

GOING INTERNATIONAL

Istanbul Clinical Clerkship Experience

by *Hatice Soysal*

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As part of our studies at the Medical University of Vienna, we are doing clinical electives for 12 months in our final year of medical school. It is up to you, whether you want to do these abroad or at home. How awesome is this, that you can do the one thing you love and have the freedom to do it wherever you want?

This was the perfect opportunity to combine the experience of working in a foreign country and travel. That is why me and two of my best friends decided to do a clerkship in the emergency department at the [Cerrahpasa University Hospital](#) in Istanbul. We applied 6 months prior at the [international relations office](#) as free movers and got accepted all at the same time.

Application and enrolment

I am of Turkish descent, but born and raised in Germany, so in terms of the language there were no preparations needed prior to the departure. All in all, it was a very uncomplicated application procedure. Our CV, a motivational letter and a student application form were needed, which we emailed to the international relations office. It is possible to do this clinical elective in every term, but twelve weeks in one piece at most.

We had the amazing opportunity to stay at the female dormitory on campus, which was literally a 100m walkway to the emergency department.

The day after our final exam at the end of the 5th year of our studies, we flew to Istanbul with Turkish airlines. If you have not experienced a Turkish airlines flight, I highly recommend it, as you are captured in the magical atmosphere of Turkey with the music, food and friendliness of the staff as soon as you step step on the airplane.

The emergency department at the Cerrahpasa University Hospital

The [Cerrahpasa University hospital](#) is one of the oldest in Turkey. It currently has a bed capacity of 1042. The emergency department at Cerrahpasa is divided up into internal medicine and trauma, with 12 beds for the acute observation of patients. You can choose freely between those two, so we did 5 weeks of internal medicine and 3 weeks of trauma. Since there were two shifts, one morning and a 16h night shift, we could choose when and on which shift we wanted to work. It became clear pretty soon that we had the most exciting cases coming in at night, so we did three 16h night shifts every week.

The first day was only introductory, so we organized our paperwork at the office of international relations and bought our scrubs (a T-shirt and matching long pants) which were obligatory. They had scrubs in the most amazing colors that you can imagine, and you were allowed to wear any color that your heart desires! No white coats were necessary in the summer heat. Together with their own medical students, so-called 'interns', we saw every new patient, took a thorough history and clinical examination and presented them to the residents. The residents then asked us for our further therapy or diagnostic plan. Together we decided further diagnostics and medical therapy. It was particularly easier for us to communicate with the patients, since most of them do not speak English, although the doctors were very fluent in English. For non-Turkish students, the communication with the patients on the wards must be easier though, when you already know a bit of the past medical history already and have more time for every new patient. In fact, there were German medical students on their Erasmus elective on the wards that summer doing very well.

For the first time we had the opportunity to work independently. The fact that the residents trust your first impression, assessment and plan on a new patient gives you a lot of confidence. I have never felt so welcomed by any other hospital staff than at Cerrahpasa. All the doctors, the nurses, the security and the secretary assistants treated us like family and we were very happy that we chose to do our internship there. In the backyard is a small cafeteria with coffee/tea and sandwiches. We went there every shift for our usual coffee breaks or ice cream treats with the staff (since it was mid-summer). Every time we went there, we were treated like family. Also, a big part of the family were the cats, living in the yard with their kittens, whom everyone, staff and patients with their family members, fed on a regular basis. They sat with us during our breaks and put a smile on everyone's face just by watching them play around.

Unfortunately, the clinic itself was very run-down. But the only thing I can say is that the staff made up for everything. Since I had no high expectations whatsoever, I was very grateful for the opportunity to work there. Because, the only thing that really matters in my opinion is how the people treat you as a colleague and as an individual, the rest will sort itself out. To this point, I have never been so happy with my workplace and was really looking forward to every shift! We missed the clinic on our off-days so much.

Do not have high expectations anywhere you go, and you will be treated as you treat others. That is the most important thing I have learned on this rotation.

Our accommodation

We lived on campus with the Cerrahpasa medical students in the girls-only dormitory which was an amazing experience and only cost us 20 Turkish Lira per day. We met a lot of friendly faces and immediately felt like we were part of the family. Not only the amazing evening talks with the girls but also the intermittent water damage, storms and power blackouts at the dorm were unforgettable.

Traveling in Istanbul

Istanbul is such a vibrant, but also overcrowded city. Just trying to get from one point to another in this huge city is an experience. You try to take the bus and unexpectedly roll into the traffic of the most important football game of the season you never knew of.

In this city you have to expect the unexpected. But at the end of the day it is so worth it, when you can watch the sunset at the Bosphorus, eat your Simit or feed the sea-gulls with it. The fresh fruit and vegetables at the local bazaars are one of a kind. We ate at a local bistro, which is run by a family who sold a lot of different home cooked meals every day and it was the most delicious food I had ever eaten - I am still reminiscing about it. There are so many great cafes, breakfast and dessert places,

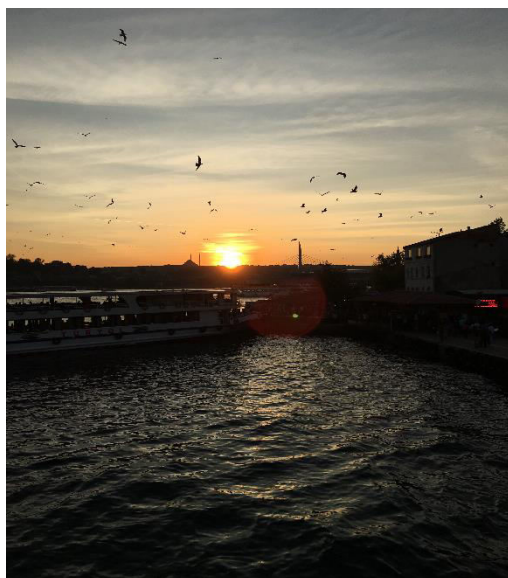
restaurants to discover and enjoy in Istanbul, especially with a Bosphorus view. To mention some: [Lokma](#), [Emirgan Sütis](#), [Dem Karaköy](#), Boon Café in Cengelköy, [Tarihi Cinaralti Cay Bahcesi](#)... and many more. But don't forget the old palaces from the ottoman empire, [the Topkapi](#) and the many famous museums, which will throw you back in time and make you feel enchanted. The great mosques with the most beautiful adhan will always have a special place in my heart. If I had the chance, I would do it all over again.

The costs per month

Flight:	Ca. 250 €
Accommodation (per person):	Ca. 300€ per month
Food and drink:	Ca. 200 € per month
Transport:	Ca. 60 € per month
Fees for 8 Weeks elective:	Ca. 60 €
Activities (museums etc.)	Ca. 50 €
Total:	Ca. 850-950 € per month

Interesting Websites *Coffee/ Tee House in old Karaköy*

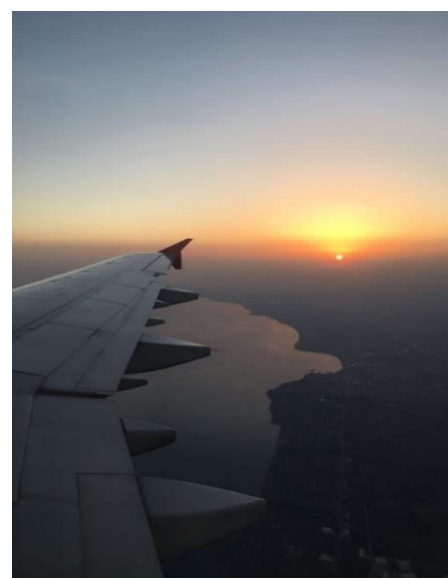
- [Cerrahpasa Medical Faculty](#)
 - [International Relations Office](#): Here you can apply
- [Things to do and see](#): Get interesting information about Turkey and read up on our history, culture and art, nature and geography, traditional culinary culture, real Turkish lifestyle and more
- [Topkapi Palace Museum](#): Museum in Istanbul that exhibits the imperial collections of the Ottoman Empire and maintains an extensive collection of books and manuscripts in its library
- Where to eat
 - [Lokma](#): Here you have the best view to the unique bosphorus in Rumelian Fortress area
 - [Emigran Sütis](#): offers a rich food menu and breakfast foods from its own farm in addition to the milky desserts
 - [Dem Karaköy](#): Istanbul's teahouse
 - [Tarihi Cinaralti Cay Bahcesi](#): teahouse in Istanbul



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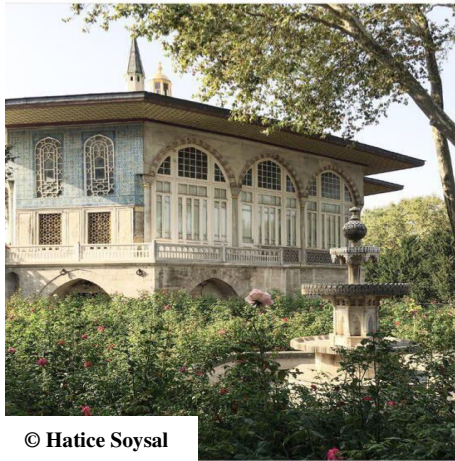
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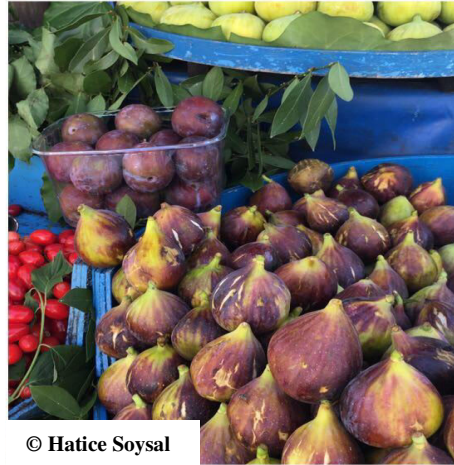
© Hatice Soysal - View over the Bosphorus



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© Hatice Soysal - One of the hospital cats

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