

# BEYLERBEYİ PALACE

Located on the Asian shore of the Bosphorus, this splendid summer palace is a reflection of the sultan's interest in western styles of architecture.

Sultan Abdülaziz built this beautiful 19th century palace on the Asian shore of the Bosphorus, in order to serve as a summer retreat for sultans and visiting dignitaries.

Beylerbeyi Palace with its most stunning façade facing the Bosphorus and its two small marble pavilions at either end of the marble quay, bordered by lovely gardens, was built to be impressive from the water.

It was used as a residence for visiting dignitaries, among which were Empress Eugénie of France, Emperor Franz Joseph

of Austria, Shah Nasireddin of Persia, Reza Shah Pahlavi, Tsar Nicholas II, and King Edward VIII and Mrs. Simpson of England.

Empress Eugénie is said to have based the window design from the guest room at the Beylerbeyi for her bedroom at the Tuileries Palace in Paris.

Sultan Abdülhamid II spent the last 6-7 years of his life, having been deposed and kept under house arrest here until his death in 1918.

## Abdülhamid II and Beylerbeyi Palace

Abdülhamid (1842-1918) ruled the Ottoman Empire from 1876 to 1909. Under his autocratic rule, the reform movement of Tanzimat (Reorganization) reached its climax and he adopted a policy of pan-Islamism in opposition to Western intervention in Ottoman affairs.

He promulgated the first Ottoman constitution in 1876, primarily to ward off foreign intervention. After a disastrous war with Russia (1877), Abdülhamid was convinced that little help could be



expected from the Western powers without their intrusion into Ottoman affairs. Subsequently, he dismissed the Parliament and suspended the constitution. For the next 30 years, he ruled from his seclusion at Yıldız Palace.

In 1909, he was deposed shortly after the Young Turk Revolution, and his brother Mehmed V was proclaimed as sultan.

Abdülhamid II was placed under house arrest at Beylerbeyi Palace, where he died in 1918.

## Chronology

- **1861-1876** Reign of Sultan Abdülaziz (Deposed by his ministers)
- **1865** Beylerbeyi Palace was built by Abdülaziz
- **1876** Short Reign of Murad V (Deposed due to his ill mental health)
- **1876-1909** Reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II (Deposed shortly after the Young Turk Revolution)
- **1912-1918** Sultan Abdulhamid II spent 6-7 years at the Beylerbeyi Palace under house arrest, and died at Beylerbeyi
- **1909-1918** Reign of Mehmed V (Reşad)
- **1918-1922** Reign of Mehmed VI (Vahdeddin)
- **1922** Sultanate abolished



## History

Beylerbeyi means Grand Seigneur or Governor; the palace and the village were named after Beylerbeyi Mehmet Pasha, Governor of Rumeli in the reign of Sultan Murad III in the late 16th century. Mehmet Pasha built a mansion on this site at that time, and though it eventually vanished, the name Beylerbeyi lived on.

The first Beylerbeyi Palace was wooden and was built for Sultan Mahmud II in early 19th century. Later the original palace was abandoned following a fire in the reign of Sultan Abdülmecid.

The present Beylerbeyi Palace was designed and built under the auspices of the architects Sarkis Balyan and Agop Balyan between 1861 and 1865 on the orders of Sultan Abdülaziz.

Today Beylerbeyi Palace serves as a palace museum linked to the National Palaces.



## Architecture

The main palace building is a two-storey construction resting on a tall basement. It was built in white marble and stone, and occupies an area of 65 m x 40 m.

The architecture is a blend of traditional Turkish residential and baroque architecture. The façades of the Beylerbeyi Palace have arches and windows with eclectic forms.

The structure, which is composed of 6 halls (three on each floor lining up), 24 rooms, a large bathroom and a hamam adjacent to an expansive garden, has the characteristics of the traditional Turkish house, with the southern section functioning as state apartments (mabeyn) and the northern section as the family's living quarters (harem).

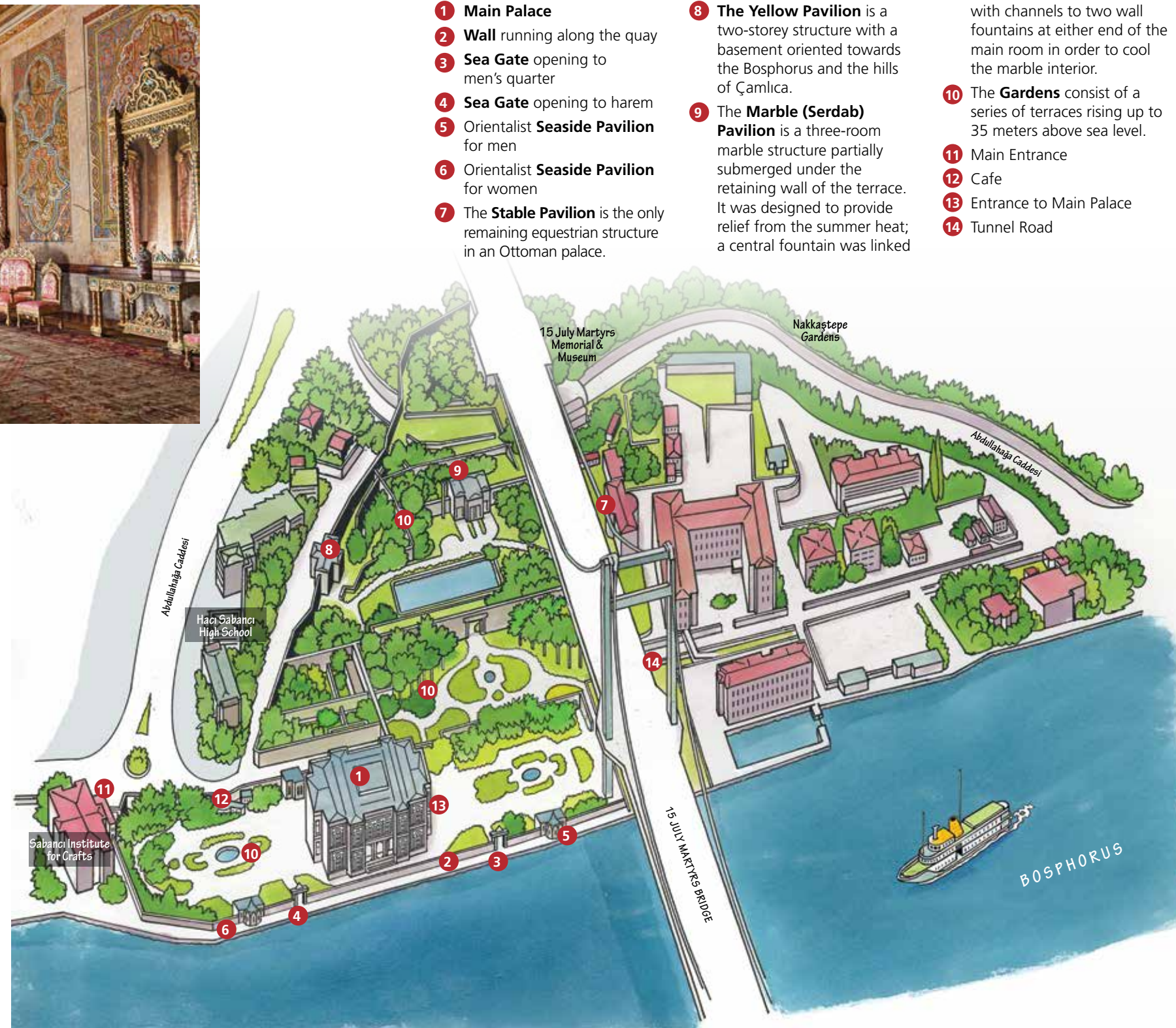
The palace is lavishly decorated with fine Baccarat and Bohemia crystal chandeliers, Ming vases, painted ceilings with an interesting mixture of European and Ottoman styles of painting, featuring scenes of ships at sea and intricate geometric designs. The floors are covered with Egyptian woven matting that provides both insulation and protection from humidity for the luxurious Hereke carpets. Sultan Abdülaziz's passion for the sea is reflected in the frescoes depicting the rough sea as well as maritime-themed candles.

The reception hall also delights the guest with a fountain and a pool, which were very soothing and cooling in the heat of Istanbul summers. A nearly life-size bronze equestrian statue of Sultan Abdulaziz was moved inside this room from the exterior gardens. Sultan Abdulaziz is known for being the first Ottoman sultan to have a statue of him made.

In contrast to the Western influence apparent from the outside, the interior is similar to a

classical Ottoman residence, being organized around a sofa in the central room on the main floor in the upper story. You need to take the stairway to reach the sofa, which leads to all the other wings and rooms on the same level. This way, there are no corridors and natural light reaches the sofa. Besides the clear light, the windows offer wonderful views of the Bosphorus and gardens.

The Blue Hall, which is also known as the Ceremonial Hall, is named after its sixteen blue columns with orientalist capitals. Its roof rests on walls with sixteen arched windows that illuminate the hall from above. Another highlight is the wood-paneled audience room.



### 1 Main Palace

### 2 Wall running along the quay

### 3 Sea Gate opening to men's quarter

### 4 Sea Gate opening to harem

### 5 Orientalist Seaside Pavilion for men

### 6 Orientalist Seaside Pavilion for women

### 7 The Stable Pavilion is the only remaining equestrian structure in an Ottoman palace.

### 8 The Yellow Pavilion is a two-storey structure with a basement oriented towards the Bosphorus and the hills of Çamlıca.

### 9 The Marble (Serdab) Pavilion is a three-room marble structure partially submerged under the retaining wall of the terrace. It was designed to provide relief from the summer heat; a central fountain was linked

with channels to two wall fountains at either end of the main room in order to cool the marble interior.

### 10 The Gardens consist of a series of terraces rising up to 35 meters above sea level.

### 11 Main Entrance

### 12 Cafe

### 13 Entrance to Main Palace

### 14 Tunnel Road

## Abdülaziz (1830 - 1876)

Abdülaziz was the Ottoman sultan from 1861 to 1876. He continued the Westernizing reforms that had been initiated by his predecessors.

Like his brother Abdülmecid I, whom he succeeded, Abdülaziz was an ardent admirer of the Western progress in technology and science. He was a member of the Mevlevi (Rumi) order of dervishes.

Abdülaziz cultivated good relations with France and Great Britain and was the first Ottoman sultan to visit western Europe.



Abdülaziz was deposed by his ministers in 1876; his death a few days later was attributed to suicide.

In Sultan Abdülhamid II's recently surfaced memoirs, the event is described as an assassination. The succeeding sultan, Murad V began to show signs of paranoia and madness, which is why the high officials were afraid the public would become outraged and revolt to bring Abdülaziz back. Within a few days, they either arranged for Sultan Abdülaziz to kill himself or assassinate him.



Empress Eugénie of France at the Beylerbeyi Palace, 13 November 1869