

Turkish Delight

A Yachtsman's paradise opens up to western tourism



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Turkey, at the eastern end of the Mediterranean has been, for many years, a haven for the cruising yachtsman. Now as the country opens up its doors to western tourism, charter boats and modern marinas are improving the access for vacationing yachtsmen. Michael Howorth visits the Gulf of Fethiye, an area rich in safe sailing, short island hops and different anchorages to discover the true Turkish Delights.

The delights of all that Turkey has to offer, began for us in Marmaris. The Ottoman Castle, built by Suleyman the Magnificent in 1522, dominates the town, and is a haven for tourists who, in July and August of each year, flock to the pretty town with its many restaurants, bars and hotels that dominate attractive beaches lined with palm trees. It is also the yachting centre of Turkey, and the huge Netsel Marina complex nestles inside an almost landlocked bay lined with pine forests that reach down to the sea in a Norwegian fiord-like setting. It was here that British Admiral Horatio Nelson assembled his fleet before sailing to Egypt and the battle of the Nile where he destroyed the French and lost his right arm.

South of Marmaris lies, Göcek and the Gulf of Fethiye and, rather conveniently, between the two, lies Ekitnick Limani; a bay studded with five or so delightful anchorages. One of these is aptly named Marina Bay and features a small dock built of local rock. Towering above, high up on the cliff sits the Marina Bay Yacht Club, which boasts a splendid bar restaurant and access to this culinary delight is achieved by the somewhat exciting and rather adventurous ride on a home made, self drive, funicular railway. In the same area, another bay boasts the tiny hamlet of Ekitnick with a beautiful sandy beach, and the other anchorages offer nothing, which of course is their attraction. Each of these tiny coves offers seclusion, peace and quite and a wonderful opportunity to swim, snorkel or dive in the clear deep water. Scuba diving is restricted in Turkey and has to be undertaken with specially appointed guides to ensure divers do not remove any of the antiquities from below the surface. It is amazing how many there are and on one dive we made, we quite lost count of the number of broken amphorae that we encountered.

Another must do tour also uses the services of one of the many local operators. It takes in the Dalyan river and surrounding nature reserves with its reed filled deltas, turtles, hawks, herons and kingfishers which all find plenty to eat because the delta is the home to breeding fish such as Mullet and Bass. The river was once the entrance to the ancient port of Canus, which now lies two miles inside the silted up estuary. Amongst the many attractions this ancient city has to offer; are the astonishing tombs that are literally hewn out of the rock that form the cliff face opposite Dalyan. Having finished walking the streets of ancient Canus it was time to re board our tour boat for the visit to visit Ilica; famous for thermal springs, sulphur baths and bubbling hot mud. It was fun to get in and wallow in the warm goo and the experience is said to be very therapeutic even if somewhat messy!

The Gulf Of Fethiye is a roughly 'T' shaped gulf with the ports of Göcek and Fethiye at the head of



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Food Comes to You ▲
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each cross piece. Göcek is; at heart, a fishing village, but over the years it has enlarged to embrace fleets of bareboat charter yachts and fleets of crewed Turkish Gulets. The town now boasts four marinas the newest of which at Port Göcek was opened in July 2000. Using Göcek as a base, we cruised around the many islands snuggled around the almost enclosed waters of Skopia Liman. Deep water abounds here and there is very little that could be considered in the way of dangers to navigation. The islands all rise steeply from the seabed and their high cliffs are covered in pine and oleander trees. The wind briskly comes off or around the islands to give exhilarating sailing without the chance of heavy seas, but the real plus side lies, in the choice of anchorages and moorings. We had over thirty different creeks or bays to choose from, it would have been easy to take a different location every night of our vacation and still have plenty to spare. Many of these bays have simple restaurants serving local fare, some are more glamorous than others but you seem to get what you pay for and most offer very good value for money. Some bays are close to sites of antiquity and it is fun to leave the water for a while clambering over ruins from Roman occupation and even earlier. In one site, aptly named Ruin Bay, in the extreme south west of Skopia Liman we found the ruins of an old building partially submerged, and explored it by wadding and swimming with our snorkels. These ruins are reputed to be those of a Turkish Hamman or bath house as used by Cleopatra who



Kalkan, Turkey
Harbour Scene Old Port Kalkan



Gullet at Anchor
Marina Bay Turkey

The Traditional Gulet

Gulets are of a singular design of Turkey's indigenous sea going vessel which blend practicality and tradition in a relaxed style. Over the years gulets have evolved from traditional fishing and cargo carrying craft into their present profile with their more pronounced broad beam and wide sweeping decks. The modern so called traditional gulet owes a great deal to the demands of mass tourism and is said by purists to be as time-honoured as Elvis Presely, and both seem to date from the same era! Gulets are constructed of wood mainly in the shipyards of Borum Bozburun Marmaris and Istanbul and along the black sea coast. The Boats are fitted with motors yet most have fully functional rigs which work well with the wind abaft the beam. Most of their cruising is however under power with the sails hoisted. Each gullet carries between eight and twelve passengers and three to four local crew depending on the size of craft. Under charter these vessels generally offer passengers separate twin berth accommodation although bathroom facilities are seldom en suite. Passengers are expected to sit back, enjoy and relax in the warm weather as the crew work around them. The closeness of the small group of people on board promotes an atmosphere of friendship and sharing. The relationship between the passengers and crew tends to be very casual and relaxed, not at all like the more formal chartering of a mega yacht. Gulets tend to be booked by the cabin and so it is often the case that a couple would end up sharing the boat with three other couples but there is nothing to stop a group of friends or an entire family from chartering an entire gulet. Gulets are chartered through Charter Yacht brokers or holiday travel companies specialising in Turkish holidays. Some hotels have associated gulets and it is possible to split a two week holiday with one week being shore based and the other a week afloat.

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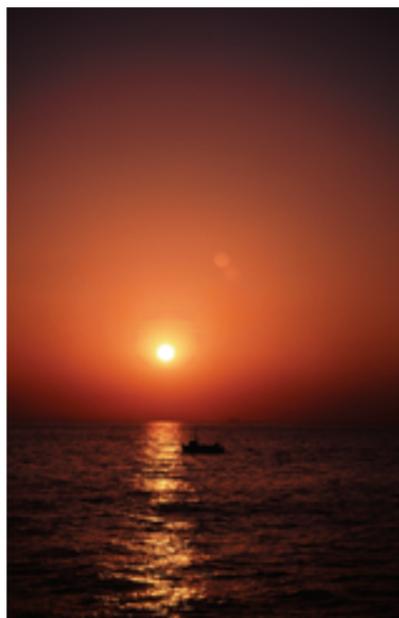
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Mythology of Göcek

Local legend has it that Göcek is said to have been the home of Daedalus and his son Icarus. Daedalus was the architect and sculptor who built the labyrinth on Crete. Mythology has it that Daedalus carved the figure of a cow headed man and that he created wings for his son using bird feathers mixed with and held together with wax or tar. For creating the cow headed figure they were banished from Göcek by the local inhabitants and Icarus flew away carrying his father with him. Unfortunately Icarus flew too near to the sun and his wings of wax and feathers melted and the pair dropped into the sea and were drowned in what was the first aeronautical disaster.



is said to have visited here on two occasions once with Julius Caesar and then again with Mark Anthony.

Ruins of old wharves used in the days of the Ottoman Empire and her cargo ships are found in nearby Sasala whilst Tomb Bay has, you've guessed it, some spectacular rock tombs each with its own imposing façade carved into the rocks high up on the cliff face.

Whilst it was very tempting to stay longer in the safety of Skopia Liman we also wanted to enjoy more of Turkey's Mediterranean coast. South from Göcek, we visited the popular destination around Olu Deniz with its cluster of little islands, set around an enclosed bay which has now been closed off to water traffic for environmental reasons. There are many anchorages here and the most popular has to be between the island of Gemel and the mainland. This island was once home to a large local community of cave dwellers, and clambering around the remains of their colony was great fun and good value given the modest entrance fee. Nearby bays offer restaurants ashore but in these waters, it is not uncommon for food to come and find you. Throughout the day, small boats often approach but never hassle, each has their own different offerings to tempt you with. Fresh rounds of oven hot loaves arrive at breakfast, ice-cream arrives just as it's getting too hot in the sun and as the pangs of hunger approach at lunchtime there beside you is a boat with a lady selling local pancakes filled with fresh cheese and local herbs. Since each of these is made to order right in front of you inside their little boat, the glorious smell is far too good to for you to let these vendors pass you by. Later in the day local fishermen call as they pass and display their catch and offer it for sale.

Of the two days spent a day in this anchorage we used one to visit the nearby fine sandy beaches of Olu Denize, said to be the best in Turkey. Then after letting go of the long line that held our stern fast to the rocks ashore, we slowly weighed anchor next morning and



headed southeast for a half a day and discovered Kalkan, an ancient port revitalised with pretty painted homes and shops dotted around the picturesque harbour. The quayside bars and restaurants are full of visitors watching the yachts and gulets all full of happy holidaymakers looking at the pretty landscape. Kalkan is one of the many towns which boast a Turkish Hamman or bath, and it has to be said that after a long tiring day sailing or playing tourist there is nothing quite like pampering oneself in a Turkish bath to relax and refresh the body. First you work up a sweat in hot room then enjoy the body scrub down, then relax with an olive oil soap massage, followed by a rinse off with cold water before a vigorous oil massage from a burly Turk. The whole process lasts about an hour and half and leaves you relaxed in mind body and sole. Many Hammans offer the choice of mixed or single sex rooms and the complete feast generally costs about \$20. Truly, this the ultimate Turkish Delight. **✎**

About the authors.

Frances and Michael Howorth are a freelance photo-journalist team who specialize in travel features on the ultra large yacht and boutique cruise ship market. They are regular contributors to Yacht Charters and Vacations and have been traveling together for the last twenty five years initially working aboard cruise liners then as crew aboard luxury private and charter yachts. Their voyages of discovery have taken them to Africa North and South America, the Caribbean, the Mediterranean, India and plenty of islands in between with such variety as to include Tristan de Cunha, St Helena and the Maldives Islands.

Michael is a member of the British Guild of Travel Writers and is a qualified Captain certificated to command large luxury yachts up to 3000 tons. Photographs taken by Frances have featured on the covers of travel magazines and in the pages of the yachting press as well as other quality periodicals. The couple have written several books mostly about yachts, yachting and survival at sea.

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