



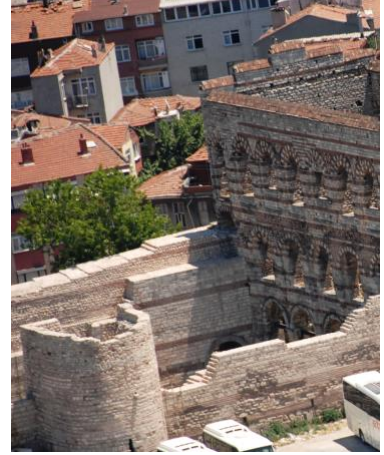
**TOURISM**  
2021 DEBATE FEBRUARY

**OUR  
WORLD  
HERITAGE**

## HISTORIC AREAS OF ISTANBUL (TURKEY): CONSERVATION AND TOURISM UNDER COVID 19

**In the framework of the Our World Heritage 2021 Debate on Tourism**

February 24, 2021, 15:00 – 17:00 (UTC+1) / 17:00 – 19:00 (UTC+3) on ZOOM



**Language:** Turkish

**Organised by:** Nuran Zeren Gülersoy and Hande Akarca

### **Moderator**

Hande Akarca – Asst.Prof. Düzce University

### **Participants:**

A.Ege Yildirim - Our World Heritage, Sustainability Coordinator

Bahattin Yücel - Former Minister of Tourism

Iclal Dincer - Prof.Dr. Yildiz Technical University, ICOMOS Turkey

Nuran Zeren Gülersoy - Prof.Dr. Isik University, OWH

Oktay Özel - Head of the Cultural Heritage Directory, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality

Özcan Biçer Director - Istanbul Tourism Platform

Zeynep Enlil - Prof.Dr. Yildiz Technical University, EUROPA NOSTRA Turkey

**Case Study:** Istanbul Land Walls

**Video Presentation:** Istanbul Land Walls; Presented by Merve Gedik Ala - IMM Directorate of Cultural Heritage (with English subtitles)

This online seminar gathering experts from academia, NGOs, and local government will evaluate the current challenges in the inter-relationships between heritage and tourism; between tourism and the changing urban landscape; between the World Heritage Historic Areas of Istanbul and Greater Istanbul, examining in particular the ramifications of the current Covid-19 pandemic.

Among the legendary cities of the world, Istanbul has evoked the imaginary for centuries, bringing travellers and settlers from across the globe enriching its cultural diversity as manifested in the city's tangible as well as intangible heritage. Residents and visitors of the past as well as of today, marvel over its monuments, recognised as architectural masterpieces of the Byzantine and Ottoman periods, such as the Süleymaniye Mosque Complex designed by Architect Sinan in 1550-1557, the 17<sup>th</sup> Century Blue Mosque, the Sokollu Mehmet Paşa Mosque, the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Şehzade Mosque Complex, the 15<sup>th</sup> Century Topkapı Palace, the hippodrome of Constantine, the aqueduct of Valens, the Justinian churches of Hagia Sophia designed by Anthemios of Tralles and Isidoros of Miletus between 532-537, St. Irene, Küçük Ayasofya Mosque (the former Church of the St Sergius and Bacchus), Zeyrek Mosque (the former Pantocrator Monastery founded under John II Comnene by Empress Irene) and the former Church of the Holy Savior of Chora with its mosaics and paintings from the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. The 6,650-meter terrestrial wall of Theodosius II with its second line of defence, created in 447, was one of the leading references for military architecture. Hagia Sophia became a model for an entire generation of not only churches but also mosques. Simultaneously, the mosaics in palaces and places of worship of Constantinople influenced both Eastern and Western art.

While the site's key attributes demonstrating the outstanding universal value of Istanbul withstood changes and deterioration thanks to measures of protection until the mid-1980s, the timber houses in Süleymaniye and the Zeyrek quarters, as well as the Land Walls which were already in a fragile state of conservation at the time of World Heritage inscription continued to decay. Despite the pressure for change, efforts to conserve and strengthen the timber structures however enabled a significant number to survive. Their conservation have been particularly challenging given changes in the area's social structure which affected the use of these structures leading to the general degradation of the urban fabric owing to lack of maintenance and public aspiration for change. Remnants of the Land Walls in many segments were left without valorisation, until a concerted effort was made for their restoration by the municipal authorities. The method and technique of conserving these Walls however gave rise to considerable international debate. The Conservation and Management Plan aims to find a balance between conservation and change by addressing the multifarious issues threatening this World Heritage Site, and includes the city's traffic and transport problems, the urban regeneration strategy and its tourism management in relation to concerned laws and regulations.

This online seminar will discuss how tourism can be oriented to better serve heritage conservation and benefit the local inhabitants by examining the different potentials of the "Historic Areas of Istanbul" inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1985, composed of four parts:

(1) the Archeological Park and Topkapı Palace; (2) Süleymaniye Quarter with Süleymaniye Mosque Complex, bazaars and surrounding settlement of timber houses; (3) Zeyrek settlement and Zeyrek Mosque (the former church of the Pantocrator); (4) Theodosian Land Walls and areas on both sides of the wall containing remains of the former Blachernae Palace.

Amongst the queries to be addressed at this seminar are:

- Can tourism be a driving force for better legal protection for heritage and enforcement?
- Is the increasing construction of tourism related infrastructure which are transforming the cityscape, compatible with the on-going investment and effort for heritage conservation?
- How can investment for tourism be oriented to better serve local development in a more inclusive manner?
- What innovative cultural itineraries can be developed to distribute the flow of visitors from overcrowded monuments to the lesser known jewels of Istanbul?
- What awareness-raising strategies and activities are needed for the local inhabitants to benefit from their tangible and intangible heritage assets while avoiding “folklorisation” and undermining their way of life?
- What are the lessons to be learnt from the ramifications of Covid-19 in building a new strategy for tourism, and how can tourism and heritage contribute to building more resilience against future crises?