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TURKEY FOR SUNSEEKERS

Hedonism or history? Along the Turquoise Coast you get both – and a tan at the same time



Every visitor is dazzled by Turkey's 'Turquoise' Coast. There's the colour, of course: 480km of blue ribbon-like Mediterranean and Aegean coastline that shimmers around southwest Turkey's edges. But there's much more here too – it's both an archaeologist's dream and a hedonist's playground. Time to embark on a voyage of discovery...

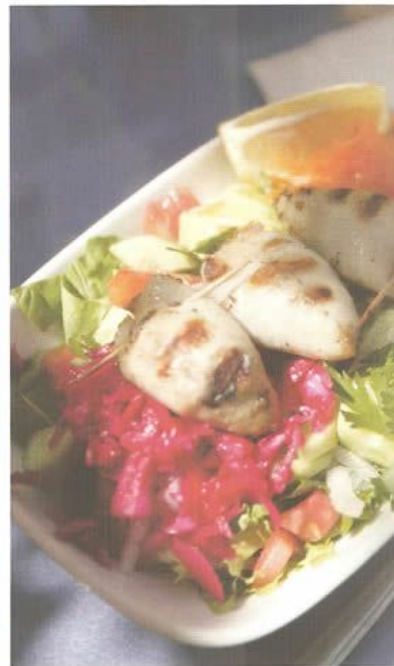
By Linda Cookson

WHAT TO SEE & DO

● You can't come to the Turquoise Coast and not spend at least a day at sea on a traditional gulet vessel – excursions leave Fethiye or Göcek for the Gulf of Fethiye, to explore its 12 islands: **densely wooded in shades of deepest green, they rise from the water like pieces of a jigsaw.** Day trips cost about £30. To book, wander down to the harbour front and take your pick.

● Voyage into history on an excursion to Kekova Island from the photogenic harbour towns of Kalkan or Kaş (about £30). **Pooling over submerged Lycian tombs in your glass-bottomed boat,** you'll pass Kale, an exquisite little settlement topped by a fairytale Crusader fortress. Along the coast of Kekova Island itself, the ruins of the Benik Şehir – a sunken Byzantine city drowned by an earthquake – are still visible.

TURKEY FOR SUNSEEKERS



WHERE TO STAY
Onur Pension (00 90 242 874 2071, www.onurpension.com). Onur has run this simple *pensione* on the harbourfront at Uçağız (near Kale) for more than 20 years. With wooden floors, ceilings and balconies, some rooms feel like the cabins on a ship. Doubles from £31. B&B.

GREAT VALUE
Dalyan Garden Pension (00 90 252 284 3196, www.dalyangardenpension.co.uk). A garden oasis in the heart of the Dalyan delta – and a 15-minute walk from Dalyan itself – this 10-room *pensione* is a delight. Drink cocktails under the banana trees, or cool off in the palm-edged swimming pool. Doubles from £40. B&B.

Gardenia Boutique Hotel (Hukümet Caddesi 41, Kaş; 00 90 242 836 2368, www.gardeniahotel-kaş.com). Omer and Nevine have created this stylish one-off – packed with tasteful artwork – in a central but quiet location near Kaş town's beach. All rooms have private balconies, and the gardens are enchanting, tumbling down to a communal terrace with outstanding sea views. Seafont doubles from £85. B&B.

Ece Boutique Hotel (00 90 252 613 2860, www.sovalyeisland.com). Tiny Sövalye Island, 15 minutes by water taxi from Fethiye, is tranquil and traffic-free. Ece is a charming family-run hotel, named after the owners'

daughter, right on the waterfront. Borrow a canoe, and paddle the coastline before breakfast. Doubles from £90. B&B.

WORTH THE EXTRA
Hotel Villa Mahal (Kalkan; 00 90 242 844 3268, www.villamahal.com). Need somewhere luxurious to moor your yacht? Try this glamorous resort, the chicest in the region. Set on an olive-terraced hillside over the bay of Kalkan, Villa Mahal's 13 rooms and suites have floor-to-ceiling windows, mosaic bathtubs and snowy white linen. Drink wine on your private terrace while the sunset melts gold and red into the Mediterranean. Doubles from £157. B&B.

Mehmet Ali Aga Mansion Hotel (Datça; 00 90 252 712 9257, www.kocaev.com). This Ottoman mansion on the Reşadiye peninsula was once the home of a local chieftain: it's a hoard of antiquities, tucked amid walled rose gardens and citrus orchards. If 'palatial' is your style, choose one of the Mansion rooms. Mansion doubles from £335. B&B.

WHERE TO EAT
Deniz Kızı (Söğüt; 00 90 252 496 5032, www.sogutdenizkizi.com). For succulent grilled octopus, meze and wonderful sticky puds, stop at this unpretentious local near the waterfront in the quiet village of Söğüt on the Bozburun peninsula. When Muhammet turns off the lights in the eucalyptus tree, it's time to go to bed. Meze selection around £5pp.

Meğri Restaurant (Carpý Caddesi 13/A, Fethiye; 00 90 252 614 4047). This popular *lokanta*- (traditional buffet) style restaurant in the bazaar is a must-visit institution. It serves speciality kebabs and unusual meze to share, including smoked aubergine and garlic watercress. Mains around £7.

Bahçe (Anıt Mezar Karsisi, Kaş; 00 90 242 836 2370). Look left at the 'Lion Tomb' sarcophagus, and you'll spy the entrance to this beautiful courtyard restaurant, serving home-cooked Turkish cuisine in a lovely garden setting. Try *güveç*, a delicious casserole served in individual clay pots. Mains around £12.

AMAZING VIEWS
Korsan Fish Terrace (Kalkan; 00 90 242 844 3076, www.korsankalkan.com). This restaurant overlooks the bay of Kalkan from the roof terrace of a traditional stone house. Visit on a Tuesday for the signature 'Fisherman's Feast' and mellow live jazz. Mains around £12.

Kızılada Lighthouse (00 90 532 686 4686, www.kizilada.com). This lighthouse is on Kızılada Island, 10 minutes from Fethiye. Arrive by boat (bookable via the restaurant) and a cable car will whisk you up to this trendy new venue with a world-class chef. Expect fantastic seafood. Mains around £22.

ROMANTIC SETTING
Orfoz Restaurant (Nr Bozburun; 00 90 252 456 2337). Another exclusive island restaurant, Orfoz is a short >