



Wild time in Turkey

Kapi Creek restaurant by night. Food and hospitality are both superb.



Elaine enjoying a sundowner



Above: Gocek Marina is modern, well appointed and attractive. Below: Gocek market on Sunday mornings is a blaze of colour and a great place to be. A wide variety of goods as well as fresh food are on offer.



Gordon Buchanan takes a week's charter along the rugged and mountainous Lycian coast – which is punctuated by interesting coves and inlets – and enjoys an exhilarating range of sailing conditions.

Finding a gap in diaries at the end of October, just at that time when the UK sailing season is getting darker, windier and wetter, presented the chance of a week-long charter in Turkey. The decision to go took considerably less time than it does to tuck in a reef.

Top Yacht, which operates a sizeable fleet in Turkey, had a Jeanneau 39DS available at their base in Gocek on Turkey's Lycian coast. They did however need the boat at their other base, Keçi Buku at the end of the chosen week, so we even had a broad passage plan made for us. The trip can apparently be done in less than a day, but we took full advantage of the time available to enjoy a fabulous cruising experience. To say we enjoyed the cruise is a major understatement.

Travel arrangements from the UK were of necessity

rather rushed, because we were flying out very shortly after the crash of XL Airways, hence we flew on a Saturday night with Thomas Cook from Gatwick to Dalaman in Turkey. Glad to have any flight at all, our arrival at Dalaman just before midnight was not too much of a hardship. After clearing immigration and paying the visitor's visa fee of £10 cash per person, we left the arrivals hall to be met almost immediately by Top Yacht's friendly driver who drove us the half hour to the Gocek base. Despite the late hour, Nigel, the base manager,



welcomed us and showed us aboard *Caliope*, our boat for the next week. Despite Nigel's irrepressible cheeriness, we felt sorry for him as he explained that he would be meeting another crew at four that morning. All the Top Yacht staff we met during our time in Turkey seemed to have the same happy attitude where absolutely nothing was too much trouble.

Caliope is fitted out as the owner's version with double cabins fore and aft, leaving the main saloon as a very spacious compartment. A decent size galley with a huge fridge and one large toilet/shower compartment completed the layout. Perfect for two couples and even fine for six, but since there were only two of us, we had space to spare. Interestingly, the after cabin in this layout has the centreline panel offset to

port. This not only creates a huge bunk, but leaves a sizeable locker in what is left of what would be the port cabin in the charter version. This locker is almost big enough to use as a single cabin, but is accessed through the toilet area. It provided ample room to store the dinghy and loads of other gear.

Despite having arrived late, we were well refreshed when awakened by the sunshine the following morning. A quick breakfast and we were ready to complete the usual handover checks. Nigel again proved most helpful, explaining the boat's systems and more in a very relaxed manner, even providing a discount code for any shopping at one of the local supermarkets. Shopping duly completed, and delighted that our heavy bags were delivered



A stiff breeze provided superb sailing at times

right to the boat, we enjoyed a light lunch in one of the local bars before setting sail in early afternoon.

Following our discussion with Nigel regarding good stopping points, we made our first at Kapi Creek, a gentle 7-8 miles away. This sheltered inlet is one of many around the area of Skopea Limani and

it was easy to imagine it being used throughout the centuries by all sorts of craft, being both well hidden and offering easy access to the expanse of the Mediterranean a few minutes away. A free running imagination conjured up images of pirate coves and lots of swashbuckling. Now a restaurant and some rather ramshackle piers populate it.

Our approach, being strangers, was cautious and this must have been noted, because no sooner than we were in hailing range, no less a person than Ismail Korkmaz, the restaurant owner, directed us to a vacant berth and took our lines. A leisurely glass of wine sitting in the cockpit while the sun dropped behind the hills put us in just the right mood for our first Turkish dinner and

exceptionally good it was too. The Kapi Creek Restaurant is mostly open air, but even in October the evening temperature was extremely pleasant; warmth that was more than matched by the natural charm of all the locals we met, as it was throughout our time in Turkish waters.

Happily fortified by our meal, the following morning saw us departing for Ekincik, a sail of about 30 miles. After motoring the first few miles, purely in order to charge the batteries, and despite the mate's comments – the refreshing beer having nothing to do with the delay – we

WEATHER

Temperatures were all about 25°C during the day, dropping to about 12-15 overnight. Sleeping for me only required a sheet, but Elaine used a blanket as well just before dawn.



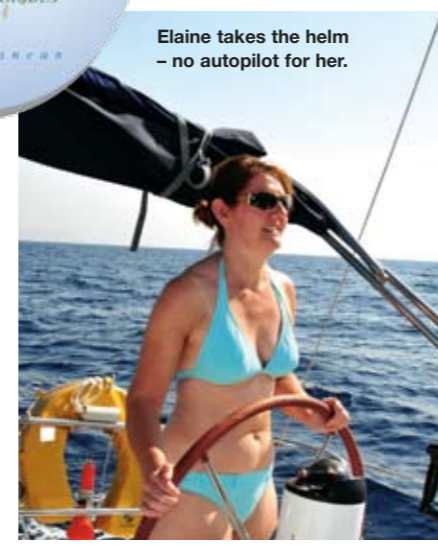
Turtles in the Koycegiz River. Some are quite tame, but their jaws crunch crabs with ease.



Boats and bougainvillea at Bozborun. One of the larger gulets that we saw.



Above: Boatbuilding Turkish style – the craft are extremely well built despite the humble nature of the boatyard.



Elaine takes the helm – no autopilot for her.



Top left: The busy main shopping street at Gocek. Above: Under full sail and blue skies – creaming along in the sunshine. It was all a far cry from Scotland in October. Left: The carved tombs at Caunos are world famous.



BOOK OFFER

We used Imray's cruising guide *Turkish Waters & Cyprus Pilot* (7th ed) by Rod Heikell, £34.50 – on which Imray offers a 10 per cent discount to readers of *Sailing Today* who quote this article.



FACTS & FIGURES

Money Turkish Lira is the currency in use throughout and during October 2008 the exchange rate was just over 2 Lira per £ sterling. Cash is more commonly used than at home and, except for the larger places, credit/debit cards are not commonly used. The major marinas will, however take almost any form of payment.

Language Being typical of the British abroad, we were extremely grateful that English is widely and, generally, very well spoken. German, French and several other languages are certainly not unknown, such is the cosmopolitan nature of the visiting population in this part of Turkey.

Mobile phones We used the local Vodafone link and found that coverage was extremely good, even up to 12 or so miles offshore. Mind you, at the prices charged when we got home, the service should have been good. Text messages are recommended although even these were charged at a somewhat higher rate than at home.

unfurled the sails to a nicely freshening breeze. Our course took us around the Point of Kurdoglu Br and onto a close reach with the sun shining and the boat sailing at about 4.5kn – just superb.

Ekincek lies at the head of Koycegiz Limani and although totally exposed to the south, was perfectly sheltered from the gentle west wind that blew throughout our time there. We anchored in about 10m and had no difficulty in getting the anchor to bite well. The village of Ekincek Iskelesi is not the most attractive in this part of Turkey, although the views of the local scenery most certainly are. The main reason for choosing to stop was the proximity of Dalyan and ancient Caunos, about five miles away up the Koycegiz River. Inaccessible by deep draught boats, the locals have a thriving business running day trips in small motor launches. Within half an hour of dropping the anchor, one of these boats came alongside

and after some half-hearted haggling, such was the friendly approach, we had arranged to be picked up from *Caliope* the following morning. The carved tombs at Caunos are quite spectacular and one can only wonder at the determination of the monks who



created them. The trip up the river was no less appealing and, even though our lunch at a restaurant in the town of Dalyan made for a couple of sleepy faces on the return journey, the whole experience was one we were glad not to have missed.

Regretting that we only had a week instead of a year in these lovely waters, we decided to miss the bustle of

Marmaris and head to Serci Limani, a quiet and almost landlocked inlet just short of our turn northwards around the Bozburun peninsula.

Wind in Turkey sometimes blows fairly hard and, just to make us feel at home, it was right on the nose – forcing us to motor the last 10 miles. The number of boats that visit Serci Limani at the height of summer must be enormous, but we were fortunate to be one of only half a dozen visiting yachts. Having negotiated the deep but narrow entrance we were immediately welcomed by a local in a small rowing boat who pointed us towards a choice of vacant moorings where his brother would take our stern line ashore. Some UK marinas could learn from such courtesy.

An entertaining host in the restaurant at the head of the bay accompanied a superb meal of fresh mullet. Unlike the UK, restaurants seldom seem to have a printed menu, relying more on what fresh produce is available, which

results in some amusing calculations when the bill is requested. Somehow, the cost of a meal for two always came to enough under 100 Lira to allow for a tip of the balance. Not much cheaper than at home, but we didn't grudge a cent of any surplus.

Beating back

Weather in Turkey is seemingly not all gentle breezes and although the following morning dawned calm and sunny, less than half an hour after we left Serci Limani it was blowing a good F6. And guess what – we had to beat all the way round the peninsula on our way to Bozburun. The sun was still shining though.

Bozburun lies at the head of the bay known as Yesilova Korfezi and is beautifully sheltered behind the island of Kizil Ada. The easily navigated channels are narrow enough to ensure good shelter and once the island is abeam to port, the vista of the Bozburun area opens like a picture postcard. We moored in the

harbour, this being the only place we had to pay, albeit at modest cost. The advantage was easy transfer of shopping; replenishing our stocks of sun cream and mosquito repellent ranking fairly high on the list, although I personally thought that the beer stocks should have topped the list. Shopping was easily accomplished and some domestic tasks, such as disposing of accumulated rubbish, duly completed, we enjoyed a sundowner in the cockpit as the shadows lengthened over the harbour and surrounding hills.

Dinner ashore meant choosing from the wide selection of restaurants and purely by chance we decided to eat at one where the owner's wife not only recognised our accents, but responded similarly. She had forsaken the cold of Scotland's Stirling for the charms of southern Turkey – and we certainly could not fault that. Dinner included our now normal selection of local delicacies as a starter. These varied from place to place, but generally included humous,

tsatsiki and spicy lamb, all usually served with the very tasty local bread.

A leisurely start the next day saw us gently motoring out of the bay while we admired some of the shoreside houses, many a blaze of colour with their covering of purple and white bougainvillea. The number of moored gulets was amazing. Although we saw quite a few under way, the number that appeared to be moored for the forthcoming winter made us wonder how they all survived. Built of wood, they all showed signs of constant maintenance and of recent use. Where they all go during the height of the summer season was a mystery to us. Later on we did manage to examine a new one being built right on the water's edge, mainly with hand tools, but to a quality that would put many modern plastic boats to shame. Heavy displacement and with powerful engines, they cruise Turkish and Greek waters and, judging by their numbers, must provide a very pleasant experience for their guests. »

OUR BOAT

Caliope, our Jeanneau 39DS, was well equipped and, being nearly new, everything worked. She came with furling main and genoa, twin wheels, and a 40hp Yanmar. There were cabin fans, a large refrigerator, a decent size shower and loo, and two double cabins, one forward, one aft. The main cabin could also be converted to a double. Her equipment included Raymarine instruments at both helm stations, Raymarine autopilot and down below a Raymarine VHF and GPS/plotter. Although well fitted out, it would have been useful to have a repeater for the GPS/plotter in the cockpit, particularly as we were sailing in waters new to us. A radar would also have been useful, especially in the event of the really poor visibility that can apparently occur occasionally. She had a decent anchor and plenty of sizeable chain as well as an electric anchor windlass, all of which seemed quite appropriate for the area where anchoring depths can sometimes be quite deep. She sailed well and we found her very comfortable.



Left: Kapi Creek is both sheltered and extremely pretty. Above: a stunning sunset over the marina at the end of our holiday. Bottom: Keçi Buku marina is home to many well-travelled yachts.

End in sight

Our last full day was spent drifting towards the head of Hisaronu Korfézi, or Gulf of Hisaronu, on our way to our final destination at Keçi Buku.

The shoreline sports a number of uninhabited, but large buildings, most of which were only partially completed. We later discovered that these were generally hotel projects on which construction had been started before planning permission was granted. When this was declined, the buildings were abandoned. One or two had overcome such problems and looked to be thriving with much activity, both afloat and ashore.

We chose to anchor for the night off the beach at Kuyulu Br. Tranquil and with a beauty that was enhanced by the glass like reflections on the water, we were most reluctant to leave the cockpit, even for dinner, until well after dark. The silence was of that ethereal quality that is almost a sound in itself. We did eventually drag ourselves off to a last dinner aboard



Caliope and, as is often the case with charters, the mixture of food comprising just about everything that was left may have been a little bizarre, but along with our last bottle of Turkish wine, was equally memorable in its own way.

Sarah from Top Yacht at Keçi Buku had very kindly sent me a text message saying that, as *Caliope* was not due to go out on charter again for a few days, we did not need to finish our cruise until the afternoon. As a result we were able to enjoy a very pleasant lunch stop just around the headland from the marina at Keçi Buku. This we followed

with a final, but unhurried, cleanup before motoring the last couple of miles.

The marina at Keçi Buku is a major yachting centre with just about all the facilities one could expect, so it was with some consternation that we were unable to identify the location of the fuelling berth from seaward. A quick telephone call to Sarah elicited enough information for me to be able to pretend that my red face was caused by the sun.

Fuelling duly completed, we motored the last few metres to the Top Yacht pontoon where Sarah was waiting to greet us along with a couple of very

HOW TO GET THERE

The cost of chartering *Caliope* for a week in October 2009 will be £1,562 with costs for other dates ranging from £1,272 to £2,142 at the height of the season. We paid an additional £160 to cover the cost of insuring the security deposit, but as an alternative there is a refundable security deposit of £2,500. Included were end cleaning, bed linen, towels, cruising permits, starter pack and services of base staff throughout the charter.

Flights: Gatwick to Dalaman – from £290 per person. Private return transfers: Airport to base – £131 for two (based upon two sailing one way, Gocek to Keçi Buku).

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willing hands who made short work of completing the usual Mediterranean style of stern to mooring arrangements

A quick debrief and we were free to have a post cruise beer at the Yacht Club bar before meeting Sarah, husband Kevin and Nick for dinner.

Our bags having been collected from the boat for us and placed in the Top Yacht minibus, we were then driven back to Dalaman airport for our flight home again to drizzly Britain.

Nothing, however, could diminish our sense of satisfaction – the combination of Turkish friendliness and Top Yacht's efficiency, plus the company's wonderful staff, was unforgettable.

We certainly hope to return for a more extended cruise before too long.