

# SEPTEMBER ASPENDOS

# 09

ONBOARD  
ATHENA  
—90m/SAIL

*Aspendos open-air  
Opera Festival*



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*A crescent of golden stone wedged between Turkey's Toros Mountains and the Mediterranean Sea, Aspendos is one of the most perfectly preserved ancient amphitheatres in the world. West of Antalya and at the heart of a breathtaking cluster of Greco-Roman ruins – some dating from as early as 1000 BC – the open-air theatre was constructed during the 2nd century AD.*

Legend has it that the King of Aspendos offered the hand of his beautiful daughter to whomever could provide his citizens with the most impressive public structure. Enter 'Zeno, son of Theodore' and his stunning building – the ultimate real estate dowry. The edifice then fell off the radar as the Roman era waned. It was temporarily transformed into a 13th-century Selçuk palace, then ignored for another half a millennium. But a credit to young Zeno, the man who literally built himself into nobility, still remains - find his inscription etched into one of the theatre's stone doorways.

Today, 41 neat rows of limestone caves still ring the amphitheatre's staggering interior. Its towering stage wall is unique, still perfectly intact after two millennia and flecked with small alcoves that would have once held ornate carved statues.

Yet as aesthetically impressive as the amphitheatre may be, it's the structure's perfect acoustics that draw hundreds of thousands of spectators to this venue each year.

This September the 19th International Aspendos Opera and Ballet Festival will thrill crowds from across the world. Over the course of the two-week festival, each evening will see 10,000 spectators flood into the alfresco amphitheatre, filling it to capacity – the glory of Rome redux.

Performances will range from the China National Peking Opera Company's production of *Madame Butterfly* to the Turkish State Ballet's dazzling interpretation of *Swan Lake*. For visitors to the region earlier in the year, the Aspendos amphitheatre also holds a series of additional opera and ballet performances during late June and early July.

By Kathryn Tomasetti

## Sophistication-on-Sea

2011 was a good year for Turkey. Its economy showed the world's fastest growth in the first quarter of the year. The country also leapt into 7th place in the list of most popular destinations in the world (behind France, USA, China, Spain, Italy then the UK).

Last year the Turkish Coast showed new levels of sophistication that put it on par with France, Italy and Spain as a cruising destination. The new marina in Kas – a modernist vision of white stone and green palms – opened in summer 2011. The beach club at the latest Amanruya resort on the Bodrum peninsula is set to be this year's jet-set destination.

Several other factors place the coastline in a class of its own. Firstly, the wide arc of shore between Bodrum and Antalya is blissfully quiet. Moor up by the Roman ruins in Sarsala Bay near Göcek, in Bozburun Bay near Marmaris, or anywhere on the Datça peninsula, and you'll be the only luxury yacht for miles around.

Secondly, Turkish cuisine is simply spectacular, blending the fiery unctuousness of Lebanese and the market fresh ethos of Italian. Scores of isolated seafood restaurants dot the coast, ready to catch a tender's mooring line and welcome its passengers to a meze and seafood feast.





# ONBOARD ATHENA

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## A GENTLEMAN'S CHOICE

What better setting for the elegance of open-air opera than Athena? A three-masted schooner with a neat naval trim, Athena, like her motor powered counterpart Talitha, recalls the golden age of yachting in the 1930s. At 90m (295ft), her vintage elegance is on an epic scale. She certainly dwarfs most modern motor boats and with several square kilometres of sail, she can outrun most of them too, even without firing her engines.

A leviathan though she may be, Athena's timeless interior makes an intimate playground for up to ten guests. The three queen suites and an additional stateroom are wood-panelled and styled in keeping with the yacht's art deco lines. The capacious master cabin is the height of elegant indulgence and features a library, fully integrated modern entertainment system and whirlpool bath.

Belying its dignified air, Athena embodies a go-anywhere, do-anything ethos. Below decks there are dive bottles and a decompression chamber for serious divers. The water toys aft – a veritable flotilla of RIBs and towables – lie in wait to explore the lonely Roman ruins that stud Turkey's Turquoise Coast. Back on deck, a crew of 18 stand to attention to cater to every whim.



#### Details

Length 90m (295ft)  
Speed 16 Knots  
Accom. 10 Guests  
Crew 18

#### Unique Feature

Exquisite style that echoes the golden age of sail with grandeur.

