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SOUTH AFRICA | APRIL 2017

101 tips to host an

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INTO THE BLUE

A week of sailing along the Turkish coast is a perfect balm for the soul. Warm turquoise water, unspoilt coastlines, incredible food, fascinating culture and, most valuably, hours and hours of time to reboot. **By Vicki Sleet**

If you, like me, feel like time is spinning out of control and if the thought of organising a foreign holiday seems absolutely impossible, given the other essential life admin and expenses that need to come first, then please trust me that a trip along the Turkish coastline, aboard a boat where every last detail, including meals and drinks, is taken care of, is what you may well need.

If you yearn for the kind of break where you'd love to see exotic places but can't face the schlep of getting yourself to and from a series of destinations, or where you crave sun-drenched days when your most demanding decision would be whether to have a swim or a(nother) glass of icy rosé after lunch, then really, a trip on a boat is it. And if I sound like something of a zealot repeating a disciple-like mantra, it's because I think I am.

You see, I was converted to this style of holiday many years ago when I first stepped aboard a magnificent reconditioned ScicSailing wooden sailing ketch. My husband, Justin, is a very keen sailor, and his idea of hell is a city holiday. The thing is, my idea of heaven is a city holiday. Luckily I'm also a bit of a sloth, so a Turkish sailing holiday works perfectly for both of us. A few days can be spent trawling the design and antiques quarters in Istanbul and haggling in the Grand Bazaar. After that it's a short flight to the coast in Bodrum or Marmaris, depending on the week's departure port, to hop on a boat to where the wind will take us. He gets to talk boat, look boat and think boat, and I get to loll.

We also love a Turkish holiday because Istanbul is accessible via an affordable and easy direct flight on Turkish Airlines from Cape Town, Joburg or Durban, and if you depart on the Saturday-evening flight from Istanbul for home, you're there by lunchtime on Sunday. Turkey is almost on the same timeline, so jet lag isn't a factor, and it's fabulously exotic (don't even start me on the food, history and culture) and affordable for South Africans. We've done the trip four times and I can't wait to explore more of Turkey with ScicSailing again this year.

Memorable MOMENTS MADE TO ORDER

ScicSailing is owned by Loes Douze, an entrepreneur who has been in the Turkish sailing game for more than 30 years. Loes operates her company, dare I say it, like a tight ship. Her teams of young Turks are snappily dressed, right down to their perfectly laundered Bermuda shorts and polo shirts. They're impeccably trained, whether in boat handling or hospitality skills, and they're enthusiastic without being annoying. Loes is all about the details - while the boats are being rerigged and refurbished in the winter months, her chefs train with Michelin-starred specialists, and the commissioned experts who lead guests on land excursions are carefully vetted by Loes herself. In the years we've travelled, we've visited ancient ruins on the Lycian Way with a Doctor of Archeology, we've traipsed through Symi in Greece (Scic also hits the Greek islands in the summer) with a jolly local who has lived there for 70 years, and we've eaten traditional Anatolian fare with a family on their handwoven rugs, high in the hills above Fethiye.

Loes has created a holiday experience exactly like the ones she prefers. 'I have always valued authentic experiences over touristy ones and I'm passionate about sharing the lesser-known jewels of Turkey with my clients,' she says. Her hidden-gems approach makes for a multitude of amazing

FAQ

- ✓ South African-passport holders can apply for a **Turkish e-Visa** online. It's delivered to your inbox immediately after payment.
- ✓ Each **ScicSailing boat** is fitted with between four and eight cabins, and each cabin consists of two single beds, a double bed or a double bed with a single bed above it.
- ✓ Each cabin is fitted with its **own bathroom**, featuring a shower and a flushing toilet.
- ✓ **All meals and drinks are included** for the eight days aboard. However, all meals and drinks enjoyed on land are for guests' own account.
- ✓ **Water sports are well catered for.** Guests are requested to send a wishlist of craft, including windsurfing, SUPs and kayaks, prior to departing.
- ✓ To check out **Itineraries**, visit www.scicsailing.eu.
- ✓ Cruise prices start from €949 (**R13 042**) **per person sharing.**



moments while on board - from mooring for the night in perfectly still, moonlit bays where there isn't another boat in sight (no mean feat in the summer months) to visiting locals-only mountain-village markets or stepping into a hilltop carpet co-operative and choosing a handmade rug made within a 10km radius. These are the kinds of experiences that make a holiday, that you end up telling your friends about when you get back home.

But her approach doesn't mean you're isolated either - Fethiye's famous fish market, where you choose your seafood and watch it being cooked, is a must if you're sailing the Turquoise Coast, and Loes makes sure you get your taste of it. The chic coastal towns of Kaş, Kalkan and Göcek are vetted each season by Loes and her team, and guests are given the lowdown on which places are hot and which are best avoided. And, of course, she'll give you insider info on what shops to visit when you're in Bodrum or Marmaris too.

Now, RELAX...

Days aboard a ScicSailing ketch are hypnotic. The waters in these parts are famous for their calm, so in the mornings, after a wake-up swim, followed by a traditional Turkish breakfast of hair-on-your-chest coffee, juicy fresh fruit, →



TOP: Ancient ruins at Knidos that you can visit during your cruise **RIGHT:** Fresh produce from local growers in the village of Ören **BELOW:** Villagers peddle their wares



GH READER SPECIAL OFFER

BOOK before 17 June 2017 and receive a €133,50 (R1 164) discount per person. PLUS book an entire boat and get two berths (one cabin) free. To redeem the special offer, e-mail Info@scicsailing.eu, and cite *Good Housekeeping*.



salty white cheese, olives, hard-boiled eggs and just-baked white bread, and after the Captain's briefing on the day's direction and destination, we generally set off by motor. By mid-morning, we'll have had a swim or two, a glass or two of Turkish tea and maybe even a nap (or two). Some guests (the ScicSailing fleet's boat can host anything from eight to 16 in double cabins) read, sunbathe or nap on deck while others brush up on their holiday backgammon skills. Me? I like to wallow in the magazines I buy in the duty-free shop, beat my husband at rummy (it never gets old!) and stare out to sea, drinking in the beautiful blues of the Aegean Sea.

Lunch, like dinner, is always a feast featuring Turkish specialities. After lunch, if we're not on land exploring, it's usually time for sailing. And this is the part of the day we all relish the most since, unlike 90% of boats operating in these parts, we actually get to sail. With the motors off and the sails unfurled, we chase the wind - sometimes it's fast-paced, but generally it's a lolling-type sail, one that invariably rocks you into a delightful state of being. I suppose it's a kind of meditation and when you're feeling frazzled by life, this is exactly the kind of respite that can reset your battery perfectly. It's why we have returned time and time again. A week spent on a ScicSailing boat is always enough to wipe this mom's motherboard clean, reenergising me.

Although family and friend groups make up a large part of her business, after many years in the game, Loes has become adept at 'matching' smaller groups of guests who may not know one another but who are keen to sail and experience an authentic Turkish holiday. From families with similarly aged children to people keen on combining their time on board with traipsing through ancient ruins, or singletons craving holiday time but fearful of repetitive 'table for one' scenarios, Loes knows her game. And with a 70% rate of return holiday bookings, it's clear her method works wonderfully.

With each day's new destination or excursion, and despite the time spent relaxing, there's never a dull moment. ScicSailing boasts a series of themed weeks, from artists' retreats to cooking and foodie breaks, and yoga weeks - there's even a nudist's week, if that's your bag! For us, we're happy to go where the boat goes, no day or destination is the same, each bay brings new swimming opportunities and each meal is more delicious than the one before. It's me-time and we-time - and a rare chance to indulge in both. **GH** - *GH Lifestyle Editor Vicki Sleet flew to Turkey courtesy of Turkish Airlines and was hosted by ScicSailing.*



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Dried fruit and nuts galore; getting the boat's sails ready; Vicki and her husband, Justin; beautiful handmade carpets on display for sale



Getting there and back

- ✓ **Turkish Airlines** departs from Joburg and Cape Town daily, and from Durban on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.
- ✓ **The check-in baggage** limit is 30kg.
- ✓ **Turkish Airlines** flies to 296 destinations in 120 countries.
- ✓ **The flight time** from Cape Town to Istanbul is 11 hours. It's 1 hour from Istanbul to Bodrum and 25 minutes from Istanbul to Marmaris.
- ✓ **Voted** Europe's best airline in 2016 by Skytrax for the sixth consecutive year. For more info regarding flights, visit www.thy.com.