

# THE TURQUOISE COAST



Turkey has long been a popular destination for less experienced sailors and, as **ALEC MARSH** finds, is an ideal choice if you are taking family or friends sailing for the first time

**F**amed for its breathtaking scenery, unspoiled beaches and rich history, Turkey ticks plenty of boxes in terms of holiday destination potential.

Add in reliable, steady winds – light in the morning, building to moderate by afternoon – and sparkling blue seas, and the appeal of exploring the region on a charter or flotilla holiday becomes obvious. The country's snaking coastline offers a plethora of peaceful bays to discover by day, whilst traditional coastal towns and bustling modern marinas give plenty of stopover options.

The majority of Turkey's plentiful

flotilla and charter offerings can be found along the Turquoise Coast, the southwestern-most corner of the country, along which lies sandy bays, rocky outcrops and wooded hills.

Many operations are centred around Fethiye, with plenty of itineraries starting from marina bases in the Göcek area, a small town a few kilometres to the north of Fethiye. Typical flotillas in this area combine a mixture of short hops and longer passages. Take your time meandering between the islands and coves of the Lycian coast, a stretch dotted with intriguing ruins set against beautiful backdrops.



“ An abundance of options means you can combine a relaxing holiday with training ”

Further north and west, itineraries centring on the Bodrum area – itself a vibrant town rich in history – tend to offer longer passages in slightly stronger winds; more experienced sailors will delight in sailing from here.

Stretching eastwards of the Fethiye area, the Dorian coast beckons those wishing to escape the crowds and explore a little off the beaten track; with stronger winds on more exposed passages, it's perfect for experienced sailors with a sense of adventure.

Two-week itineraries are a particularly popular offering in this region and, with so much to explore, no matter

what your experience, it's easy to see why. Be prepared to be flexible with dates: in some cases, operators are able to offer specific itineraries only on set weeks. However, the sailing season in Turkey stretches from early May to late October, so there's plenty of scope for finding your ideal trip.

#### GENTLE INTRODUCTION

The sheltered area around Fethiye is particularly well-suited for those with little to medium experience; the wind generally reaches not much more than Force 3 and numerous coves, short passages, calm anchorages

**Above**  
Turkey's Turquoise Coast is dotted with tranquil coves

and uncomplicated line-of-sight navigation combine to make it a perfect destination for aspiring skippers.

And although Turkish local authorities require ICC or RYA Day Skipper certification for those wishing to charter their own yacht, that's not to say novice sailors cannot get out and make the most of exploring this stunning coastline. Far from it! An abundance of options from operators in the area (including Sunsail, Seafarer, Nautilus and Top Yacht Charter, for example) means that you can easily combine a relaxing holiday with training, whether you are looking to try out new skills or simply boost your confidence. →



STUART PEARCE (C) SUNHAI



CO ONE STOP SAILING



STUART PEARCE (C) SUNHAI

Whilst there has long been the option of hiring your own yacht with an RYA instructor on board in order to tick off day or coastal skipper qualifications, an increasingly popular alternative is the 'learn on flotilla' concept. You get all the fun and the itinerary offered by a standard flotilla holiday, but with a qualified skipper on board to show you the ropes and sign certificates at the end of the week. With the emphasis equally weighted, this combines the best of all worlds – sailing tuition, time to practise and chill-out time – and holds appeal for families and groups as well as couples.

If you have some experience but fear your skills might be a little rusty, a couple of days on a refresher flotilla is another option. Alternatively, if you have lots of experience but no paperwork to prove it, several operators now offer to join you on the first day guiding you through the ICC requirements, before you can then enjoy your holiday independently.

Finally there are a number of 'stay and sail' providers in the region, whereby you can spend an exciting week honing your skills with RYA tuition at a dinghy beach club, before taking charge of your own yacht for the following week.

**Above**  
Exploring some of the coastline's ancient ruins at Cleopatra's Bay

**Top right**  
Sheltered waters and gentle winds

**Above right**  
Mix your holiday with training and further your skills

## First-hand experience

Alec Marsh shares some lessons learnt the hard way as he treats his new spouse – who has never sailed before – to a sailing honeymoon

My new wife turns to me – she's standing in the galley of our Sun Odyssey 32, and a streak of searing Aegean sunlight falls across her hair. It's hot, really hot. She throws down the inventory, and fumes: "I never expected my honeymoon to begin with counting spoons!"

In that moment, I have a startling revelation: perhaps my idea for a flotilla honeymoon in August in Turkey wasn't such a corker. Especially since Ashley, my wife of all but two days now, has never sailed before. I suddenly remember the story of a family friend who went sailing on his honeymoon: the marriage didn't survive.

An hour later, I am dragging the just-married suitcases aboard and Ashley has been to the supermarket and is cheerfully unloading bag after bag of produce. For a yachting newbie she's done a brilliant job of provisioning the boat.

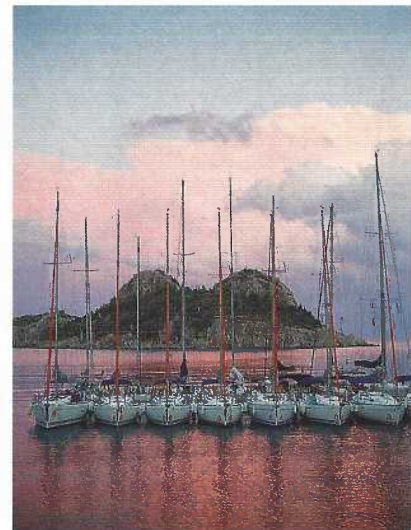
Our flotilla skipper arrives. John, a pale, wiry 55, is a former Army man and works as a driving instructor in

the off-season. It shows as he patiently and expertly briefs us on every aspect of the boat, from the heads to head sail. Ashley listens intently. I watch as everything is absorbed pliantly without question. It's gratifying because I've just been wondering how well I'll cope being effectively single-handed.

### THE BAY OF FETHIYE

Next morning, after the briefing, we set off for our first destination – a bay just 10 miles away across the Gulf of Fethiye. We've got a Force 5 southwesterly, so it'll be a nice beam reach most of the way.

We slip our moorings and thread our way from the marina into the protected Bay of Fethiye. Once here Ashley steers nicely as I retrieve fenders, lines and then pop below to update the log, and double check the route. So far so good – until I hear a shriek. I look up, and Ashley's face is filled with uncertainty as she's pointing directly ahead. I leap up into the cockpit, heart racing. Possibly half →



a mile away a small fishing boat idles in our general direction. With relief, a short discussion of the use of bearings to ascertain likelihood of collision begins.

We enter the Gulf of Fethiye and the Aegean – and it's what we're here for: flawless blue skies, a rich blue sea and, for a sailing newbie, the presence of enough land to be reassuring. Our boat pitches delightfully from wave to wave. It's perfect – or so I let myself believe until audible displeasure from Ashley informs me otherwise. Evidently something about the way the boat is moving is causing her genuine alarm.

Why on earth hadn't we done any preparation for this? Just one day's sailing would have been something. Fortunately my wife is made of stern stuff. The moment of alarm passes and I give her the helm. With little direction she steers ably to windward so I can deploy the main (the in-mast roller reefed is inelegant but perfect for short-handed sailing) and soon we're skipping along more smoothly at 4.5 knots. I log it: 'Engine off. 13.38.'

And Ashley definitely looks the better for it. Our destination is now a mere eight miles away and suddenly, we are sailing. Contentedly. It's 30 degrees and the conditions are perfect. And we're on our honeymoon. My eye scans the horizon, taking in the lumps and bumps that I've noted on the chart, as well as those that I haven't. I'm at peace.

I look over at my beloved: her head is bowed forward and resting in her hands as she wrestles in the grip of seasickness. '13.45. Engine back on.' We motor-sail with genoa the rest of the way and (after narrowly avoiding several more lethal collisions), reach Tersane Island, and berth in a beautiful bay. We were the last boat to leave; we're the first one in.

#### WRISTBAND 'MAGIC'

Overnight I obtain anti-seasickness wristbands from a fellow charterer. "It's pure witchcraft," he confides, as he hands the box over. But I'll take anything. Armed with motion sickness tablets and the wristbands we set off for Boynüz Bükü, a well sheltered tree-lined bay

**Above left**  
The sandy Wall Bay is great for snorkelling

**Above right**  
A flotilla gives you the assurance of reconvening at the end of each day

on the mainland, the next morning.

First it's back into the Gulf of Fethiye, again in perfect conditions, although the sails are gone by 12.45. Still, it is good for the fridge, even though we've sailed perhaps three miles all told over two days.

We spend the afternoon swimming in the turquoise waters and I ready myself for the day to follow: the flotilla's route involves a 20-mile crossing of the Gulf of Fethiye in what would be perfect conditions to any sailor, but might just finish off the honeymoon. I just hope it won't do the same for the marriage. Ever optimistic, we set off the next morning.

This time as we head into the open water, I bring up a beach towel and cushion and lay it appealingly in the cockpit so Ashley can sunbathe. With Ashley content and the sails up, we make good speed for an hour and a half, interrupted only by a spot of lunch until we put a tack in. Finally with the afternoon breeze falling away the engine goes back on at 3pm. And suddenly I realise we've sailed for two hours and covered some 10 miles. And Ashley has loved it. I feel like Columbus laying eyes on the New World! When we arrive she's ready with the fenders and grabs the lazy line with gusto.

That afternoon we snorkel with a sea turtle in Karacaören Bay. Suddenly we are in honeymoon cliché-land. "You know," remarks Ashley the next afternoon from the coach roof, where she's sunbathing beneath a nicely set mainsail. "I think I'd like to do a sailing course..." □

*Alec and Ashley were sailing in the Fethiye Flotilla with Nautilus Yachting*

## Sailing holidays with a novice: Dos and don'ts

- 1 Communication.** Explain everything clearly beforehand. Twice!
- 2 Assume nothing.** What you take for granted afloat has been years in the learning.
- 3 Avoid jargon.** Nautical words are a foreign language. In the heat of the moment, 'front' and 'back' might just be better than bow and stern.
- 4 Safety management.** Give yourself tasks that may involve danger (for instance, unloading winches) until confident your novice can do it without injury.
- 5 Slowly does it.** Don't be too ambitious with your passage planning.
- 6 Enjoy it.** You want your novice to love it as much as you do.
- 7 Don't go overboard.** But in the event it should happen, ensure your novice knows precisely what to do.