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TRAVELLER

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AUGUST 2014

SUN, SEA AND SNOW WHY ICELAND IS 2014'S COOLEST SUMMER HOLIDAY DESTINATION

SLOW DOWN

EAT, SLEEP AND CHILL
LIKE A LOCAL IN
TURKEY

DRINK UP

WHY ENGLISH WINE
IS NO LONGER
A DIRTY WORD



ZURICH, PARTY CAPITAL | EDINBURGH COMEDY GUIDE | MUST-VISIT BEACH BARS

Contributors

Meet some of the talented people behind this month's issue



JAMES BOWDEN

It came as no surprise for this veteran of the adventure-photography scene (shooting for *The Guardian* and *Discovery Channel*, among others) that our Iceland surf story would involve some hard graft. "I had to get up at 2am to meet the local surfers," he reports. Apparently, though, "the sleep deprivation was well worth it" to get the amazing shots you can see on p52.



KATHRYN TOMASETTI

"Exploring places I had never dreamed existed the week before" – that's the attraction of journalism for this *Time Out*, *National Geographic* and *Delicious* magazine scribe. It made her the ideal candidate to check out the burgeoning slow-travel scene in Turkey, for this month's issue. Find out how she got on with "the beaches, bays and vineyards of the Çeşme Peninsula" on p74.



STEPHEN COLLINS

Despite his weekly comic strip in *The Guardian*, this illustrator "couldn't imagine anything worse than standing in front of people and waiting for them to laugh at my jokes". Fortunately, we just asked him to draw characters from the Edinburgh Fringe (p42), not perform there. That said, it wasn't an entirely easy ride: "It takes something to depict a man with a firework in his bum for a family magazine".



FIONA SIMS

It's hard to argue with a food-and-drink writer when she says she has the best job in the world. Writing for *The Times*, *Delicious*, *Decanter* and *Food and Travel* has given her a taste of the good life, as well as expert wine knowledge, which we put to good use in profiling the young guns of English wine, which is getting "more like Champagne every day". See the story on p60.

THE TEAM

Editor **Simon Kurs** Deputy Editor **Sarah Warwick**
Art Director **Mat Wiggins** Associate Editor **Vicky Lane**
Picture Editor **Julia Holmes** Designer **Yessica Diez-Davies**
Sub-Editors **Liz Granirer**, **Julie Alpine**
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easylet Brand Executive **Natalie Yeung**
(general contact for magazine)
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European Sales Team **Tara Brady**, **Tatiana Buba**,

Valentina Caja, **Phil Castle**, **Nishan Gumani**, **Fernanda Clemente Pinto**, **Stephen Rowbotham**
Sales recruitment joinus@ink-global.com
Contact editors firstname.surname@ink-global.com

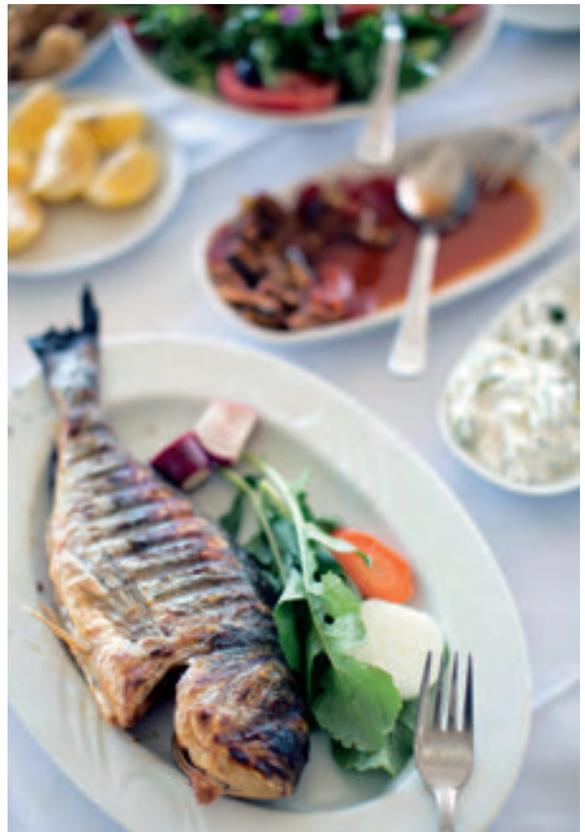
Ink CEO **Jeffrey O'Rourke**
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Chief Operating Officer **Hugh Godsal**
Publishing Director **Simon Leslie**
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Ink, 141–143 Shoreditch High Street, London E1 6JE
Advertising tel +44 (0)20 7749 6268,
fax +44 (0)20 7613 6985 ink-global.com
Advertising email kevin.smith@ink-global.com
Editorial tel +44 (0)20 7613 6945
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A tiny Turkish town you've almost certainly never heard of could well have created the template for the ultimate immersive, 21st-century holiday. So how does it feel to live like a local in Seferihisar?
Kathryn Tomasetti investigates

Slowly does it

PHOTOGRAPHY TIM E WHITE





It's a sunny Sunday morning on Turkey's Aegean Coast. It may be early, but it's already necessary to elbow through the crowd to reach the stalls selling fresh pomegranate juice, grassy-green olive oil and artichokes as big as a baby's head. My wrists ache under the strain of souvenir-packed shopping bags, stuffed with colourful knitwear, jars of bergamot marmalade and handcrafted iPad covers.

These goodies could have been sourced at London's Borough or Paris's Marché Raspail, but this is no hipster farmers' market. Instead, I'm rambling through the 16th-century suburb of Sığacık, near the Turkish town of Seferihisar.

Easy-going shoppers point me to the best local honey, then a favourite teahouse. Stallholders are quick to slip me nibbles, from hazelnut biscuits to the region's popular sour green plums. The seasonal bounty alone makes me dream of a sleepy week here spent eating, drinking and exploring. Luckily for me, next year, Sığacık will open its bougainvillea-trimmed doorways to become the world's first homestay holiday village.

Seferihisar is tucked 45km south-west of Izmir, Turkey's third-largest city. Sığacık (pronounced 'suh-ah-juck') – 5km west of Seferihisar's centre – is a bucolic medieval neighbourhood, perched on a perfect bay. Never heard of the place? I've spent a decade travelling in Turkey, yet until last month, neither had I. Still, as Turkey's first Cittaslow or 'Slow City' – a spin-off of Italy's Slow Food Movement – the town offers a novel model for tourism that could soon make it famous.

Visit Seferihisar and you'll smell the town before you see it, because the biggest local crops are tangerines, satsumas and mandarins. The air is heavy with the sweet fragrance of citrus flowers drifting in from the surrounding orchards.

On my arrival, I made a beeline for charismatic Sığacık. This seafront district is trimmed by rows of seafood restaurants, bobbing sailboats and turquoise waves. It's here that I meet with Mayor Tunç Soyer, the ideas man behind the transformation.

Mayor Soyer boasts an easy smile and a shiny bald pate, and is a ringer for Patrick Stewart, aka Captain Jean-Luc Picard. He has the drive and



“As Turkey’s first Cittaslow, or ‘Slow City’, the town offers a novel model for tourism that could soon make it famous...”



Clockwise from top left Sığacık's marina; in the Sunday home-grown market, where local produce and hand-made crafts are the order of the day; locals play backgammon

futuristic vision of the *Enterprise* captain too, giving me a passionate lowdown on Cittaslow's history before showing me around.

The Slow Food Movement was founded in 1989 in Italy. Worldwide adherents decree that all food should be tasty and nutritious, as well as produced in an environmentally and socially responsible way. In 1999, Paolo Saturnini – mayor of the Tuscan town Greve in Chianti at the time – took this ethos a step further, kick-starting Cittaslow.

Cittaslow encourages cities to promote their own unique attributes, rather than buying into a homogenised high street. "It's about small producers," explains Mayor Soyer. "Not mass tourism, but tourism on a small scale." Towns must meet around 60 highly detailed criteria in order to become a designated Cittaslow. These include benchmarks related to protection of the environment, agriculture, hospitality and cuisine. Fast-food outlets and chain stores are out. Renewable energy, slow travel and long-held local traditions are decidedly in.

Clockwise from right
Tea is served black in tulip-shaped glasses; Seferihisar's mayor, Tunç Soyer



“Cittaslow encourages cities to promote their own attributes. Fast-food outlets and chain stores are out. Renewable energy, slow travel and long-held traditions are decidedly in”



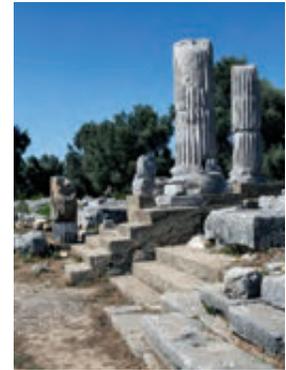
From his election in 2009, Mayor Soyer has worked diligently to get Seferihisar recognised as a Cittaslow – and he was the first in the country to succeed that same year. To date, there are 189 towns in 29 countries, with nine Cittaslow scattered throughout Turkey, although Turkish members generally look to Seferihisar as their leader.

This isn't my first experience exploring a Cittaslow. Among others, I've visited Bra, outside of Turin in Italy, which was one of the first towns to embrace the Cittaslow ethos. But Seferihisar has a different feel. As is common throughout Turkey, people are welcoming, showing me in for glass after tulip-shaped glass of tea. Even compared to gregarious Italians, the residents here are faster to weigh in with their local recommendations too – "Eat at Sığacık Liman [sigaciklimanrestaurant.com]!", "You have to try windsurfing at Büyük Akkum Beach!", "What do you mean, you haven't visited the ruins of Teos yet?!" – and other opinionated advice.

Seferihisar is justifiably proud of its Cittaslow status – apparent from the tiny snails (the Cittaslow logo) sculpted atop the town's buildings. In practical terms, workshops are run for local fishermen, instructing how best to use less popular – yet more sustainable – fish in



Clockwise from left
A fisherman repairs his nets; handcrafted bags on sale in the market; the ruins of the ancient Greek city of Teos, 5km from Sığacık



“Any resident may set up a stall for free, as long as what’s sold is locally sourced or handcrafted”

recipes such as moray and conger-eel kebabs. The local primary school has its own organic vegetable garden and raises chickens. Streetlights are, of course, solar powered.

As a visitor, it was Sığacık’s home-grown market that I found most impressive. It takes place all day every Sunday and is held along the criss-cross of Old Town streets that lace the 16th-century village centre. Any resident may set up a stall for free, as long as what’s sold is locally sourced, like bags of bee pollen, or handcrafted, like a leather mobile phone case. No wholesale products are allowed.

At the start, Mayor Soyer remembers, “Stands were so poor. People simply weren’t producing locally anymore.” But visitors from nearby Izmir began frequenting the market, requesting certain fruits and vegetables, or traditional desserts. The people of Seferihisar proudly delivered. “Producers were brave,” Soyer adds, and Sığacık’s stalls are now loaded with offerings, from aubergine-filled *börek* (like filo

pastry) and Turkish sherbet drinks, to lace-like jewellery and hand-stitched aprons.

So popular has the market proved that some of the stallholders formed a cooperative (Hıdırlık Tarımsal Kalkınma Kooperatifi) to launch the Sefertası Restaurant (seferipazar.com), which takes its name from the tiffin-style lunchboxes used historically in the region. Many of the recipes served there have been mined from the memories of over 400 locals, all aged 75 or older. Traditional dishes, such as *mantı*, Turkish ravioli with chickpeas, are virtually impossible to find elsewhere.

“The restaurant is run by women and all the members of this cooperative are women,” says Idil Yazıcıoğlu, a professional tour guide who recommends her clients dine at it. The Sefertası Restaurant is just one of the local projects credited with empowering local women, who have traditionally been left out of the mix in the regional economy.

The general vibe around town is that Seferihisar’s transformation into Turkey’s leading Cittaslow – particularly following the market’s great success – has opened the floodgates for tourism. And, in 2015, Sığacık will seek to draw in even more visitors, as it launches the world’s first fully integrated homestay holiday village. Within the compact



Old Town, each one of the 284 homeowners living there plans to rent out one room to tourists. The municipality will oversee the project, training locals in order to ensure uniform standards across the medieval town centre. Tourists will drink, dine and socialise with the villagers, in their homes, as well as in the Old Town cafés and harbourside restaurants. The result? Well, it promises to be the epitome of experiential travel.

Together, the Seferihisar municipality and local residents may still be ironing out the details, but it's apparent to me that the homestay holiday experience is ideal for visitors who are keen on a total immersion kind of getaway. That's right – if your ideal vacation is a book, a beach and total anonymity, the holiday village isn't for you. Instead, it promises to appeal to travellers who love a good natter with their hosts over breakfast, whether it's garnering tips on the best vineyard visits or foraging for edible herbs with your B&B owner's best friend's sister-in-law.

Çetin Öztürk relocated to Sığacık four years ago. He now owns the simple Orion Guest House (cittaslow-teos.blogspot.com.tr). Since he took up residence here, he says, "Seferihisar, and especially Sığacık, have changed a lot."

“The world’s first homestay holiday village promises to be the epitome of experiential travel”

As well as being a Cittaslow destination, Sığacık offers all the usual delights of the Aegean coast

Will the new homestay holiday village affect his trade? He's adamant it won't. "I think the holiday village will increase business," he says, "because visitors will decide to stay in Sığacık more than they do now. This is a good idea for tourism, but it also needs a good organisation for bookings and sustainability of the project."

As for the locals? They're more than made up by the possibilities of the project – not least in sharing this beautiful place with the wider world. "We have sea, sun, beaches and we still have our traditional lifestyle preserved," says Temel Okyar, a Sığacık resident who will be renting a room in his home as part of the homestay venture. "And [with our guests] we will pick our own vegetables from our garden. If they want to eat fish at dinner, we will go fishing ourselves in the morning. We will give [visitors] a real opportunity to live in a Cittaslow." *Kathryn Tomasetti travelled as a guest of the Turkish Tourist Board (gototurkey.co.uk)*

DESTINATION IZMIR



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Beyaz Ev Pansiyon, in Sığacık, is 600m from the beach, and serves both a local and international breakfast.



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Seven nights B&B at four-star Marlight Boutique hotel, from London Gatwick on 18 September, from £350pp.



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flies to Izmir from London Gatwick. See our insider guide on page 157.

*FOR T&CS SEE PAGE 173