

Insider Istanbul

(A city's best-kept secrets often lie behind closed doors.
These four trendsetters have the keys)



Book club: The crew at bar-restaurant Joke Perestroyka.

1. İzzet Çapa The Nightlife Guru

This oft-proclaimed “naughty boy of nightlife” has launched 40 bars and clubs since his Dedikodulu Cafe hit the scene in the late '90s, and he currently has five in operation. Each nightspot is different: “At one you’ll dance with belly dancers, at another to tracks mixed by a famous Dubai DJ,” says Çapa. The common denominator is an emphasis on mixing East with West and on eclectic gourmet food. Find the man making his nightly rounds at **Long-table Istanbul**, in the Sofa Hotel in Nişantaşı (123 Tesvikiye Cad.), at **Al Jamal** (3 Taskisla Cad.), and at **Joke Perestroyka**, in Beşiktaş (Suleyman Seba Cad.).

2. Mihda Koray The Gallerist

She launched the much-buzzed-about URA! gallery three years ago to coincide with Istanbul’s 2007 Biennial, but Koray is already looking for a bigger space for her spectacular shows. Some exhibitions, like those of graphic artist Raymond Pettibon and videographer Nam June Paik, could be considered conventional; others—concerts, installations, and head-banging shows—most definitely are not. “A couple of people were in neck braces the day after a double performance by London guitar rockers Hey Colossus and Part Chimp, and everyone in the audience was topless, including a few girls,” Koray says (ura-project.org).

3. Sefer Çağlar The Interior Designer

Many of Istanbul’s chic spots, including Bosphorus bar Anjelique and the House Café Kanyon, bear the stamp of Çağlar’s Autoban, the design company he founded with Seyhan Özdemir and which has given the city’s old-school landscape a new edge. Çağlar’s favorite development? The **Witt Istanbul Suites**, a stylish hotel in the city’s happening Cihangir neighborhood, whose apartment-style quarters have an organic look and are outfitted with the designer’s custom furniture. “Each room is a multifunctional space where guests can eat, rest, socialize, and sleep,” says Çağlar (90-212-393-7900; suites, \$271–\$366).

4. Müge Ersin The Fashion Designer

One of the city’s best-loved women’s wear designers, Ersin has been running her label **Atelier Yume** (“Studio of Dreams”) for six years. But when she first opened a showroom in Maslak, an industrial zone known for its car dealerships and repair shops, the location was considered outré. Now, Ersin says, “it’s become popular with artists and sculptors and is a real bohemian escape for my customers who like feeling they’ve shopped off the beaten path.” For spring and summer, these pioneers can expect colorful Art Deco–influenced pieces (Ataturk oto sanayi sitesi, 2. Kısım 19. Sokak No. 617; 90-212-276-1782).

Reported by Colin Barraclough, Ondine Cohane (Dream Team), Eimear Lynch (Passport Control), Gisela Williams (The Buzz), and Hanya Yanagihara. Edited by Kate Maxwell