2026 iGeo – Istanbul, Türkiye

Participants: 48 teams, 184 students, 88 team leaders

Results

Gold Medals

1. Andrey Yenbakhtov – Kazakhstan
2. De-An Chen – USA
3. Artur Richter – Germany
4. Kaleb Iash Elnathan Naibaho – Indonesia
5. Lukas Petrikas – Lithuania
6. Amina Ayanbyek – Mongolia
7. Ryann Win Khaing – Singapore
8. William Liao – USA
9. Daryn Bekbol – Kazakhstan
10. Rafif Adinata Ramadhan – Indonesia
11. Arseni Turovich – Belarus
12. Petar Tolimir – Serbia
13. Ugnius Vilimas – Lithuania
14. Renārs Spriņģis – Latvia
15. Teng Tse Yuan Marcus – Singapore
16. Anna Armitage – New Zealand

Team Ranking (By Score)

1. Lithuania
2. Kazakhstan
3. USA
4. Singapore
5. Latvia
6. Türkiye
7. Hungary
8. Indonesia
9. Romania
10. Philippines

Team Ranking (by Medals)

Team	Gold	Silver	Bronze	TOTAL
Lithuania	2	2	0	4
Kazakhstan	2	2	0	4
USA	2	1	1	4
Singapore	2	1	1	4
Latvia	1	2	1	4
Turkiye	0	4	0	4
Hungary	0	3	1	4
Romania	0	2	2	4
Philippines	0	1	3	4
China Taipei	0	1	3	4

Poster Winners

1st Place: Iran
2nd Place: China Hong Kong
3rd Place: Slovakia
Favourite Poster by Popular Vote: Indonesia, Singapore, Croatia

International Geography Olympiad 2026 – İstanbul

Organization, Participation and the Olympiad Flow

The 22nd International Geography Olympiad – iGeo 2026 – was held in Istanbul from 11 to 17 August 2026 under the auspices of the International Geographical Union (IGU) and hosted by the Turkish Geographical Society. As one of the world's most prestigious geography competitions for secondary school students, the Olympiad brought together 184 participants from 48 countries for a week of academic competition, field-based learning, cultural interaction, and international collaboration. The Dedeman Istanbul Hotel in Gayrettepe served as the venue. More than a conventional academic event, iGeo 2026 demonstrated how geography can be experienced as an applied discipline. The combination of analytical assessment, real-world observation, and intercultural exchange created an educational environment in which students engaged with geography not only as learners, but also as young researchers.

The Olympiad was prepared by a Local Organising Committee (LOC) headed by Prof. Dr. Barbaros Gönençgil in collaboration withe the Steering Committee of the iGeo Commission.



Istanbul as the Center of the Olympiad

The selection of Istanbul gave the 2026 Olympiad a distinctive geographical identity. Few cities offer such a rich intersection of physical, historical, and human geography within a single metropolitan landscape. The Bosphorus, the connection between Europe and Asia, dense transportation networks, coastal systems, historical neighborhoods, and rapidly changing urban environments collectively transformed the city into an open laboratory for geographical observation.



Rather than serving simply as a host city, Istanbul became an essential educational component of the Olympiad. Participants encountered geographical concepts directly through the urban environment, observing relationships between land use, population distribution, environmental pressures, and urban development in ways that extend beyond classroom learning. This integration of the city into the educational programme became one of the defining characteristics of iGeo 2026.

The fieldwork exercise made this link explicit. It was set in the Golden Horn area, and one of its tasks dealt with urban regeneration at the Zindan Sokak and Perşembe Pazarı site, where students worked on a live example of change in a historic waterfront district.

The 2026 Olympiad Flow

The Olympiad followed a carefully structured programme that balanced academic assessment with collaborative and cultural experiences. Throughout the week, participants progressed

through the three official competition stages: the written test, the multimedia test, and the fieldwork exercise. Alongside these, they took part in ceremonies, poster presentations, international meetings, Culture Night and cultural visits that encouraged interaction beyond the competitive setting. The programme closed with an awards ceremony at which medals were presented.
This progression reflected the philosophy of iGeo: academic excellence, practical investigation, and international engagement were treated as equally important dimensions of the Olympiad experience. Delegations could also extend their stay with post-event excursions to Cappadocia and to Pamukkale and Ephesus.

International Participation
The scale of participation was one of the event's greatest strengths. Forty eight countries were represented by 184 students, all of whom had qualified through demanding national selection systems before reaching the international stage. Consequently, the Olympiad assembled an exceptionally strong cohort of young geographers representing diverse educational traditions and geographical perspectives.
The academic community extended well beyond the competitors themselves. Team leaders, observers, teachers, university academics, judges, and members of the Steering Committee contributed to a collaborative environment where ideas about geography education, assessment methods, and research practices could be exchanged across national boundaries.



Cultural diversity was equally important. Students brought experiences from different climates, landscapes, cities, and societies, allowing discussions of geography to become genuinely global. Working within a common framework while sharing local perspectives strengthened both academic dialogue and intercultural understanding.

Educational and International Impact

The programme continued beyond the official competition through poster presentations, the Culture Night, team events, and informal exchanges that encouraged participants to communicate their own geographical research and learn from their peers. These activities reinforced the idea that international education develops not only through examinations, but also through collaboration and shared experience.

Overall, iGeo 2026 in Istanbul successfully integrated rigorous academic competition with field-based learning and global cooperation. Hosted by the Turkish Geographical Society, the Olympiad provided an educational model that connected geographical knowledge, practical investigation, digital competence, and intercultural exchange within one internationally recognized event.

Conclusion

The 22nd International Geography Olympiad in Istanbul demonstrated what an international academic competition can achieve when it goes beyond the traditional examination format. It brought together some of the strongest young geography students from around the world and challenged them to think, observe, analyse and communicate as young researchers. The combination of written assessment, fieldwork and multimedia analysis gave a broad picture of the students' geographical knowledge, practical skills and international connections.

The Istanbul setting added a particular strength to the event. The city's geographical complexity provided an exceptional environment in which students could see the relationship between geographical theory and real-world conditions. At the same time, the international character of the event ensured that the experience extended well beyond academic competition. Students returned to their countries with new knowledge, new perspectives and connections with peers from around the world.

For these reasons, iGeo 2026 should be regarded as more than a successful geography competition. It was a substantial international educational experience and an effective platform for developing the next generation of geographers. Its combination of academic rigour, field-based learning, digital skills and intercultural exchange provides a strong model for the future development of international geography education.