

17 Grand Bazaar

Names (also known as)

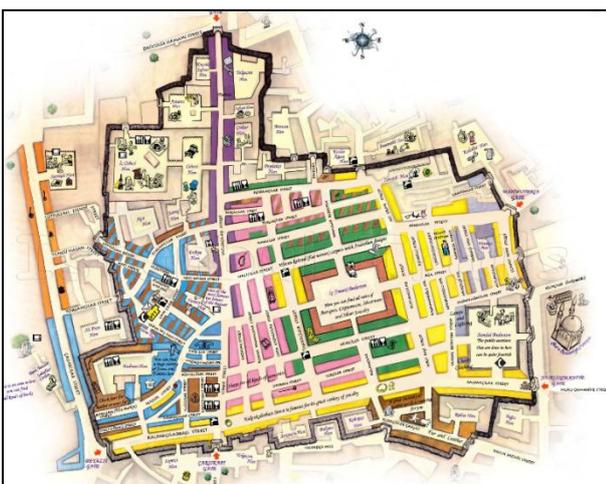
Turkish: Kapalıçarşı, meaning ‘Covered Bazaar’; also Büyük Çarşı, meaning ‘Grand Bazaar’.

Location/Description



The Grand Bazaar in Istanbul is one of the largest and oldest covered markets in the world, with 61 covered streets and over 3,000 shops which attract between 250,000 and 400,000 visitors daily. In 2014, it was listed No.1 among world's most-visited tourist attractions with 91,250,000 annual visitors.

The Grand Bazaar is located inside the walled city of Istanbul, in the district of Fatih.



Today the Grand Bazaar is a thriving complex, employing 26,000 people visited by between 250,000 and 400,000 visitors daily, and one of the major landmarks of Istanbul. It must compete with modern shopping malls

common in Istanbul, but its beauty and fascination represent a formidable advantage for it. The head of the Grand Bazaar Artisans Association claimed that the complex was in 2011 - the year of its 550th birthday - the most visited monument in the world. A restoration project starting in 2012 should renew its infrastructure, heating and lighting systems. This project should finally solve the big problems of the market: for example, in the whole Bazaar there is no proper toilet facility. Moreover, the lacks of controls in the past years allowed many dealers to remove columns and skive walls in their shops to gain space: This, together with the substitution of lead (stolen in the last years) with concrete on the market's roof, has created a great hazard when the earthquake expected in Istanbul in the next years will occur.



Brief history

The construction of the future Grand Bazaar's core started during the winter of 1455/56, shortly after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople. Sultan Mehmet II had an edifice erected devoted to the trading of textiles. It was named Cevâhir Bedesten ('Bedesten of Gems') and was also known as 'New Bedesten' in Ottoman Turkish. The word bedesten is adapted from the Persian word bezestan, derived from bez ("cloth"), and means "bazaar of the cloth sellers". The building lies on the slope of the third hill of Istanbul, between the ancient Fora of Constantine and of Theodosius. It was also near the first sultan's palace, the Old Palace (Eski Sarayı), which was also in construction in those same years, and not far from the city's bakers' quarter in Byzantine times.

The construction of the Bedesten ended in the winter of 1460/61, and the building was endowed to the waqf of the Aya Sofya Mosque. Analysis of the brickwork shows that

most of the structure originates from the second half of the 15th century.



In a market near the Bedesten, the slave trade was active, a use also carried over from Byzantine times.

At the beginning of the 17th century the Grand Bazaar had already achieved its final shape. The enormous extent of the Ottoman Empire in three continents, and the total control of road communications between Asia and Europe, rendered the Bazaar and the surrounding hans or caravanserais the hub of the Mediterranean trade. According to several European travellers, at that time, and until the first half of the 19th century, the market was unrivalled in Europe with regards to the abundance, variety and quality of the goods on sale. At that time we know from European travellers that the Grand Bazaar had a square plan, with two perpendicular main roads crossing in the middle and a third road running along the outer perimeter. In the Bazaar there were 67 roads (each bearing the name of the sellers of a particular good), several squares used for the daily prayers, 5 mosques, 7 fountains, 18 gates which were opened each day in the morning and closed in the evening (from these comes the modern name of the Market, "Closed Market". Around 1638 the Turkish traveller Evliya Çelebi gave us the most important historical description of the Bazaar and of its customs. The number of shops amounted to 3,000, plus 300 located in the surrounding hans, large caravanserais with two or three storeys round a porticoed inner courtyard, where goods could be stored and merchants could be lodged. In that period one tenth of the shops of the city were concentrated in the market and around it. For

all that, at that time the market was not yet covered.

Recurrent calamities, fires and earthquakes hit the Grand Bazaar. The first fire occurred in 1515; another in 1548. Other fires ravaged the complex in 1588, 1618 (when the Bit Pazari was destroyed), 1645, 1652, 1658, 1660 (on that occasion the whole city was devastated), 1687, 1688 (great damage occurred to the Uzun Carsi) 1695, 1701. The fire of 1701 was particularly fierce, forcing in 1730-31 Grand Vizier Nevşehirli Damad Ibrahim Pasha to rebuild several parts of the complex. In 1738 the Kızlar Ağası Beşir Ağa endowed the Fountain (still existing) near Mercan Kapi.

In this period, because of the new law against fires issued in 1696, several parts of the market between the two Bedesten were covered with vaults. Despite that, other fires ravaged the complex in 1750 and 1791. The quake of 1766 caused more damages, which were repaired by the Court Chief Architect Ahmet a year later.

The last major catastrophe happened in 1894: a strong earthquake that rocked Istanbul.

In 1914 the Sandal Bedesten, whose handlers of textile goods had been ruined by the European competition, was acquired by the city of Istanbul and, starting one year later, was used as an auction house, mainly for carpets. In 1927 the individual parts of the bazaar and the streets got official names. The last fires of bazaar happened in 1943 and 1954, and the related restorations were finished on 28 July 1959.

The last restoration of the complex took place in 1980. On that occasion, advertising posters around the market were also removed.

Sources:

Wikipedia

(Compiler – Jim Cowie)