

# MAIDEN'S TOWER

## Kız Kulesi

Maiden's Tower has long been a key landmark of Istanbul, resting between the Asian and European sides of the city, greeting ships as they pass through the Bosphorus.

Many Istanbulians could not imagine their city without it. Some would even go so far to claim that even tea tastes better when viewing Maiden's Tower. It rests between the Asian and European sides of the city, greeting ships as they pass through the Bosphorus.

Maiden's Tower is also a living monument, connected to countless paintings, postcards, poems, songs, and novels. Legends, history, and dreams are encountered at the wonderful panorama, café, and restaurant of Maiden's Tower. Everyone can see something different depending on his or her point of view.



1. Mihrimah Sultan Mosque (Architect Sinan)
2. Nevmekan Sahil (Cultural Center and Lady Sultans' Museum)
3. Maiden's Tower
4. Boat to Maiden's Tower from the shore
5. Kuzguncuk Neighbourhood
6. Beylerbeyi Palace
7. Bosphorus Cruise with Valide Sultan Boat
8. Market Street
9. Şemsi Paşa Mosque (Architect Sinan)
10. Ferry Station
11. Marmaray (Subway)
12. Üsküdar - Ümraniye - Çekmeköy - Sancaktepe (Subway)
13. Sultan Ahmed III Fountain
14. Yeni Valide Mosque
15. Rum Mehmed Paşa Mosque
16. Ayazma Mosque
17. Mimar Sinan Bazaar (Architect Sinan)
18. Selman Ağa Mosque
19. Nakkaştepe Gardens



During the day, Maiden's Tower is a cafe and restaurant. It can be visited between 09.00 and 19.00 everyday. There is an admission fee. You can catch one of the frequent ferries either from Kabataş or Salacak in Üsküdar.

After 20.00 it is a restaurant. It is better to make a reservation.





### History

- The island on which Maiden's Tower was built is one of the two natural islands on the Bosphorus.
- The first structure on this tiny island was built in 410 BC by Alcibiades, an infamous Athenian statesman and general. It was probably not a tower then, but a customs station to control the passages of ships to and from the Black Sea during the Peloponnesian War.
- Centuries later, during the Byzantine Era, a small tower was constructed on the island (then known as Arkla) by the Byzantine Emperor Manuel I Komnenos in the 12th century. It seems that a chain was attached to the fortress on the island on one end and to a tower below the acropolis (where Topkapı Palace is now located) at the other end. A similar technique was used at the mouth of the Golden Horn around the same time, where a chain stretched across it.
- George Sphrantzes, a chronicler of the siege and conquest of Istanbul in 1453, mentions that the Venetian commander Gabriele Trevisano and fifty soldiers garrisoned the tower.
- During the Ottoman period, it was a tradition to fire cannons for celebrations during holidays or ceremonies when new sultans ascended to the throne as well as when sultans went on outings on the Bosphorus with their boats.

- The Ottomans used it as a watchtower until it was severely damaged by an earthquake in 1509. The wooden structure on the island burned down in 1721, after which a new lighthouse tower was built by Nevşehirli Damat İbrahim Pasha. He was the Grand Vizier to Sultan Ahmed III.
- The current structure dates to 1763.
- Between the years 1830-1831, the tower was converted into a quarantine area to prevent the expansion of epidemic cholera.
- Afterwards, between the years 1836-1837, a great plague caused the death of 20-30 thousand people and some of the patients were kept in the hospital located in the Maiden's Tower for safety precautions.
- The tower was restored by Sultan Mahmud II in 1832.
- In 1994, it was given to the Navy to be used for military purposes.
- A company, which was given a 49-year-long lease in 1995, opened a restaurant and café after its restoration was completed in 2000.

### Legends

- The name Maiden's Tower originates from a Turkish legend about a princess who was confined there. The father of this princess, in order to avoid the prophecy foretelling her death by the bite of a serpent, had the tower built in the middle of the Bosphorus, where she would live her life in secrecy and protection. The prophecy came true when she found a serpent in a basket of grapes.
- The Maiden's Tower has also been called the Leander's Tower, as it was mistakenly believed to be the location of the myth of Hero and Leander. The original story took place along different straits – the Dardanelles (now Çanakkale, Turkey) – not the Bosphorus. The tragic myth tells the story of two lovers, a priestess named Hero at a temple of Aphrodite at Sestos on one side of the straits, and a young man named Leander who lived on the opposite side at Abydos. Each night, Leander, guided by a lamp placed by Hero, swam across to be with her. One stormy night, the lamp went out and Leander lost his way and drowned; when Hero saw her dead lover she despaired and threw herself into the water and died as well.

