



Park and glide: gulets are the traditional way to explore Turkey's shoreline THINKSTOCK

Coastal Turkey

*With sparkling bays, staggering ruins, thrilling watersports, and chic hotels, there's plenty to enhance a beach break, says **Laura Holt***

There are few simpler pleasures than strolling through a Turkish town at night, after a long, hot day spent gazing out at the turquoise seas. As the muezzin's call to prayer wafts through the warm air, your only concern will be where to go for dinner. A rooftop restaurant perhaps, looking out across the glinting lights of the surrounding bay. Or maybe something more intimate, in an atmospheric courtyard garden, garlanded with low-hanging lanterns.

With 7,199km of coastline, picking the perfect resort can be tricky, although most of Turkey's coastal activity is concentrated around its western and southern shores, where the Aegean and the Mediterranean meet. The Black Sea coast is much less focused on tourism.

Planning a trip to Turkey became more complicated last year, when compulsory e-visas were introduced. These must be purchased in advance online at evisa.gov.tr, with a 90-day, multiple-entry permit costing US\$20 (£13). Yet the launch of this summer of BA flights from Gatwick to two of the coast's major hubs – Dalaman and Bodrum – has made accessing the region even easier (0844 493 0787; ba.com).

There are destinations to suit most travellers here, whether you hanker for the boutique hotels and beach clubs of Bodrum, or the quieter coves of the Bozburun Peninsula. The tiny town of Alacati has long lured windsurfers to the

blustery Cesme peninsula. If scuba-diving is more your thing, consider the charming resort of Kas. Further west, the lively resort of Oludeniz combines a much-photographed beach with an ideal destination for paragliders. Daniel Craig launched himself off the town's 1,969m Mount Baba in the 2012 Bond film *Skyfall*.

Boat lovers are also well served by numerous "blue cruises" along the coast, which take place on traditional wooden *gulets*. Trips often depart from Fethiye for a three-night journey along the coast, stopping at Oludeniz, Butterfly Valley, Kas, Kalkan and/or the sunken city of Kekova, before docking in at Demre and travelling by road to the ruins of Olympos, an ancient city left by the Lycians.

Indeed, the entire Turkish coastline is littered with archaeological intrigues, most notably at the Greek city of Ephesus. Europe's most complete classical metropolis is an unmissable detour for anyone visiting the central Aegean coast. Despite having undergone 150 years of excavation, only one-fifth of the 10th-century city that once stood on the site has so far been revealed.

Those who prefer to take in their history on two feet will be awed by the Lycian Way, a 539km long-distance walking route that runs from Oludeniz to Geyikbayiri (cultureroutesinturkey.com/ the-lycian-way). It traces the settlements of the Lycian people eastwards via graves and ruins, with opportunities to swim and kayak along the way.



The big providers of package holidays to Turkey are Thomson (020 3451 2695; thomson.co.uk) and Thomas Cook (0844 855 0515; thomascook.com). Thomson has online deals such as a week's B&B in a "Small and Friendly" hotel in Fethiye, departing Leeds/Bradford on 3 July, for £224 per person. Even in the school holidays, deals are available: Thomas Cook has four nights in Marmaris, flying from Stansted on 30 July, for £275 self-catering. Other operators to the Turkish coast include Anatolian Sky (0844 273 3141; anatoliansky.co.uk) and Exclusive Escapes (020 8605 3500; exclusiveescapes.co.uk).

Bodrum and beyond

The town of Bodrum (right) and its surrounding peninsula are known for their luxury hotels and beach clubs, which come alive in summer when the well-heeled, party crowd descends.

Upmarket places to soak up the 24/7 atmosphere include Ibiza-style club Halikarnas (00 90 530 372 29 85; halikarnas.com.tr), with its Secret Garden restaurant designed by Jade Jagger.

Among the swathe of high-end hotels to have sprung up in the area in recent months are the

Jumeirah Bodrum Palace (00 90 252 311 0030; jumeirah.com), which opened 1 May, and Mandarin Oriental Bodrum (00 90 252 311 18 88; mandarinoriental.com/bodrum), which launched last year.

Swissôtel Resort Bodrum Beach (00 800 6379 4771; swissotel.com) opened this month on a private beach in Turgutreis, a 25-minute drive from Bodrum. See "Where to stay" overleaf for more options.

Anyone with a desire to sample the quieter side of the Turkish coast should



head instead to the twin peninsulas of Datca and Bozburun, south of Bodrum. Sea breezes, beautiful beaches and olive groves define the landscape of Datca, whereas Bozburun's pine-backed curving coastline is more rustic.

Simpson Travel (0208 003 6557; simpsontravel.com) offers villa holidays in the region, with a stay at the sea-facing Simpson Secret Bozburun Peninsula starting at £1,735 for a week in July, based on two sharing, with flights.

Kas and Kalkan

Kas and Kalkan, which are a 25-minute drive apart along a stunning stretch of Mediterranean road, make for an ideal twin-centre escape.

Kas is the quieter and arguably more charming of the two, the small streets off its main square lined with lantern-lit restaurants. Kas is also a centre for scuba-diving (right). Dragoman (00 90 242 836 3614; dragoman-turkey.com) offers week-long packages with

bed and breakfast accommodation, equipment, six dives and a guide from €242. Flights to Turkey are not included in this price.

For more bustle, head to Kalkan, which is known for its rooftop bars and restaurants. New for this season is Botanik Garden Bar (00 90 535 470 9099), which uses herbs grown on site in its garden to produce drinks.

Thomson (020 3451 2688; thomson.co.uk) offers a week at the



Samira Resort Hotel and Apartments in Kalkan for £353pp in July including flights from Glasgow to Dalaman.

From both Kas and Kalkan, you can access Patara, home to a ruined Lycian city including an impressive amphitheatre. Nearby, you'll find one of Turkey's longest beaches – an impressive 18km long. Kaputas, a small stretch of sand, reached by walking down 180 steps, is also accessible from both towns.

Cesme and Alacati

The windswept Aegean peninsula of Cesme is Turkey's top destination for windsurfers, so popular that it draws professionals annually for the PWA World Cup (17 to 22 August; pwaworldtour.com).

To sample the area's watersports, stay in the atmospheric town of Alacati, close to the bay. Alacati Surf Paradise Club has a handful of schools (right) operating between May and October. Five windsurfing lessons with Bu Bi Surf School (00 90 232 716 68 76; bubisurf.com) costs from TL530 (£130) per person.

More recently, the town has lured the chic Istanbul set to its smart hotels, enticing boutiques, excellent resta bougainvillea-draped houses.

In Alacati, you're a taxi ride away from the white sands of Ilica Beach or a two-hour journey away from the ruins of Ephesus. Numerous operators offer tours to the former capital of Asia Minor; No Frills Ephesus Tours (00 90 232 892 88 28; nofrillsephesus.com) offers a half-day excursion for €40 per person. Departing from Selcuk, it includes transport, guiding and entrance fees.

