ⑪ Denizli
- ⑫ Uşak

CARPETS AND KILIMS

- ⑬ Konya

A **carpet** may be machine-made or handmade. Fold the face of the rug back on itself: if you can see the base of the knots and the pile cannot be pulled out, it means that it is handmade.



CARPET

This reproduction of a 16th-century Uşak carpet is known as a Bellini double entrance prayer rug.



Indigo



Madder



Camomile

Dyes

Before chemical dyes were introduced in 1863, plant extracts were used: madder roots for red; indigo for blue; and camomile and other plants for yellow.

The "prayer design" is inspired by a mihrab, the niche in a mosque that indicates the direction of Mecca (see pp38-9).

The tree of life motif at the centre of the kilim is symbolic of immortality.



KILIM

Kilims are usually made using the slit weave technique by which a vertical slit marks a colour change.

The width of a rug is limited by the size of the loom. Most rugs are small because a large loom will not fit into a village house.



BUYING A RUG

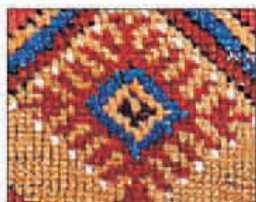
Before you buy a rug, look at it by itself on the floor, to see that it lies straight – without waves or lumps. Check that the pattern is balanced, the borders are of the same dimensions, and the ends are roughly the same width. The colours should be clear and not bleeding into one another. Bargaining is essential (see p211), as the first price given is likely to be at least 50% higher than the seller really expects.

Buying a good quality old rug at a reasonable price, however, is a job for an expert. The age of a rug is ascertained from its colour, the quality of the weaving and the design. Check the pile to make sure that the surface has not been painted and look for any repairs – they can easily be seen on the back of the rug. Restoration of an old carpet is acceptable but the repair should not be too visible. Make sure the rug has a small lead seal attached to it, to prove its authenticity and that it may be exported, and ask the shop for a receipt.



Kilim pieces

are used to make a variety of smaller craft objects, also for sale in carpet shops.



Burdock motif



Chest motif

Motifs

The recurring motifs in rugs – some of them seemingly abstract, others more figurative – often have a surprising origin. For instance, many are derived from marks that nomads and villagers used for branding animals.



Motif from wolf track, crab or scorpion



Modern motif of a human figure