

Turkish Delight

Cruising Southern Turkey's Lycian Coast



A "Blue Voyage" on a Turkish gulet along the Lycian Coast is more than worthy of its listing in 1000 Places to See Before You Die. Popular for its turquoise waters, Greco-Roman ruins, rugged landscape, sun drenched beaches and great food, we found that a few weeks meandering down this stretch of the Mediterranean Coast was a wonderful way to wind up our 7,000 mile cruising season on Moonshadow, which started in Thailand at the beginning of the year. Fairly protected from the full force of the prevailing Aegean winds known as the Meltemi and offering numerous marinas, municipal harbours and cozy anchorages, this stretch of Turkish coastline is a cruiser's delight.

▼ On the water front
Kastellörizon

▼ George
& Merima



▼ Gulets and cafes on the quay Marmaris

Marmaris 36° 51' N 28° 16.7' W

We spent a week in the Marmaris Netsel Marina, adjacent to the town, catching up on boat chores by day and enjoying the lively town by night. Netsel is a modern, full service marina with a variety of services on site, including an excellent supermarket, and a host of yachting related businesses within walking distance. We found the locals to be friendly, helpful and efficient, and in just a few days managed to trim down our "to do" and "to get" lists.

Situated at the head of a well-protected natural bay, the once-sleepy fishing village of Marmaris has exploded into a budget tourism mecca. A stroll through the town's bazaar was truly a sensual delight, and at night we joined the crowds along the Hacı Mustafa Sokak, also known as "Bar Street" where the doof-doof music pumping out of the nightclubs can be felt and heard all the way to the marina. However, to enjoy the best of the Lycian coast, we headed for the quiet anchorages and small villages.

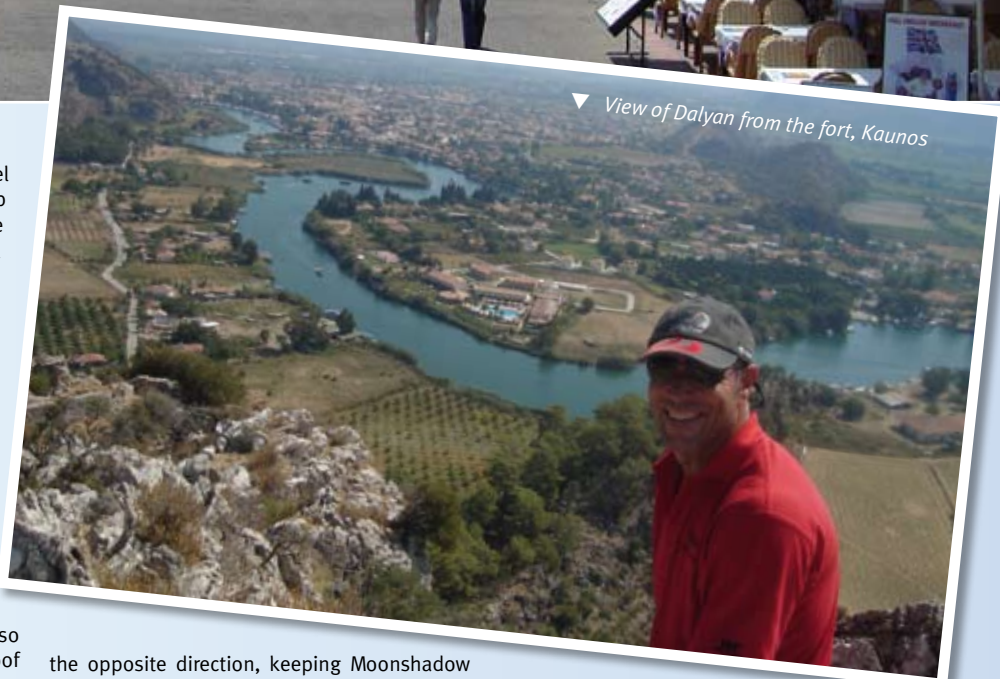
Turunç Bükü 36° 46.5' N 28° 15.1' W

Leaving the hustle and bustle of Marmaris town behind, we found anchorage in a small inlet called Turunç Bükü, just outside of the Bay of Marmaris. The beach was lined with holiday resorts, but we were relieved to have a quiet, if a bit of a rolling evening away from the big city lights and all-night revelry.

Dalyan 36° 47.9' N 28° 36' W

The following day we motor-sailed east in light air and anchored behind Delicada (Dalyan) Island just to seaward of the Dalyan River bar. When we arrived, the area was buzzing with day trippers and river boats and the long brown-sand beach was crawling with sun worshippers. A local guide came by and offered us an all day tour of ruins at Kaunos, the town of Dalyan, the fresh water lake and some mud baths for US \$200. We declined, figuring we might be able to do it ourselves in our dinghy. By sunset the place transformed into a ghost town and we were the only boat left.

The anchorage was not particularly well-protected, but the Meltemi had been quiet and we did have a relatively comfortable night, only rolling a bit after the sea breeze died and before the land breeze filled in from



▼ View of Dalyan from the fort, Kaunos

the opposite direction, keeping Moonshadow more or less in line with the gentle swell.

Setting off early the next morning in the dinghy, we dodged the loggerhead turtles that were hanging out near one of their favourite nesting sites, Iztuzu Beach. We easily negotiated the shallow waters over the bar and made our way up into the Dalyan River delta. Inside the bar there was plenty of water and we found navigation through the wide reed-lined tributaries quite easy. The bright red Turkish flags flown high from the sterns of the local boats were visible above the reeds for quite some distance, giving us rough bearings to where we were headed.

Our first stop was at a fish farm blocking an entire tributary of the river. We tied up at a small visitors' dock. From there, it was a short walk to the ancient Roman city of Kaunos. In its heyday, Kaunos had many things going for it: a high hill for the fortification, a well protected harbour, fresh water from the river, timber from the pine trees growing on the surrounding hills and plenty of flat, fertile farm land. Historians speculate that Kaunos failed because the harbour silted, leaving it three kilometres inland, and because the inhabitants were plagued by malaria, which was evidenced by reports of the yellow cast of their skin.

The ancient amphitheatre was mostly intact, as were Roman baths, the Agora (central square/market) and a few other buildings on

the site. We decided to get a bit of exercise and hiked up to the ruin of the fort. The path was scarcely more than a goat track, unmarked and slippery with loose rock. At the top we were rewarded with a commanding 360° view of the marshland, the sea, and the picturesque village of Dalyan further inland. From this vantage point I made a mental map of how to make our way to town through the maze of tributaries and fish traps.

We made our way back down to sea level and wound our way by dinghy up to Dalyan. Just across the river from the village are some



▼ Lycian Tombs, Dalyan

spectacular Lycian tombs carved into the face of the cliff. After a few photo stops, we continued upstream until the river opened up into a huge fresh water lake. A full throttle run gave our outboard a much needed flush out. We returned to Dalyan and enjoyed a traditional Turkish lunch on the riverfront, while gazing out at the tombs and turtles

dodging the constant parade of tourist boats chugging up and down the river.

Ekinçik Limani 36° 49.5' N 28° 33' W

That afternoon a light Meltemi filled in and we decided not to tempt fate and, after our delightful day excursion, we moved north up the coast a few miles to a lovely and more protected anchorage in a bay called Ekinçik Limani. We found good holding in 17 metres, well away from the charter boats and gulets. The anchorage was very calm, quiet and well worth the four mile battery-charge run.

Fethiye Körfezi 36° 40' N 28° 54.3' W

A pleasant day's sail in light airs took us to a large bay called Fethiye Körfezi about 20 miles southeast. This bay is a lovely cruising ground boasting numerous islands and a variety of picturesque, deeply indented coves providing fine shelter. It is also close to the charter hub of Göcek, and many of the coves were chocker with yachts and gulets. We found a very pretty, pleasant and uncrowded spot to anchor on the north side of a small privately-owned island called Domuz Ad, and tied our stern to an olive tree on the rocky shoreline.

Snorkeling in the warm, clear water I saw remnants of ancient amphora (a ceramic vase) embedded in the rocky bottom. After my last dive I surfaced to a loud racket. On shore was a donkey screeching as if to protest to my presence. The next day a French yacht tied up next to us and was also subjected to the verbal abuse of the disapproving donkey. I didn't feel so bad.

Port Göcek Marina 36° 44.9' N 28° 56.5' W

In need of a few provisions, we called into the Port Göcek Marina which is owned by Swissotel and run by Camper and Nicholson. It is a first-class marina with superb facilities, beautifully landscaped grounds and a host of amenities. Göcek is a friendly little village situated at the head of the bay, surrounded by pine forest inside a backdrop of mountain peaks. An impressive array of supermarkets, cafes, restaurants and chandlery are all within walking distance to the marina. No wonder its become a popular place to base a yacht or over-winter.

Göcek is also the kind of village where weddings are a public affair. We visited on a weekend, so on both Friday and Saturday evenings we were treated to some wonderful live Turkish music which was part of two wedding celebrations. We walked into town on Saturday evening, and the whole village seemed to have come down to party and dance with the bride and groom at a small waterfront amphitheatre. On Sunday we shopped at the local market on the edge of town, about a 20 minute walk from the marina. In a large area shaded from the midday sun by tarpaulins, there was a huge selection of housewares, hardware, clothes, toys, fresh produce, herbs and spices. The breads, local cheeses and olives were simply divine - perfect for provisioning!

Fethiye 36° 37.5' N 29° 05.7' W

With a good breeze, we sailed twelve miles south along the coast and anchored off the town of Fethiye within range of an unsecured wireless broadband signal from a nearby hotel. Fethiye, once the ancient town of Telmessus, is situated at the foot of a pine tree- covered mountain on the edge of a large but well protected bay. While most of the town's buildings date from the Ottoman Empire or feature more recent architecture, there are still ruins of a Crusader castle on the hill above, with a few Lycian tombs carved into the solid rock faces of the cliffs just below.

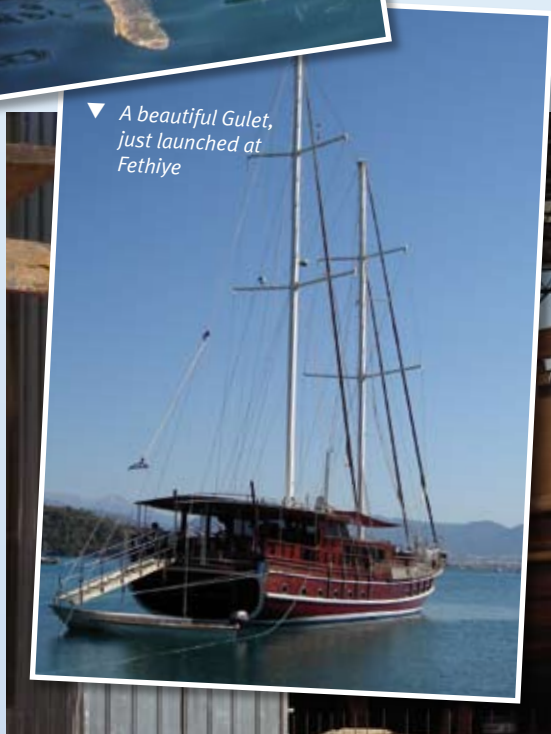
On our first visit to town, we were greeted by a large and curious sea turtle basking near the quay where the fishing boats were tied. After a stroll around the town centre, we were impressed by the friendliness of the people, the laid back bohemian vibe and low volume of tourism. Fethiye is the kind of place where a week can pass you by before you know it. It did for us. That night we returned to town for a meal out to celebrate Merima's birthday and ended up on the pedestrian-only "bar street" sipping drinks, puffing on a nargileh (sheesha pipe) listening to some great music and chatting away with some friendly Turks at a convivial little joint called the Car Cemetery Bar.

There is quite a nice shopping bazaar in the middle of town, and on Tuesdays there is a huge local market. In this part of the world, market day comprises far more than just a shopping trip. People come from villages and farms from miles around to buy, sell, eat, drink tea and mingle in a casual atmosphere. We found it a great place to stroll, people watch, check out the interesting items on offer, and pick up a few goodies.

On one morning, our daily walk took us to the head of the bay where we had noticed a large shipyard building traditional wooden power boats and gulets. We were greeted by the manager of the yard and invited to have a look around. I counted no less than nine vessels under construction and 100 craftsmen on site. All of the boats were being fabricated from exotic African hardwoods in the traditional fashion; strip-planks fastened to laminated ribs. With the exception of some small power tools, very little of the building process appears to have changed since the days of Noah. It was fascinating to see



▼ Loggerhead Turtle at Fethiye



▼ A beautiful Gulet, just launched at Fethiye



▼ Hand-crafting a gulet, Fethiye

these boats in their various stages of completion, with craftsmen meticulously hand forming and fitting each piece. While the yard itself was about as basic as it gets, the end result, a spectacular gulet which was just launched, was something to behold.

Departing Fethiye, the coast to the south is lined with rugged mountains plunging into the sea. We tried to find a spot just outside of Ölü Deniz (36° 32.9' N 29° 06.8' W), a magnificent land-locked lagoon about 15 miles from Fethiye. The area attracts a lot of tourists and the nearby anchorage was full, so we hovered around awhile checking out the beautiful beach and the dozens of para gliders descending from Mt. Baba, which towers 2000 metres above the lagoon. We later found a good calm spot to anchor behind a nearby island called Gemiler Adasi, which was covered in ancient ruins.

Gemiler Adasi 36° 33.4' N 29° 03.9' W

Gemiler anchorage was fine until late in the afternoon when it became the Grand Central Station for gulets! They were coming and going all through the night, revving engines, making lots of noise and dropping their anchor rode over ours. A bit of swell started to work its way around the island late in the evening, so we departed the next morning as soon as our rode was clear.

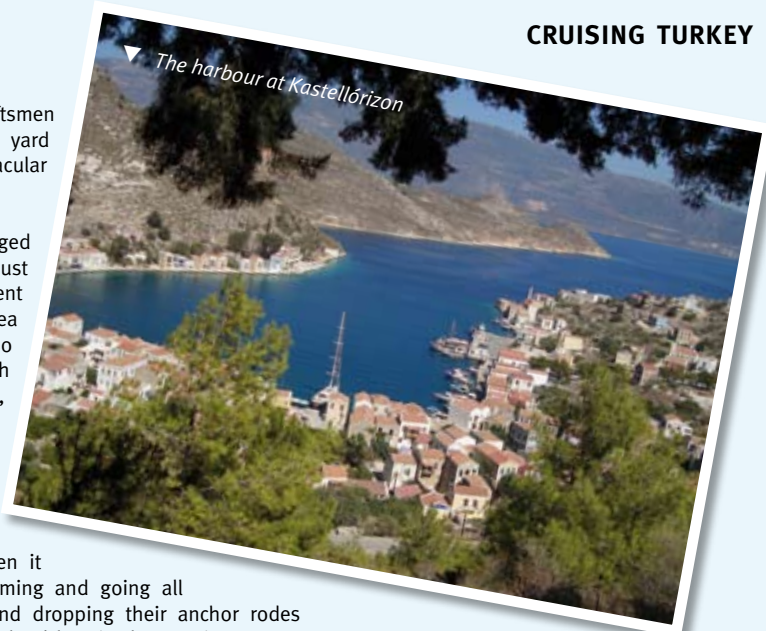
In light air we motor-sailed south down a beautifully rugged stretch of coastline about 30 miles to the little town of Kalkan. From seaward we could see deep gorges slashing the mountain sides, cliffs pockmarked with caverns, sea caves and many areas of relatively recent rock fall, all evidence of Turkey's geological activity.

Kalkan 36° 15.7' N 29° 24.8' W

Once a quiet little Greek fishing village, Kalkan has now been taken over by tourism. It still has a lovely charm about it, with plenty of nicely restored old Greek and Ottoman buildings, narrow cobbled lanes, and colourful splashes of bougainvillea. The harbour is small, but well protected and adjacent to town. Kalkan has a reputation for its very trendy shops, restaurants and cafes catering to upscale tourists and visiting yachties. We were fortunate to arrive by midday and find space to moor stern-to, "med style". During the high summer season, the municipal harbour is chock-a-block with visiting yachts and usually full by happy hour. Whilst we had a nice outlook facing the village, we were squashed in a "boat canyon" between a massive gulet and a large charter yacht, with our fenders close to bursting. After two days we longed for a bit of privacy.

Kastellórizon, Mandraki Anchorage 36° 09' N 29° 35.95' W

A leisurely two-hour sail took us to a quiet anchorage off the desolate and rocky little isle of Kastellórizon. The easternmost of Greece's Dodecanese island group, Kastellórizon is the most distant island from Athens. Its nearest bit



▲ The harbour at Kastellórizon

of homeland is Ródhos, about 70 nautical miles to the west, and Kastellórizon lies just one mile off the coast of Turkey. The island has had a tumultuous past, but from all appearances it is once again on the rise, thanks to tourism. For this reason, the local officials turn a blind eye to visits by yachts cruising on a Turkish transit log, and allow them to anchor or tie up for a day or two and drop a few Euros into the local economy.

Kastellórizon's attractive natural harbour is lined with stately and colourful Greek mansions surrounded by a dry, rocky backdrop. It reminded us a bit of its charming Dodecanese cousins, Symi and Khálki. The biggest difference is that there were so few tourists that they went almost unnoticed. It is quiet, quaint and an ideal place to escape and forget about the real world for a while. Arriving by yacht and med-mooring to the narrow quay, one can literally step off the pasarelle to a table at one of a half dozen or so little tavernas and cafes lining the narrow waterfront.

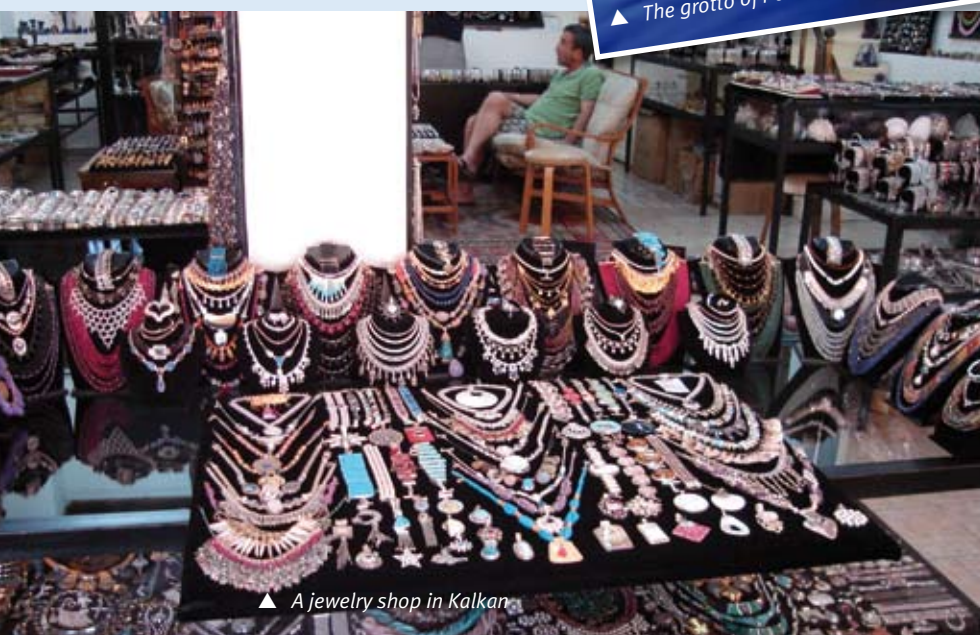


▲ The grotto of Peresta Kastellórizon

Opting for a bit of peace and quiet, we anchored just around the corner from the entrance harbour at a nice little anchorage called Mandraki. We took the dinghy ashore and found an old stone pathway that led around the edge of the castle-crowned hill to the village. Along the pathway there was a rather precarious no handrails-stairway leading up to what is purportedly the only Lycian tomb in Greece, carved into the solid rock cliff face. This was our first opportunity to view one of these up close and examine the detail and the perfection of the carving of lines, angles and flat faces.

In the town of Kastellórizon many of the grand old buildings lay in ruins as a result of wars, earthquake, and abandonment in times of misfortune. Drawn by the solitude or a desire to return to family roots, some have been lovingly restored as private homes or hotels, and quite a few more are 'work in progress'.

The next morning, with the sun still low, we took the dinghy around to the southeast



▲ A jewelry shop in Kalkan



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corner of the island where we found the Grotto of Perastá (approximate position 36° 07.4'N 29° 33.75' W). We weren't exactly sure of its location, but I was able to identify the opening from a photo in a tourist brochure. The entrance to the grotto is only about three metres wide and barely high enough for the dinghy outboard to clear the opening above. Driving in for the first time, we felt like we had entered the mouth of a whale ready to swallow us up. The small entrance leads into an immense 'room'. Light reflecting through the water at the opening casts lovely dancing rays in various hues of blue on the cavern walls. As our eyes adjusted to the light, we could make out the silhouettes of the stalactites growing out of the ceiling above. Occasionally when a large swell would come into the grotto compressing the warm and humid air, the cavern would turn misty for an instant. The grotto of Perastá is very impressive, and worth the effort either with your own dinghy or by arranging a boat from town.

Later that morning we hiked up to the monastery of Ayíou Yeoryíou (St. George) toú Vounióú. Situated on a high plateau in the middle of the island, the complex dates back to the 16th century. Our walk started behind the town, up a winding stone path and stairways. At the head of the cliff the path straightens out and narrows into a rough and rocky track bordering a goat pasture. George may have slain the dragon, but left the snakes, as we saw a few slithering into the cracks in the rocks as we approached.

Arriving at the monastery, we were disappointed to discover the main entrance was fenced in and locked up. Around the back however, there is a gaping hole in the wall through which we could walk into the main courtyard and check out some of the open rooms and crumbling structures. In typical Greek fashion, while all ancillary buildings were crumbling around it, the Orthodox chapel was in good condition. A peek in the window confirmed that it was quite well maintained and the locked door had protected all the religious artifacts inside.

It was a clear and calm morning and the walk back to sea level rewarded us with outstanding panoramic views of the harbour and village, the Turkish mainland and surrounding islets.

Kaş 36° 11.8' N 29° 38.4' W

The next morning we made the short trip across to mainland Turkey and the town of Kaş. The Meltemi had been at rest for a few days, and Kaş Limani (Bay) was exceptionally calm. Instead of going into the municipal harbour and being jammed in with other yachts like keys on a piano, we anchored Moonshadow in the bay just outside the harbour and took a long stern line around a rock on the breakwater, keeping our bow pointing into the gentle swell.

Kaş is a lovely little holiday town with a central area jammed with shops, galleries, cafes bars and restaurants. A large and very intact ancient amphitheatre overlooks the bay and in the high cliffs behind the town are

a number of Lycian tombs which are attractively illuminated at night. The actual top of the mountain is shaped like an alien space man lying on his right side. On Fridays there is an excellent fresh produce market on the edge of town under awnings stretched between the trees in an old olive orchard. We came back with big bags of excellent fruits and veggies costing just one to two New Turkish Lira (US \$.70-\$1.40) each.

We arrived just after the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. During Ramadan, Muslims, if they are able, abstain from food and drink during daylight hours as a show of empathy for those less fortunate. In some places they actually fire gun shots or set off fireworks to wake people up early enough to eat breakfast before the Morning Prayer at sunrise, and again after sunset to let people know that they can tuck into their evening feast. While we enjoyed listening to the "call to prayer," the gunshots took a bit of getting used to.

Üçağiz Limani 36° 11.7' N 29° 51.1' W

Further down the coast we stopped in a lovely little area collectively known as Kekova. The island of Kekova is long and narrow, lying just off the coast, protecting a stretch of shoreline and a number of charming little bays. We anchored in the calm and shallow Üçağiz Limani (Bay) near a small fishing village with the same name. The mainland and islands around Kekova area are dotted with ancient ruins and sarcophagi.

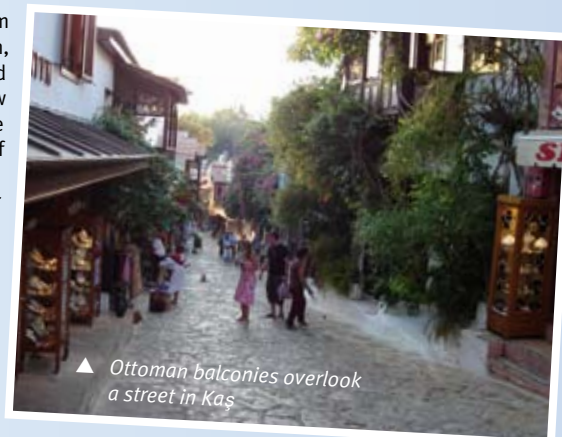
We headed ashore for a stroll around the village of Üçağiz. It is touted as an unspoiled fishing village but most of the restaurants that dominate the waterfront have sprouted long, rickety and rather tacky looking jetties that are meant to attract yachts and gülets to their dining tables with offers of free water, electricity and the Internet. The village itself is nondescript, but it is situated on the site of the ancient city of Teimiussa. We enjoyed an afternoon exploring the interesting ruins on the east end of the town overlooking the bay.

Kaleköy 36° 11.2' N 29° 51.6' W

Early the next morning, before the tourist boats had arrived, we took the dinghy across the bay to the hamlet of Kaleköy that sits on the ancient city of Simena, part of which rests a few metres underwater thanks to a major earthquake a couple of millennia ago. One can still see building foundations and a sarcophagus sitting just above and below the crystal clear water; especially with a mask and snorkel.

Kaleköy cascades down a steep hillside to the sea from a small but attractive castle which is a remnant from the Crusades. It also has restaurants with jetties but they have done a better job with the aesthetics than their neighbours across the bay. We had a nice walk through the rocky paths of the village up to the castle where we enjoyed the commanding views of the bays, islands and surrounding countryside. One of the interesting features of the castle is its rather petite amphitheatre, with seating for perhaps 100, carved entirely out of the face of the stone hillside. I'm not sure if it was because it was early in the day or late in the season, but we had the entire place to ourselves.

Most of the homes in Kaleköy appear to be very old and are built of stone with terracotta tile roofs. Colourful flowers, basil and oregano growing on or around many of the cottages add to the charm. Dotted the rocky hillside are thousand-year-old olive trees, with wildly contorted trunks, that are still yielding fruit. The locals were very friendly and one young Turkish girl selling pareos attached herself to us, acting as our tour guide and telling us a bit of the local history in her excellent English.



▲ Ottoman balconies overlook a street in Kaş



▼ Kaleköy from seaward

▲ Thousand year old olive tree



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Setur Finike Marina, Finike 36° 17.6' N 30° 09' W

The next morning we lifted the anchor for the last time of the season. We motor-sailed in light breezes and flat waters for the last 18 miles to Finike, a small farming town that is barely given a mention in the Lonely Planet guidebook. Many yachties choose to over-winter or leave their boats here owing to its mild climate, laid back atmosphere and reasonable berthing fees.

As we approached the Setur Finike Marina, we felt the first few raindrops in many months, reminding us that winter was approaching and it was time for us to head home to New Zealand for the southern hemisphere summer.

Officialdom

Turkey has numerous ports of entry along its coast and is most welcoming to foreign yachts. Check in/out is an easy and straightforward process. One must visit the Port Authority, Customs, Immigration and Quarantine, all in a prescribed order. All the information you need to check in/out should be provided by the marina.

We found all the officials to be friendly, helpful and professional. A three month visa-on-arrival is granted free to most nationalities, but some nationalities, such as U.S. citizens, may be required to purchase a visa stamp for €15. Visiting yachts will be issued a transit log that is good for six months, may be renewed, and is surrendered upon departure. Foreign vessels may remain in Turkey for up to five years. Check-in is not required at each port visited, but most marinas or municipal harbours will request to see your transit log and passports.

Pilotage

Cruising Guides

Turkish Waters & Cyprus Pilot; Imray 2006, £34.50, ISBN 9780852888414

For current information on ports of entry, formalities and other cruising related information, visit www.noonsite.com.

Charts

C-Map CM93 is adequate, but does have numerous inaccuracies. Always supplement electronic charting with up-to-date paper charts, a depth sounder and a good set of eyes.

Imray 'G' series cover Greece and Turkey. £14.50 each – www.imray.com.

Weather

We used a combination GRIB files from SailMail, daily reports broadcast on the Mediterranean Cruisers Net (8122KHz at 0530UTC), Olympia Radio (Greece) who broadcast regular maritime forecasts on SSB (see Turkish Waters Pilot for schedules and frequencies), and of course, personal observation.

Tourism

Lonely Planet guides for Turkey and Greece.

Currency

The official currency is the New Turkish Lira, or YTL. ATM's are available in tourist areas, and most merchants accept credit cards. The Euro is also widely accepted.

Communications

Internet is widely available and most marinas have wireless broadband for clients. Many cafes offer free broadband to patrons. Cell phone coverage is excellent, but expensive if you are roaming. If you plan to spend more than a few weeks in Turkey, you can get a local SIM card for your phone, but you must register it with the Turkish Government in Ankara. Most cellular service providers will fill out all the required paperwork, but you must bring your passport when making the application.

About the Author

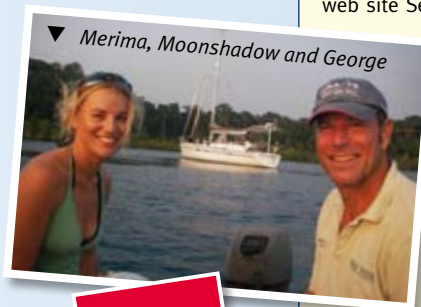
George Backhus was born and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area. As a teenager he followed the travels of sailor Robin Lee Graham, the youngest person at the time to sail solo around the world. Graham's regular articles appearing in National Geographic magazine inspired George's dream of some day sailing the world and visiting far away places.

He purchased his first yacht in 1981 and spent much of his free time sailing and racing on the San Francisco Bay. Honing his sailing skills over the next ten years, George eventually earned a U.S. Coast Guard Master's Licence and worked part-time as a sailing instructor at a leading Bay Area sailing club.

George "punched out" of a successful marketing career in corporate America in 1994, purchased *Moonshadow*, a Deerfoot 62 cutter, and set out in pursuit of his lifelong dream. Along the way, he began writing newsletters to friends and family back home, describing the amazing places he visited, his incredible experiences and the unique cruising lifestyle. Now 14 years into his planned five-year circumnavigation, he has sailed more than 60,000 miles and visited 30 countries, and taken up permanent residency in New Zealand along the way. He has written numerous articles that have appeared in the popular Northern California Sailing Magazine *Latitude 38*, and his bi-monthly "sailor's logs" appear on the highly respected cruising web site SetSail.com.

George's Kiwi partner Merima joined him on the voyage in 2005. They spent two years cruising Australia and South East Asia before heading to the Med via the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. They plan to spend a couple more years cruising the Med before heading across the Atlantic in the ARC, closing the loop on their circumnavigation. *Moonshadow* is not new to the ARC. She sailed in the inaugural event in 1986, and was the first monohull to finish.

In addition to bluewater cruising and yacht racing, George is an avid SCUBA diver and spear fisherman. He and Merima enjoy travel, hiking, attending musical and cultural events, reading, cooking, wine and international cuisine.



▼ Setur Finike Marina