

Wind, Water And Wonder

Sailing in an authentic ketch is the ideal way to experience the Aegean coast of Turkey, as Diane Kenwood found out



I think I may have discovered a new form of extreme activity. Forget the effort of white-water rafting or the adrenaline rush (aka terror) of bungee jumping. This is extreme relaxing — the sort of total, stress-relieving relaxation that makes you ponder whether even hauling yourself upright is worth the effort.

And best of all, the way of achieving this sublime state is not only totally legal, it's available to anyone. Just climb aboard a Turkish ketch, watch a well-drilled crew hoist a trio of huge sails and then lie back and revel in the delight of the wind propelling you over the glittering, blue Aegean Sea, while you drink in the dramatic landscape of the Turkish coastline and down whatever beverage has been refilled in your only just half-empty glass.

Better still: do it for a whole week. And while you're at it, toss in three delicious, freshly prepared meals a day (to be eaten out on the sunny or starlit deck when the boat is moored in yet another impossibly picturesque bay), drinks and canapés at dusk each evening, a selection of comfy cushion-covered couches and sunbeds to recline on and the delightful company of more than a dozen fellow voyagers. *Voilà!*

The wind in the sails and the rugged Turkish coastline make the perfect backdrop to this most relaxing of holidays

Extreme relaxation served up Turkish style, courtesy of Dutch/English company ScicSailing.

Life on board

Of course, there's more to the trip than just (just?) that, but each experience only adds to the pleasure. From the compact yet comfortable, wood-clad, en-suite cabins, to the wonderful evening barbecue on the beach, when

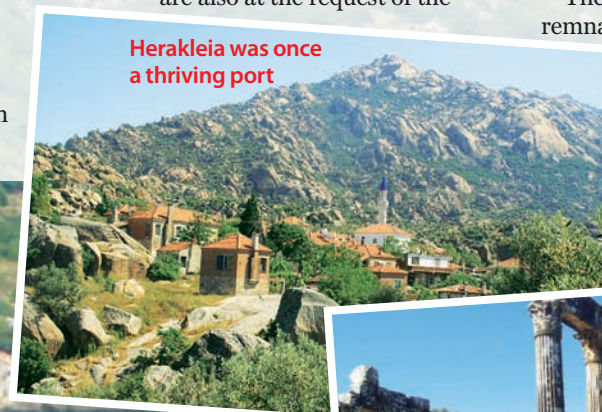


not only are tables and cushions transported from the boat and laid out under the candlelit trees, but crockery and glass as well!

Each morning, the captain maps out the itinerary for the day. There are 15 different core itineraries, which can be changed depending on the wishes of the passengers and the wind and sea conditions. Unlike the majority of the companies whose boats ply this south-west coast of Turkey, ScicSailing only uses motor power when essential.

Land ahoy

Excursions and some activities are also at the request of the



Herakleia was once a thriving port



The temple of Zeus at Euromos

passengers. The all-inclusive price covers swimming, snorkelling and kayaking from the boat. There's a small charge for windsurfing, laser sailing and waterskiing, and excursions range in price, depending on their length and the number of people taking part.

You can remain on board for the entire week if you choose — there's no pressure to do anything other than rest, eat and enjoy the views. But it would be a shame not to explore the landscape and lives of the people of this fascinating part of the Turkish mainland.

History all around

Turkey is a country quite literally built on its history. There are hundreds of archaeological sites throughout this spectacularly mountainous nation.

Among the more impressive is the temple of Zeus at Euromos, which dates from the 2nd century AD and is one of the most complete temple remains in Turkey. Its roofless Corinthian columns have survived the centuries and the occasional earthquake impressively well, though the lintels that balance on top of them look remarkably precarious.

The Turks live with the remnants and reminders of their history all around them, as a visit to the ancient city of Herakleia on the

shores of Lake Bafa clearly shows. Donkeys are still used for transport and the simple homes of the residents, who make their meagre living farming the land, are built in and around the ruins of ancient towers and temples. The landscape is dotted with hundreds of ancient tombs.

Wander the walls and remains of the original city and it's easy to picture it as a thriving port when Lake Bafa was a part of the Aegean Sea. This was before the channel connecting the two was cut off by silt carried from the surrounding Latmos Mountains by the winding River Maiandros (hence the term, meander).

Now clusters of sun-wrinkled women in brightly coloured skirts and scarves proffer their locally made jewellery, scarves and hamam towels, while the men gather in the shady cafes.

Ancient and modern

Halicarnassus is another ancient city dating back almost 2,500 years, though today it's better known as the bustling port of Bodrum. The entrance to the harbour is dominated by the Castle of St Peter — a mere 600 years old — whose five towers represent the nationalities of its former inhabitants: French, Italian, Spanish, English and German. Innovatively restored, it houses stunning collections of undersea treasures found around the coast and affords glorious

views of the city and coastline.

Bodrum is also home to what remains of the burial chamber of King Mausollos — the original Mausoleum, and once one of the Seven Wonders of the World.

If you grow weary of Bodrum's ancient history, it can offer a more modern diversion. The shops that line the streets along the harbour are full of designer accessories — all fakes! Haggling is expected, so don't be shy.

Back on board, Loes Douze, the mastermind behind ScicSailing, talks of the spirit of adventure that she finds is common to "her" passengers.

There is a magical alchemy in the mix of sea, sailing, service and serenity that is impossible to resist. So I'm not surprised to learn that 70% of the passengers are repeat bookings. I fully intend to be one of them.

SAILING SPECIFICS

- ScicSailing runs a fleet of classic ketches, which can accommodate from six to 16 passengers in en-suite cabins. Each yacht has its own captain, chef and one or two sailors.
- Their sailing season is from the end of March through to early November and itineraries can be arranged to suit passengers.
- Prices start at €1,034 per person per week, which includes all accommodation, drinks and meals on board, but excludes flights and two evening meals taken on shore.
- Flights are to Milas-Bodrum or Dalaman airport.
- For more information, or for a brochure, visit www.scicsailing.eu or call Loes Douze on 0758 300 1766 or e-mail info@scicsailing.eu

