



Bodrum is a bustling city in Turkey that developed on the site of the ancient Greek city of Halicarnassus. St. Peter's Castle dominates this view from the marina.

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## Cruise passengers opted for a relaxing pace

► Turkey continued from E12

Captain Hakan Uguz and his crew of three were very accommodating. In fact, the flexible itinerary is one of SCIC's strengths and made for a restful, carefree holiday.

Each morning, after a leisurely breakfast of bread, jams, tomatoes, cucumbers, olives, feta cheese and seasonal fruits, the captain would unroll his chart and, after suggesting two or three options for the day, we would take a vote.

Some possibilities were obviously more appealing than others, but the skipper usually withheld his opinion, seeming to divine what the group wanted. No crowded cities, for one thing.

Cleopatra Island was also not worth the trouble, it seemed. "We can go if you want, but I don't recommend," he advised. "There is nothing there. Only they say, Cleopatra, she was there once."

Let's not bother. Let's sail. And what a thing of beauty it was to watch the crew members perform their magic, hoisting the three creamy canvas sheets up the two masts up, up, up into the cornflower blue sky, the sailors nimbly climbing and jumping, coiling and knotting the ropes, calling out to each other, "Hadi, hadi," meaning "Come on. Let's go."

Lounging up front I would on many days become hypnotized by the whistle of the wind and the rhythmic snapping of the sails. The boat would sway beneath us, cutting through the waves and lifting us gently off the water, as if to float in the air. The scent of salt water would fill my nostrils, and I would look at the pine-dotted hills beyond, all my worries forgotten.

Having taken Cinnarizine before the trip to fight her perpetual motion sickness, Johanne was now most often installed in her usual spot on the bowsprit, gazing ahead, a smile on her face as wide as the sea.

We made landfall several times, but never for more than two or three hours.

In the village of Oren, we shopped at the weekly market. Some of us bartered for straw hats while most of the Dutch contin-



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Cruise passengers shop for sun hats during a stop at a market in Oren.

gent diligently haggled for Turkish bath towels. Was four towels for 20 Turkish lira (\$12) a good deal or could they do better, they wondered. Others bought Turkish Delight treats to take home as gifts.

As for me, I had fallen in love with a local woman's blue and green tie-dye style cotton dress. Neither of us spoke a word of the other's language, but we admired each other's outfits. She mimed an exchange and we laughed. Too bad she wasn't serious.

The sedate sailing rhythm of our journey suited me well.

In my real life I hate to be rushed and I despise getting up early, but aboard the sailboat I was up before the breakfast bell rang at 9 a.m. most days. And often I had already enjoyed a refreshing dip. This poses no problem when the sea isn't an Arctic temperature and is as still and clear as a mirror.

After breakfast and the captain's daily briefing, we would sail or motor to the next cove, then promptly leap overboard to cool off from the baking 37 C heat.

Afterward? Nap, read, snorkel, windsurf or swim to the nearest island. Then, a lazy lunch of spicy tomato couscous, green bean and carrot stew or Turkish moussaka and shepherd's salad, possibly followed by a visit from the ice-

cream boat. Swim again.

Later, we would sail or motor to a nearby village, visit an ancient site or stop by a local market. Then swim again. Next, sail or motor to next cove, where we would anchor for the night and swim some more.

At about 7 p.m., we might have captain's cocktails on the forward deck, followed by dinner in a restaurant on shore. Or maybe hike up a hill for a glass of wine and a sundowner.

Back on the boat we would dine on several meze (Turkish appetizers) of seaweed salad topped with garlic, grilled prawns sprinkled with lemon and olive oil, baked and puréed sweet potato adorned with an artistic glaze, or steamed greens drizzled with lemon juice — and still have to make room for supper and dessert.

With Sailing Cruises in Comfort, a near-vegan eater like me was never going to go hungry.

Finally, before bed, we would bask in the light cast by a velvet tapestry of stars.

Yeah, life is hard. Our final bittersweet sail took us to the Bodrum marina (about 20 kilometres from Ortakent, where we began our cruise) where we would anchor for our final night aboard the ship.

Now a magnet for wealthy Istanbul residents, cruise-goers

and backpackers, Bodrum has a look today that makes it hard to believe this bustling city was once ancient Halicarnassus.

We visited the crumbling amphitheatre and the lushly landscaped St. Peter's Castle, which commands spectacular views of the city. We also treated ourselves by visiting Rashid's Hamam, which bills itself as "the best and the biggest" Turkish bath in the world. Johanne received a foam scrub from Rashid himself.

Bodrum is also a sophisticated shopper's paradise where I would willingly have parted with thousands of hard-earned dollars — if I had any — to bring home an Aladdin's cave of treasure in rugs, coloured glass lamps, brass and copperware pieces, ceramics and hand-embroidered silk throws.

By week's end, I knew I had fallen in love with sailing, not only as an ideal way to travel and explore new places, but as a way of life. I'm determined to go sailing with Sailing Cruises in Comfort again.

Perhaps even learn to sail in this ancient, sun-drenched land — so that I can truly be at one with the turquoise sea.

Elizabeth Warkentin is a Montreal writer.

### If you go . . .

Prices per person for a one-week **Sailing Cruises in Comfort** expedition, including daily breakfast, lunch and five dinners, plus snacks and drinks, including alcohol, range between \$1,075 and \$1,210, depending on the month.

Options for getting to Bodrum include flying to Istanbul with KLM ([www.klm.com](http://www.klm.com)) via Amsterdam (starting at \$1,315 in September) or with Lufthansa ([www.lufthansa.com](http://www.lufthansa.com)) via Frankfurt (starting at \$1,425 in September). From Istanbul you can book a separate return flight to Bodrum or Dalaman for about \$150 with Turkish Airlines ([www.turkishairlines.com](http://www.turkishairlines.com)).

Sailing Cruises in Comfort has a website at [www.scicsailing.eu](http://www.scicsailing.eu). For more information, contact Loes Douze at 44 758 300 1766 in the United Kingdom or by email at [info@scicsailing.eu](mailto:info@scicsailing.eu).

Six to sixteen-person yachts can also be chartered for one week, starting at \$3,145 for a six-person boat, excluding meals and drinks.



Swims are the best way to cool off during the day.

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