

TOWN & COUNTRY America 2016 APRIL (ISTANBUL MATRONS)

Welcome to Istanbul

continued from page 103

Caddesi, has alternately been one of the smartest, one of the most neglected and, since its 1980s revitalization, again one of the most popular thoroughfares in Istanbul. However, the wide street is mostly lined with mass-market megachains, and the smaller streets that run off İstiklâl are the more interesting places to explore.

Cihangir, whose circuit of meandering narrow streets begins roughly at Taksim Square and winds down to the Bosphorus, is the city's intellectual center, a formerly poverty-stricken area now full of sidewalk cafés and bars that began opening as the neighborhood gentrified. Among the smoky wine bars and the Witt hotel, you'll find new restaurants, such as the enchanting **Cihangir Mutfak** (4/1 Şimşirci Sokak; 011-90-212-251-6425), open only since August, which serves flavorful Sephardic food (like spiced-eggplant pie) at a big kitchen table surrounded by walls covered with cartoonlike drawings. Down the hill from the imposing gates of the 15th-century Lycée Galatasaray (the oldest high school in Turkey) is the Çukurçuma neighborhood, a rabbit warren of fusty old antiques stores in 19th-century town houses interspersed with remarkable interior-design stores.

Perennial favorite **A La Turca House** (4 Faik Paşa Yokuşu; 011-90-212-245-2933; alaturcahouse.com) sells decorative objects (kilims, bone-handled silverware) in a tableau so fanatically arranged you're right to worry that you might destroy it if you purchased something. Nearby at **Cezayir** (12 Hayriye Caddesi; 011-90-212-245-9980; cezayir-istanbul.com), you'll find lightly experimental new Turkish cuisine, such as pastries filled not with lamb or Feta but with duck, presented in a multi-use, clubby series of rooms.

Asmalimescit, the bohemian quarter on the westernmost side of Beyoğlu, has facades dating back to the 14th century, narrow streets and a nightlife scene that won't quit. Babylon, one of Istanbul's mainstay music venues for nearly a decade, has been joined by **Babylon Lounge** (4 Jurnal Sokak; 011-90-212-245-3800; babylon-ist.com), a tiny, perpetually

crowded space mixing specialty cocktails (*caipirinhas* made with sake, for instance) and serving pan-Mediterranean salads and noodles with edible flowers. Closer to Taksim, the jaw-dropping live-music spot **Ghetto** (10 Kamer Hatun Caddesi; 011-90-212-251-7501; ghettoist.com) is in a three-story-high historic building with mural-painted and coffered ceilings. Its secret third-floor restaurant **Metto**, offers modern takes on traditional Turkish mezes (lamb, calamari, shrimp) and has a rooftop-terrace bar.

A SHOPPER'S MECCA The neighborhood of Nişantaşı has one of the most concentrated aggregations of status stores in the world, including both Hermès and Prada, which just cut their ribbons in December, not to mention the newly opened City's Nişantaşı, a huge upscale mall chockablock with impressive labels like Dolce & Gabbana and Roberto Cavalli and fifty-plus other top shops. The second-floor boutique **Antony Todd** (25 Abdi-Ipekçi Sokak; antonytodd.com; 011-90-212-231-4758), which opened in November, sells the designer's custom oak furniture, slipper chairs and mirrors made by local craftsmen—though Todd jokingly refers to the store as a front for his party-planning business. Also new and noteworthy: **Yastik by Rifat Özbek** (13 Şakayik Sokak; 011-90-212-240-8731; yastikistanbul.com), a spare white storefront show casing nothing but cushions (*yastiklar*) in vintage Anatolian, Brazilian and African fabrics culled from the travels of Özbek, one of Turkey's contemporary-fashion pioneers.

The Beşiktaş neighborhood, which runs from Nişantaşı down to the Bosphorus, is finally seeing some fresh blood as well. At its heart are the Akaretler Row Houses, two blocks of 19th-century residences built for laborers constructing the Dolmabahçe Palace for Sultan Abdülmecid I. The area (known today simply as Akaretler) is now home to shops like Marc Jacobs, Jimmy Choo, Marni and Lanvin and is anchored by the new W hotel. If you

have time for only one stop there, make it the boutique **Sevan Bıçakçı** (1A Şair Nedim Caddesi; 011-90-212-236-9199; sevanbicakci.com); jewelry designer Bıçakçı makes his intricate gold and gemstone baubles using ancient micromosaic techniques, fusing age-old inspiration with contemporary design.

SHOWSTOPPING MUSEUMS

The **Santral Istanbul Contemporary Art Museum** (2/6 Kazım Karabekir Caddesi; 011-90-212-311-7809; santralis-tanbul.org), which opened in 2007 in Istanbul's Ottoman-era power station in the northern neighborhood of Eyüp, is the most exciting example of Istanbul's new movement to renovate derelict municipal buildings. Skybridges lead from an intact control room to the encircling engine rooms, interactive power displays fill the first level, and top floors are devoted to changing exhibits, most recently a retrospective of the Surrealist drawings of Yüksel Arslan. On the grounds, **Otto Santral** (011-90-212-427-1889), an industrial-chic café that offers live music at night, serves an exhaustive list of fun cocktails and Turkish and international snack foods (grilled octopus, sliders, a pizza with Turkish pepperoni). Aside from its second-floor permanent collection of Turkish modern art, **Istanbul Modern** (Meclis-i Mebusan Caddesi, Warehouse No. 4; 011-90-212-334-7300; www.istanbulmodern.org), in a converted storage space on the Karaköy pier, is remarkable for its views across the Bosphorus to Sultanahmet. Then there's the **Şakirin Mosque** (at the entrance to Karacaahmet Cemetery, on the Asian side of the Bosphorus in Üsküdar; no telephone). With the opening of the mosque last May, Zeynep Fadillioğlu, best known for decorating restaurants and nightclubs in Istanbul, became the country's first woman to design a house of worship. Officially praised by Istanbul's Grand Mufti, the towering glass-walled sanctuary perfectly exemplifies the city's fusion of tradition and contemporary art (note the asymmetrical bronze-and-