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The Other Side of Paradise

Summers in the Med are sheer bliss, but if you want to make the most of all that Cyprus and Turkey have to offer, try exploring in the spring as well. It's the perfect time for walking, cycling or hitting the spa – and you might just get the beaches to yourself!

WORDS KATHRYN TOMASETTI

BEST FOR HIKING

Dalaman, Turkey

Thanks to Dalaman's year-round mild climate, exploring Turkey's great outdoors in any season couldn't be more idyllic. Adventurers should try the Lycian Way (lycianway.com), a 2,000-year-old mule track. This coastal trail edges along the sea from Fethiye, which is 40km south of Dalaman, to Antalya, around 500km to the east.

British trekkers Kate Clow and Terry Richardson took the time to painstakingly mark up the footpath in red and white, and it was officially opened in 1999. Nowadays, when the signs need repainting, the local residents oblige. The path connects a series of ancient ruins and tiny towns, all the while skirting some stunning seascapes.

For visitors seeking a gentle excursion that's do-able even during Turkey's steamy summer months, the initial portion of the Lycian Way is wide and relatively easy. It departs from Fethiye and heads 9km south to the hauntingly beautiful ghost town of Kayakoy, which was completely abandoned after the Turkish and Greek population exchanges in 1923. Further south, the trail becomes more challenging as it passes the Aegean's sublime Oludeniz and Patara beaches. Depending on which portion you choose to hike, the path can be steep in places. It's a good idea to take a companion and plenty of water.

Cautious explorers may prefer strolling the region's tamer seaside



• Walk the Lycian Way, a 2,000-year-old mule track

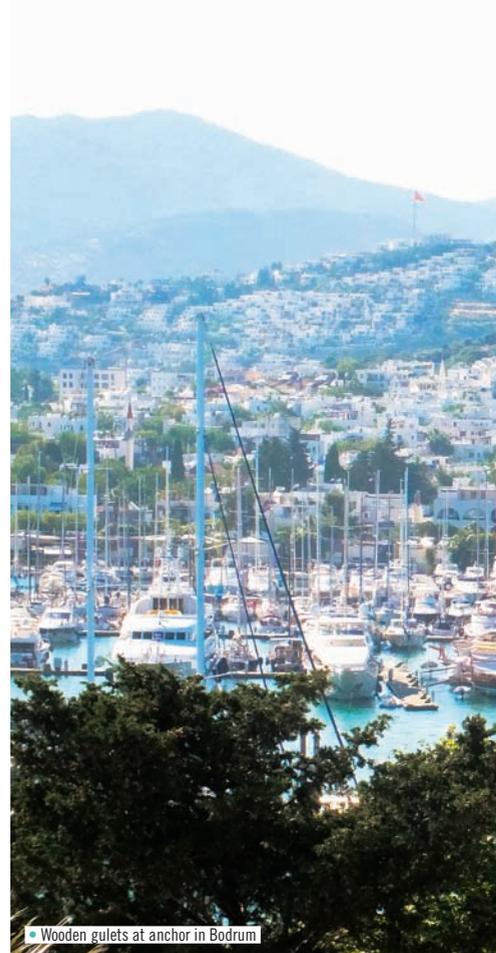
spots instead. In Gocek, which is 18km east of Dalaman, the town's wide, waterfront promenade connects three teeming marinas and is dotted with restaurants and bars.

If you don't mind getting your feet a little wet, 30km west of Marmaris you'll find the quirky 1km-long Kizkumu sandbar, which straddles picturesque Orhaniye Bay and is never more than ankle-deep.

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THE LYCIAN WAY CONNECTS ANCIENT RUINS, TINY TOWNS AND STUNNING SEASCAPES

• Spectacular views from the Lycian Way



• Wooden gulets at anchor in Bodrum

BEST FOR FOODIES

Bodrum, Turkey

Turkey's Aegean coastline is a haven for serious food lovers, from artisan cheeses and foraged forest herbs to fresh fish straight from the sea. Bodrum is the place to sample the best of the region's bounty. The town is home to scores of traditional restaurants, each one specialising in tiny, tapas-style meze dishes for sharing – easily a meal in themselves – followed by more substantial main courses.

Seafood specialist Berk Balik (167 Cumhuriyet Caddesi, +90 252 313 687, berkbalik.com) is a favourite. Nibble your way through stuffed vine leaves, aubergine salad, samphire, homemade pickles and octopus roasted with garlic. Meat-lovers should make a beeline for the new Bodrum Winehouse (14 Sanat Okulu Sokak, +90 252 316 3694), set in an atmospheric stone building. Owners Ferhat and Ekin are multilingual (so English is no problem) and they serve up hundreds of different Anatolian wines, as well as plates of local cheeses, cured meats and hefty steaks.

If you're staying in self-catering accommodation, pop along to



• Horseshoe-shaped Coral Bay



BEST FOR R&R

Paphos, Cyprus

The western coast of Cyprus is peppered with thalassotherapy centres (seawater spa treatments), day retreats and honey-hued strips of sand – perfect for relaxation on any budget.

Cyprus claims to be the birthplace of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love, and this enchanted isle is an ideal spot for a spa. Try the Intercontinental Aphrodite Hills' *thermae* experience (£35, aphroditehills.com), which takes bathers through a series of Greco-Roman saunas and hammams. Or indulge in Thalassa Boutique Hotel's detoxifying thalasso bath (£40, thalassa.com.cy), which draws out impurities using sea salt and algae. Le Meridien Limassol (lemeridienlimassol.com) offers ▶



• A Bodrum-style spice stall



Bodrum's Friday *pazar* (market), held just north of the bus station. This season, look out for plump pomegranates and vibrant citrus fruits, as well as *sucuk* (spicy local sausage), dried figs and sheep's cheese. Veggie visitors should stop in at Bodrum Organik (60/1 Atatürk Caddesi, Bitez). This tiny shop sells organic products such as goat's milk, pulses and honey. Need sustenance to keep shopping? Nearby Bitez Dondurma (48 Atatürk Caddesi, Bitez) makes Bodrum's finest ice cream, with flavours ranging from melon to mulberry.

▶ Flights from £72, holidays from £349



• The Intercontinental Aphrodite Hills spa resort



• This page: explore Cyprus's cyclist-friendly scenery

PHOTOS: ALAMY, REX

equally luxurious treatments such as underwater Watsu massages (£70) or stimulating sea showers (£35). Day or drop-in visitors are welcome at all of these spas.

On a budget? Visit Cyprus outside of high season to relax on your own gorgeous stretch of sand – it's almost like having a private beach for free! During springtime, average temperatures range from 18°C to 22°C. Popular seaside spots such as Coral Bay, a horseshoe-shaped cove just north of Paphos in Peyia, are idyllic, yet attract just a fraction of their summertime visitor numbers. To really get off the beaten track at any time of year, hire a four-wheel drive and head to Lara Bay, an important nesting site for turtles, located around 30km north of Paphos.

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BEST FOR CYCLING Larnaca, Cyprus

Until the 1970s, cars were a rarity on Cyprus, and bicycles were the main form of transport. Today, the island's scenic cycling routes remain as popular as ever, and they're geared towards all fitness levels.

Environmental factors help Cyprus draw in cycling fans all year round. The island has very little rain or wind, pleasant winter temperatures and virtually non-existent traffic in rural areas.

And the cycling paths themselves are sublime, winding their way through vineyards and olive groves, past pristine beaches and tantalising taverna restaurants.

Beginners have plenty of options to choose from, including an easy 18km pedal along the Meneou cycling route, taking in Larnaca's castle and salt lake, an important breeding ground for flamingos. Alternatively, head west of Larnaca to the Rizoelia Forest, where unpaved roads criss-cross the picturesque woodlands. More experienced cyclists should seek out the challenging 61km Larnaca-Nisou route, which races through the hills of the Kakoradjia region.

For more details, download *Cyprus Cycling Routes* from visitcyprus.com, or pick up a list of rental agencies from the Larnaca tourist office in Plateia Vasileos Pavlou.

► Flights from £72, holidays from £399

THE CYCLING PATHS ARE SUBLIME, WINDING THROUGH VINEYARDS AND OLIVE GROVES

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