

Nautical travel



All at Sea

Sailing off the coast of
Turkey, Lisa Harris sinks
into deep relaxation

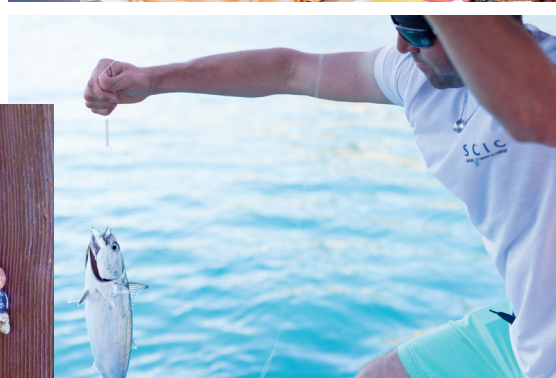


Postcard perfect:
the beautiful
Göcek Bay





Little touches:
traditional beads
decorate the boat



TURKISH TIPPLES

- 1 **SPARKLING WATER**, lemon juice and a pinch of salt – great for rehydrating in the summer heat (also an old Turkish cure for a hangover!)
- 2 **TURKISH COFFEE**: always served with a little glass of water. It has a serious caffeine kick!
- 3 **ÇANKAYA KAVAKLIDERE**: A popular Turkish white wine, delicious with mezze or grilled seafood

From top: Breakfast is served; fishing on board makes for a fresh lunch; catching up with emails using the Wi-Fi; relaxing with a cocktail or two

Pleasures are simple on a sailing holiday: the sun on your back, fresh kiwi and oranges for breakfast, a splash of cold water as you dive into the sea. Lounging on deck, afternoon cocktail in hand, you feel like you've truly made it in life.

I'd never been on a sailing holiday before, but as I emerged from my third swim of the day to be greeted with freshly cooked Turkish kebabs and spiced orzo salad for lunch, it started to feel like the best holiday idea ever.

ScicSailing (pronounced 'chic' sailing), a Dutch-British company co-owned by the infectious enthusiastic Loes Douze, has about 15 itineraries off the coast of Turkey, from four-day short hops to two-week cruises. My boyfriend and I flew into Dalaman and, after a taxi ride to Marmaris, boarded our elegant gulet (a bit like a schooner), where we joined the rest of our group of 10. Our one-week cruise was made up of a mix of ages – from 35 to 65 – and five nationalities, including couples, singles and friends.

After drinks and nibbles with the captain and an early night, we set sail at dawn the next morning, and by breakfast we were out on the open water. Our route that week would take us through the gulf of Fethiye, ducking into hidden coves and into the Dalyan estuary, before setting our final anchor down in the elegant seaside resort of Göcek.

We had been excited about the cruise, but a little nervous that we might go

stir-crazy after being stuck on a boat for seven days with complete strangers. We needn't have worried, as Loes takes great pleasure in matching passengers at the

'Only the start and end ports were fixed, it was up to us where to go next'

booking stage, so you have lots in common. There was also plenty of space on the double-masted boat to find some solitude if you needed it, but

everyone was so laid-back that we ended the holiday by swapping emails and promising to stay in touch. One of the best things about the trip was that only the start and end ports were fixed: every morning the captain would take us through options for the day's sailing over a cup of coffee, and it was up to us (and the prevailing winds) where we would go next. Each day

started with breakfast and a swim before a short sail to our next destination, reading, sunbathing and relaxing, with an excursion on land after lunch, and then a little more sailing and swimming before settling in for the night.

The crew were charming hosts; serving cocktails and cooking our meals, while also being incredibly skilled sailors. You could spend a whole afternoon just watching them leap about, hoisting sails and dropping the anchor. Guests can pitch in if they have previous experience, but it's more of a 'chambers on deck' than an 'all hands on deck' kind of break.

Food is perfectly pitched: breakfast is a feast of melon, strawberries, yogurt and honey, with eggs, tomatoes and cheeses for a savoury Med flavour, too. Lunch and dinner are always healthy: a big salad, olives from the crew's family farm, and traditional dishes like garlic aubergines, creamy turmeric chicken, grilled fish and calamari. Meals are all ▶





Paradise: one of the picturesque beaches in Fethiye



From top: making friends with fellow guests; a tasty on-board barbecue; a crew member shows his sailing skills; the sunset over Gemiler Island, below



included, and so is a generous supply of wine, beer and spirits that fuel conversation late into the night.

We loved the sigara böregi (crispy filo rolls of spinach, feta and dill) that the chef taught us how to make, which he also does on selected culinary cruises (they have biking, cake decorating, yoga and archaeology-themed cruises, too). My top foodie moment was when the chef dropped a fishing line off our boat, caught a big, fat tuna and then threw it on a barbecue. It was the freshest lunch I've ever had.

Fresh food was a running theme – even in the most remote inlets. One afternoon while we were anchored in a bay, a little boat chugged alongside us with an elderly husband and wife team cooking up spinach gözleme flatbreads



right in front of us. Shortly afterwards, an ice cream seller bobbed along, so we treated ourselves to a Cornetto, too. It was the ultimate food-delivery service!

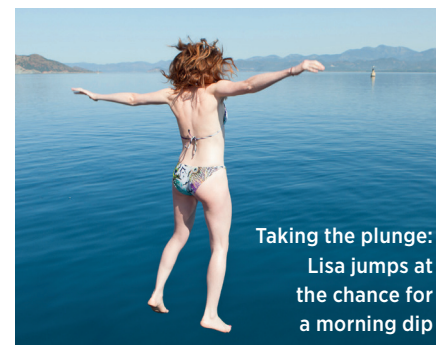
It turns out the Turkish coast is littered with incredible ancient artifacts – some of which are only accessible by boat. Göcek Bay is home to a ruined bath that's said to have been given as a wedding gift to Cleopatra by Mark Anthony (it's actually thought to be a ruined monastery, but the myth is far more romantic). The island of Gemiler is scattered with ruined buildings and some archaeologists believe it houses the original tomb of St Nicholas, the fourth-century bishop and saint, who was the inspiration behind Santa Claus.

There are reminders of the region's history along the coast, and we were taken by the Kaunos amphitheatre and the Kaunian rock tombs, dating back to the fourth century BC, carved into a sheer cliff face above the Dalyan river.

On these day trips ashore or when visiting a city like Fethiye, the buzz of the markets, backstreet souks and heat of the hammam was enticing, but it all felt a bit overwhelming after days

at sea. We were always glad to return to the sanctity of the boat and enjoy breakfast in a quiet inlet the next day.

I've never relaxed so much. Your mind becomes as still as the water as you gaze at the horizon. The only things to think about are taking a dip, having a siesta or whether it is too early for a glass of rosé... which, of course, it never is! ♦
For our special offer cruise prices see pages 130 and 131.



Taking the plunge: Lisa jumps at the chance for a morning dip

HOW TO BOOK

Prices start at €949 per person and include food and drinks (scicsailing.eu). Flights must be booked and paid for separately. BA flies from London Gatwick to Dalaman (ba.com).

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