



Rings of Smoke – A Nargile Tour of Istanbul



A communal nargile session - Image by Suhail Vawda of the Tripsters Team

The fact that it goes by so many names means that it's made a place for itself in many cultures and regions of the world. Whether you call the water pipe a nargile, shisha, hukkah/hookah, argila, ghelyan/ghelyoon, or hubbly bubbly, you're probably familiar with the experience. And yes, we mean experience – smoking nargile is not just a smoke. It's a lot more than that. Before we go on, if you do, in fact, call it "hubbly bubbly", we urge you to re-evaluate your decision to do so.

A Cloudy History

[Some say](#) that it all started back in India – the hookah was a way to enjoy smoking tobacco from a head that was attached to a stem which led to hollowed-out coconut at the bottom. This allowed for the smoke to pass through water, causing the smoke to cool, thereby making for a more pleasant experience.

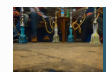
Eventually, the Ottomans, Persians, and Arabs adopted this practice and the nargile (as it's

Search

About our company

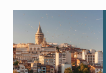
Tripsters takes the stress out of planning your holiday or mini-break, providing you with tailor made itineraries. The Tripsters concept makes travel simpler. Each and every one of our trips is tailored to you – based on your personal preferences, where you're staying, and how much time you have. Designed by local experts who visit and review each location in your chosen city, our itineraries are completely bespoke.

Latest posts



Rings of
Smoke – A
Nargile Tour of
Istanbul

🕒 November
12, 2019



Making the
Most of
Istanbul –
Touring Like a
Local (Part 2)

🕒 September
26, 2019

known by Turks), or ghelyan, began to rival the long tobacco pipe, or *chibuk*, as the nargile evolved to using a glass vase as the base, instead of a coconut. They also advocated for a flexible leather hose instead of a fixed mouthpiece which led to the stem of the nargile. This is the short version of how we arrived at the modern design of the nargile. The long version is not this simple, but that's not what we're here about today.



A nargile tavern of old

We're here to let you know of some of the best places to smoke nargile in Istanbul. Like we said, it's not just about smoking – the atmosphere and spirit of conviviality, many would say, play as big a part in enjoying the sweet taste and aroma of tobacco as the expertise that went into preparing the nargile. In most nargile cafés in Istanbul, you'll pay approximately 30-35TL to smoke nargile. With

that said, the best that you could do is get going and visit some of these nargile cafés, or shisha bars, choose your flavour of tobacco and get lost in the exhale.

Authentic Expertise – Çorlulu Ali Paşa Medresesi

Once part of an Ottoman social complex, Çorlulu Ali Paşa Medresesi used to be a [traditional](#) religious school. After some social transformation in the early days of the Turkish Republic, about a century ago, people refused to allow the place to become abandoned.



Entrance arch of Çorlulu Ali Paşa Medresesi

It evolved into what it is today, maintaining a social atmosphere and keeping that link with history. It's almost solely a place for Turks and tourists, alike, to meet, relax, and let go of the day's stress in clouds of aromatic, white smoke.

You'll find this nargile café along the tramway, a short stroll away from the Çemberlitaş stop in Istanbul's Old City. It's located in the old Ottoman heart, close to the Grand Bazaar, making for a great stop after a day of bargain-hunting. Smoking nargile here is a very traditional affair, and those traditions associated with it are alive and well.

For one, you'll find that the nargile will always be placed on the floor, as in most nargile cafes.

Categories

- Istanbul
- tripsters
- Turkey
- Uncategorized
- Urla

Recent comments

- September 10, 2019
Perri Peltz commented on Kurtuluş – Discover Istanbul's Characteristic
- September 10, 2019
Salem commented on Urla – Discover Tuscan Beauty on the Aegean Coast

Tags

Aegean antiquebazaar babylon Bazaar beefactory bomonti Bomontiada chill city culture discoverturkey diversity Don'ts Dos entertainment Explore explorelikealocal Feriköy Festival fleamarket gathering Guide Heritage history international Istanbul İzmir kurtuluş Learn local music nature nightlife nightout outdoors summer Tips Tour traffic travel Tripster Turkey urban Urla



*The atmospheric, semi-covered
cafe – Photo by
[Svetlana Gumerova](#)
on
[Unsplash](#)*

There's a general hum of conversation in the air as many people meet friends here, while you might find equally as many people sitting and puffing by themselves. Neither is taboo. Turkish tea, *çay*, is a staple and sipped between puffs, and you won't go wrong with ordering an apple tea here either.

The stone floors and enchanting surrounds of the place – you'll pass by old Ottoman-era gravestones as you make your way into the café – make this café feel like a time warp. It's lit by vibrantly-coloured Turkish lamps which makes the experience all the more surreal – ideal to lose yourself in smoke and great conversation.

At Çorlulu Ali Paşa, they do nargile right, and so we advise that you go with the all-time favourite flavour, apple. When paired with Turkish tea or their Turkish coffee, brewed on hot coals, the atmosphere of the place is the truly authentic experience you've looking for. If you're a more seasoned smoker, try asking for *tömbek*; an unflavoured, heavier smoking experience.

Bosporus Buzz – Huqqa

Huqqa, as the name of this [café and restaurant](#) suggests, is one of Istanbul's trendiest nargile cafes. Quite contrary to the previous café that we've discussed, this café and restaurants is located next to the Bosporus in the Beşiktaş district of Istanbul, boasting breath-taking views of the city and its primary body of water.

[View More on Instagram](#)

331 likes

huqqa

Çarşamba akşamının keyfini çıkarmak isteyenlerle birlikte biz HuQqa'dayız, ya siz? 🌟🌟🌟🌟🌟🌟

-
-
-
-

www.huqqa.com

#huqqa #huqqalover #summer #summermood #summertime #summervibes #summerfun #visit #fun #enjoy #bestplacetogo #bucketlist #living_destinations #try #shisha #show #lifestyle #food #foodie #taste #tasty #yummy #bosphorus #views #dinner #dining #foodshot #shishatime #shisha 🍷 #righttherightnow

[view all comments](#)

Located in a more fashionable area of the city, Huqqa's venue and nargile reflects the buzzing, modern sensibility of the area – a great comparison to Çorlulu Ali Paşa Medresesi, especially if you want to gain an understanding of the city's culture through the lens of nargile smoke.

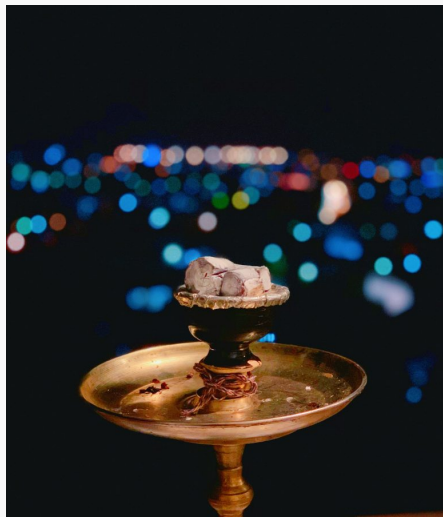
You'll find that their nargile pipes can also be a far cry from the traditional aesthetic of copper and clay tones, as Huqqa often opts for all-glass nargile pipes (featured on their menu), the inside of which can be dressed up with sliced fruits and mint leaves.

The smoke, although not traditional in aesthetic, is always great – Huqqa's the place to try out the more eclectic in tobacco flavours, with the option of filling the base with something more than just water. It can be a more lively experience, with prices to match, but with its comfortable

setting and crisp views of the Bosphorus, there's no place like it. With their restaurant menu, you'll be able to start the day with a full Turkish breakfast, followed by a nargile, to begin your day of sightseeing.

Lit on the Asian Side – ReCafe

ReCafe can be found in the heart of the bustling, cosmopolitan area of Kadıköy on Istanbul's Asian side. Compared to the first two nargile cafés that we've mentioned here, ReCafe is a lived experience with a youthful, but down-to-earth, spirit.



Natural coals atop the nargile

It might not appear like much as you enter from the sloping cobblestone street on the edge of Kadıköy's [hipster neighbourhood](#), Moda, but once you enter, the café opens up to a semi-covered social area with traditionally-low tables and stone floors. It's a neighbourhood hub that's home to many of the city's Fenerbahçe football club fans, so friends often gather to watch Turkish league matches here. The atmosphere gets spirited, but never rowdy, and the café provides *tavla* (backgammon) boards for those who want to engage in a little competition among friends – all while sipping on ReCafe's expertly-prepared nargiles.

Every smoke here is satisfying, and ReCafe opts for a more traditional take on nargile pipes, favouring the classic aesthetic. You do find, at times, a sleeker, more modern take on the Turkish nargile pipe, they keep it simple – the quality of the smoke is priority. ReCafe offers various kinds of Turkish teas, and even popcorn and light snacks for those who are a bit peckish. *Ihlamur çay* (linden flower tea) goes down well with one of their well-prepared mint tobacco mixes. We suggest *nane-limon nargile* (Mint and lemon flavoured nargile).

Bazaar Bliss – Park Cafe

A hard day of bargaining and finding deals can be satisfying and stressful at the same time – it's all about perspective. When in the bazaar of Caferağa Mahallesi in Kadıköy, a stone's throw away from the ferry port, Park Cafe is a vibrant, lively social haven for people of all ages to kick back a little, sip on tea, and puff on life-giving nargile.



sogdiana.arslan
Kadıköy Park Cafe

[View Profile](#)



[View More on Instagram](#)

12 likes

[Add a comment...](#)

With its more traditional, low, square tables draped in colourful manner with what brings to mind the communal atmosphere of a quaint Turkish town, the café reflects this vibe. The staff will, in all cases, go out of their way to make you comfortable and cater to all your needs (within reason, of course). The staff are family and they make you feel like part of that unit and there's banter all round – this is amplified if they know you're a tourist.

Similar to ReCafe, backgammon boards are available at request – you'll find that many patrons will be engaged in a head-to-head, followed by a lot of playful jibes after most rounds. The nargile is on point, as they say – we recommend you ask for *gül-nane* (rose and mint) nargile, as they prepare it here with unparalleled balance. Even though the çay flows freely here, you'll spot one of the staff making *Türk kahvesi* (Turkish coffee) on hot coals at the entrance. However, we find that one of their specialties, which pairs beautifully with *gül-nane* nargile, is *menengic kahvesi* – a Kurdish coffee made from roasted terebinth beans as the main ingredient, brewed with milk.

A Little Conversation, A Lot of Action

While smoking nargile, we know that you might [end up in a situation](#) or two and might not know how to express yourself to explain some of your concerns. We've provided a short list of phrases that could help you in navigating your nargile experiences.

Nargile ne kadar? [Nar-gee-leh neh kah-dar] – How much for nargile?

(Nargile) Yandı [Yahn-duh]– The nargile is burnt.

(Başka) Sipsi alabilir miyim? [(Bah-sh-ka) Sip-see ah-la-bee-leer mee-yeem] – Can I have a(nother) mouthpiece?

Daha kömür, lütfen [Daha koh-myoor, lyoot-fen] – More coal, please.

Çok sert! [Chok sehr-t]– Too strong/heavy.

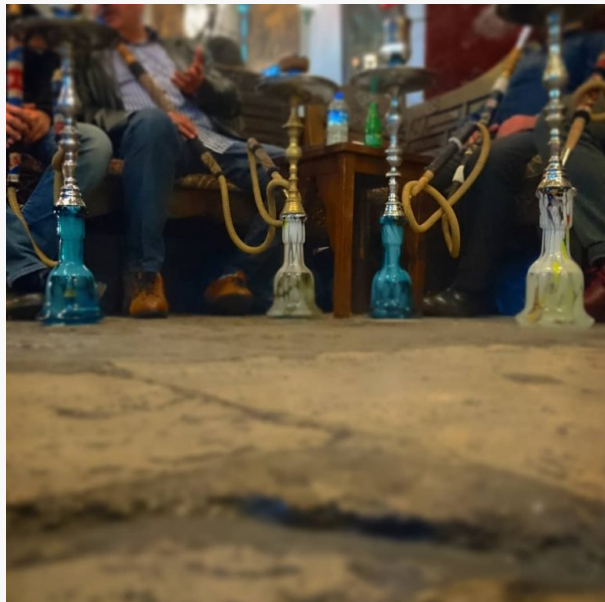
Şimdi güzel [Sheem-dee gyoo-zehl] – It's great now.

Bir çay alabilir miyim? [Beer chai ah-la-bee-leer mee-yeem] – Can I have (a) tea?

İki çay alabilir miyiz? [Ee-kee chai ah-la-bee-leer mee-yeez] – Can we have 2 teas?

Çok teşekkürler! [Chok teh-shek-kyoor-lehr]– Thanks a lot!

Nargile Navigation



*A communal nargile session – Photo by Suhail
Vawda of the Tripsters Team*

Since Istanbul is a cultural metropolis, you'll find nargile served at many restaurants or cafes, and that's great for anyone who wants to stop and unwind with a smoke. While that's great, many places – especially in tourist areas – simply serve nargile for its novelty. Let's face it, your Insta feed never suffers from a nargile-related photo. That being said, for those who want a great smoke from a nargile prepared by skilled staff, these are only some of the best places that one can visit in the city.

If you're planning to stay in an area and you're not sure if there are any worthy nargile cafes, [contact us](#) at Tripsters and

we'll create a travel plan that promises you stops at these, and other, specialty nargile spots!



Creative Holidays. Want a tailor made itinerary specially for you?

Give your holiday ideas live!

GET STARTED

Comments are closed.



Quick links

[Home](#)
[How it works](#)
[Blog](#)
[Sample Trips](#)

Need help?


[FAQ](#)





About Us


[Our Team](#)
[Terms](#)
[Privacy policy](#)


Tripsters provides you the opportunity to explore like a local. Get your bespoke travel itinerary for Turkey designed just for you. Uncover hidden gems and discover local culture – no hidden costs, no biased recommendations.





**Company address:**
Frank Beckmann
FB Consult Ltd.
Company code 205075382
22 Bulgaria street
2770 Bansko
Bulgaria




+90 530 160 01 30
+359 749 88393


contact@tripsters.tips



Sign Up to Our Newsletter

Get latest updates & weekly insider travel tips.

SUBMIT