

TURKISH TREASURES SAFARI: POINTS OF INTEREST *EN ROUTE*¹

THE DAY TAGS ARE INTENDED TO CORRESPOND WITH THE ITINERARY (DAYS 1 AND 2 WERE TRAVELLING AND SETTLING IN). PLACES OF MAJOR INTEREST ARE NOT INCLUDED AS THERE ARE READILY AVAILABLE SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON THEM.

Day 3

THRACE

Thrace is that small area of northwest Turkey which remains part of Europe. It occupies about a quarter of the ancient province of the same name.

Along the Sea of Marmara

From Istanbul, a coast road follows the curve of the shore round the Sea of Marmara to Eceabat on the Dardanelles. As you approach **Silivri (ancient Selymbria)**, look for a fine Ottoman bridge, one of many built by Sinan (who also designed the Süleymanie Mosque) in this area. Süleyman the Magnificent liked to hunt here and once had a narrow escape from a flash flood by climbing onto the roof of a pavilion to escape the torrent.

At **Marmaraereğlisi**, are the fortifications, harbour, theatre, acropolis and stadium of the Samian colony of Perinthus Heracleia.

Tekirdağ is a seaside town popular with Turkish holidaymakers. Its fish restaurants draw patrons from as far away as Istanbul. Hungarian Prince Ferenc II Rakoczi (1676-1735), invited to Istanbul in 1717 to help fight the Austrians, spent the last years of his life in Tekirdağ. The project was abandoned and the prince never returned to his native land. His house has been converted to a museum of Hungarian items.

Gelibolu

Gelibolu an attractive little fishing town with a small tower museum dedicated to the Dardanelles campaign and the great 17th-century Turkish admiral Piri Reis.

Day 4

Gelibolu is the starting point for our tour of **Gallipoli**.

MARMARA

Marmara is a green and fertile province south of the Sea of Marmara. In classical times, this area was divided between Bithynia and Mysia. After the expulsion of the Persians from Asia Minor by Alexander the Great, the Bithynians formed an independent kingdom with its capital at Nicomedia (modern İzmit).

Çanakkale

Çanakkale became an active trading and transit point between Asia and Europe after Sultan Mehmet II built a fortress there in 1452. (Mehmet II's conquest of Constantinople in 1453 marks the beginning of the Ottoman Empire.)

In the 19th-century, Çanakkale was home to scores of consulates and custom houses.

In more ancient times, it was at this part of the Dardanelles that the Persian King Xerxes built his bridge of boats across the narrowest part of the straits to land 100,000 troops in Thrace. Ever since then the Dardanelles have remained a crucial control point between the European and Asian continents.

Today there would seem not too much more to Çanakkale, apart from its attractive seaside promenade, restaurants and cafes. It is suggested to take a walk to the small promontory near the entrance to the

¹ Information in this commentary has been unabashedly plagiarised from travel guides and internet sites.

military installation at the north end of the town (inaccessible in 2008). From there you have a spectacular view of old Çanakkale extending into the straits, its old **Ottoman fortress** (now a military museum), the harbour and, beyond, the broad panorama of the Dardanelles. (The military museum was certainly worth the visit.)

The **Çanakkale Archaeological Museum** has artefacts, sculpture and ceramics from Troy.

Day 5

Troy

Possibly the most interesting thing about Troy is sorting out in one's own mind whether the events so often depicted ever took place at all; and whether Helen and Paris, Agamemnon, Achilles and Odysseus ever existed at all.

Whatever one believes, Troy certainly has a lot of historical and architectural interest. In 333 BC, Alexander the Great came to Troy. Having made a sacrifice to the spirit of Priam (alias Peter O'Toole) and received a gold crown from a citizen of Sigeum (where the Greeks had supposedly beached their ships), he anointed his body with oil and ran naked to the mound where Achilles was buried. Motorcycle visitors are expected to do likewise.

After being destroyed during the Mithridatic War of about 82 BC, it was rebuilt by Julius Caesar. It received special honours from several emperors because it was the birthplace of Aeneas, the legendary founder of Rome.

Towards the end of the 19th century, Heinrich Schliemann, a German businessman and an amateur archaeologist, began to excavate Troy using the *Iliad* as his guide. He had decided that a huge mound at Hisarlik was the site of ancient Troy and dug a trench through it. He found the remnants of a city and a considerable amount of artefacts and treasure which he called the "Treasure of Priam." However, it was all from an earlier bronze age civilisation rather than Homer's Troy.

Some nine levels of ancient Troy have been identified. There is on-going controversy and argument over whether Troy VI or Troy VII was Homer's Troy. Turkish archaeologists are of the view that Troy VI is Priam's city.

Troy today has little to show for its illustrious pedigree. However, some highlights are the massive tower in the great wall of Troy VI, which could well be Priam's Troy. The carefully constructed houses of Troy VI can be seen in contrast to the more careless constructions of Troy VII. You can also see Schliemann's great north-south trench. Northwest of the paved ramp, against the wall of Troy II, he found his golden treasure. It may have been through the west gate beyond that the Trojan horse was brought into the city.

THE AEGEAN

Bozcaada

Look for Bozcaada, an island off the coast just south of Troy. According to Homer, this is where the Greek fleet moored while Odysseus and his men were inside the wooden horse waiting to surprise the Trojans.

Chryse

The ancient site of Chryse hasn't got much to show in terms of ruins, but is rich in Homeric significance. It is the place from where Agamemnon took the daughter of the priest of Apollo. The priest was able to call on the gods for help and, although his daughter was eventually returned, Agamemnon demanded the mistress of Achilles as compensation. This led to a feud between the two Greek warriors that permeates the whole story of the *Iliad*.

Babakale

Babakale is a drowsy traditional village at the western-most point of Asia Minor. This may not be on our route as it seems accessible only from an unmarked road back from Behramkale that hugs the coastline. One guidebook refers to a small working fishing village about 3km north Babakale as the perfect place for those craving secrecy and anonymity. The village is dominated by an Ottoman fortress and also has a small number of hotels and holiday villas.

Assos and Behramkale

The ancient city of Assos is located on the Bay of Edremit. Its most striking feature is its **acropolis**, which can be seen from a distance. There are many very narrow streets that wind their way past typical houses and several small shops. It manifests a way of life that hasn't changed in centuries. There is a mosque converted from a church with a cross and Greek inscription over the door reflecting a time when Assos was part of the Byzantine Empire. The **magnificent citadel** is built on an outcrop of solid granite with hefty stone walls.

Within the walls of the citadel are the remnants of the **Temple of Athena**, built in about 530 BC at the top of a near vertical drop of 240m. Destroyed as an unwanted reminder of the recent pagan past by the Byzantines, all that remains here are a few Doric columns and the platform of the Acropolis itself. From here a breathtaking panorama spreads out before you nearly to the horizon of the Gulf of Edremit across the Greek island of Lesbos.

Worthy of note is the fact that Aristotle was invited to Assos and spent more than three years living and working there. He founded a school of philosophy and conducted his early exploratory work in zoology, biology and botany. It is said that a peaceful stroll among the remaining columns still evokes the atmosphere in which the great rhetorician and thinker lived and worked.

From the main village, a precipitous road crawls down the cliff, past the old walls and ruined sarcophagi, to the harbour area and narrow ribbon of seashore, home to the now fashionable fishing village of **Behramkale**. Behramkale has become an oasis for many of Istanbul's artists, actors and academics who find this secluded port irresistible.

Ayvalik

Ayvalik is known for its olives and soap-making. It is described as a large resort town with a picture perfect fisherman's Harbour overlooking a glistening bay across which some two dozen deep green islands are scattered like thrown dice. While described as relatively unknown to foreigners, it has some of Turkey's most extensive beaches and some of the best seafood dining in the country. Ayvalik is a sleepy town of handsome wooden houses lining meandering lanes that are more reminiscent of Greece and Turkey. In fact, the town was almost entirely Greek until the population exchange of 1923. Local lore also has it that the reason for the construction of the maze of narrow alleys that threads the entire town was to assist smugglers trying to escape from the authorities.

Bergama

Bergama is the modern day site of the ancient city of **Pergamon**.

Pergamon was once a great Hellenistic city and the centre of culture, commerce and medicine to rival the other centres of Mediterranean Hellenism, such as Ephesus, Alexandria and Antioch. It rose to fame in the carve-up of Alexander's empire after his death. In its heyday, it possessed a library as famous as that at Alexandria. It was here that parchment was invented. It was also an intellectual centre that possessed famous schools of grammar and medicine. Perhaps its best known relic is the Temple of Zeus within the Acropolis. Sadly, little remains of the temple today except for the foundations. The temple was excavated in the 1870s and its most famous item, the great altar, was shipped to Berlin and rebuilt. It remains the centrepiece of the Pergamon Museum in eastern Berlin. Supposedly it is the altar that is being referred to in the Apocalypse/Book of Revelation, 2: 12-13: "In Pergamos, where Satan's Throne is".

Izmir

Izmir is ancient Smyrna. There have been settlements here since ancient times. However, it was Alexander the Great that moved the then existing settlement to a new citadel built on top of Mount Pagus and named it Smyrna.

Smyrna remained a vigorous city until sacked by the Arabs on their way towards the conquest of Constantinople. At the beginning of the 11th century, Seljuk Turks captured the city, only to be ousted by Crusaders. It was then sacked by the Mongol hordes of Timur before finally falling to the Ottomans in 1415.

After World War I, the city was taken over by Greece, who saw it as the centrepiece of a new Hellenistic empire. That failed with the Greek evacuation in 1922 and a major fire; followed by the great population exchange of Asia Minor in 1923. (There is a very good read about this era in a book called *Paradise Lost* by Giles Milton. Its sub-title is *Smyrna 1922 – The Destruction of Islam's City of Tolerance*. It well captures the halcyon days of grandeur of Smyrna in the years before and even during the war; and the horror and barbarity that followed.)

Once the equal of the fabled city of Troy and a rival to Pergamon as the centre of education and medicine, Izmir now attracts throngs of less privileged Turks from all over Anatolia and the East searching for work.

It has an imposing **Fortress of Kadifekale** on Mount Pagus, which offers an unparalleled view of the harbour and the city below.

Kuşadasi.

Kuşadasi is known for its sparkling water, broad sandy beaches and large marina. It is essentially a holiday resort and stopping-off point for cruise ships. It also has carpet and leather shopping. It is said that this part of Turkey has suffered from the 1998 earthquake and more recent global political events, which have affected tourism.

Dove Island is connected to the mainland by a causeway. It has a restored 14th or 15 century **fortress**, which is now a disco.

Day 6

Ephesus

Ephesus has a long history that predates the Romans. However, Ephesus entered a golden age during the Roman era when Augustus declared Ephesus the capital of the province of Asia Minor in place of Pergamon.

St Paul also visited Ephesus in 53 AD and established the first Christian Church.

Most of the surviving ruins of Ephesus belong to the Roman imperial period.

See separate notes on Ephesus.

Selçuk

Selçuk is a small town whose importance is principally its proximity to Ephesus and its housing of the **Ephesus Museum**. Worth noting also are the Selçuk **Fortress** on the hill of Ayasoluk and the **Basilica of St. John** located south of the fortress. St John is said to have lived the last years of his life here. (See notes on Ephesus.)

Day 7

Pamukkale and Hierapolis

Pamukkale is a shimmering white cascade, formed by limestone-laden hot springs that have created stalactites, potholes and magical fairy-tables. The water is reputed to be beneficial to the eyes and skin and to alleviate rheumatism, asthma and dermatitis. Wading in the little pools on the plateau is now forbidden, but you can swim in the Sacred Pool at the **Pamukkale Termal** (and, presumably, "our own thermal pool at the hotel").

The ruins of the splendid **Hierapolis** are spread over a mile from the city. Hierapolis was founded by Eumenes II of Pergamon and bequeathed by Attalus II to Rome. It was levelled by an earthquake in AD 17 but was rapidly rebuilt and enjoyed prosperity in the 2nd and 3rd centuries. The **theatre** is vast and the intricate friezes of the stage building have undergone restoration. Below the theatre is the small cave of the Plutonium where you can hear gushing water. A grill seals the cave now but it was believed to be an entrance to hell. East of here are the very substantial remains of **Roman Froninus Street**. Look out for the impressive remains of **Roman public toilets**.

Day 8

MEDITERRANEAN COAST

LYCIA

The area called Lycia is essentially the peninsula between Fethiye and Antalya. Its population, the Lycians, settled the area from about 1400 BC. Their history included creating a federation of several cities (from about the 6th century BC); falling under Persian rule (about 540 BC); coming under Hellenistic influence with the arrival of Alexander the Great (about 333 BC); enjoying a degree of independence after Alexander; being conquered by Antiochus III of Syria (197 BC); coming under the Roman Empire (about 189 BC), to enjoy a century or so of independence compliments of Mark Antony after his victory at Philippi (42 BC), and returning to the Roman Empire in the 1st century AD.

Fethiye

At the western edge of Lycia, Fethiye is a small attractive port town tucked between a broad bay and the sheer cliff of **Mount Cragos**, the western end of the Taurus Mountains. Although there has been a town here since the Lycians built **Telmessos** about 2,500 years ago, most of the town is brand new, having been flattened by earthquakes in 1856 and 1957. Little else remains of the ancient city other than a series of **Lycian rock tombs** in the cliff behind the town, the largest of which is the grandiose **Temple Tomb of Amyntas**; a theatre being restored; and, on top of the mountain, the last remnants of a 14th century **Crusader fort**.

Kaya (Kayaköy?)

Kaya is described as an eerie ghost town, which makes a fascinating excursion. It was home to about 3,500 Greeks until the deportations of the 1920s. The Macedonian Muslims who were due to take over the village believed it to be cursed and refused to move in, so the whole settlement of about 400 homes stands silent. The church and a few houses on the fringes have been restored using EU money.

Ölüdeniz

Ölüdeniz supposedly had one of the most beautiful beaches on the Mediterranean ("a turquoise and cobalt lagoon encircled by platinum sand, with stone pines leaning crookedly over the water" – sounds like a miner's paradise!). However, unrestricted development has pretty much ruined what was once an idyllic lagoon with a narrow spit of sand between it and the sea.

Tlos

Tlos is on the eastern side of the main road. It is a place that was known to the Hittites in the 14th century BC. The **Ottoman castle** was inhabited until the 1800s. This little-known site also has many Lycian "house" tombs. Below the town near the river are the remains of a wealthy Roman city.

Saklikent

Saklikent is also on the east side of the main road - about 3 km in from it. It is a cool, dark gorge carved by the turbulent Eşen River about 300m high and 18 km long. A wooden catwalk leads about 150m into the gorge.

Pinara

Back to the west side of the main road, Pinara was a 4th century BC colony of **Xanthos**, which became a prominent member of the Lycian League. The earliest town is built at the top of a sheer cliff honey-combed by Lycian tombs. The Roman city is on a smaller hill near the car park.

Sidyma

The scattered remains of 2nd century BC Sidyma have almost been swamped by the modern village of Dodurga, much of which has been built with ancient stones.

Letoön

Letoön, partly submerged by the rising water table and now clad in reeds and inhabited by frogs and waterbirds, is the site of **three adjacent temples** dedicated to Leto (said to have been the lover of Zeus), Apollo, and Artemis, the ruling deities of Lycia. It was here, according to legend, that Lycia received its name. When Leto became pregnant, she fled from Mt Olympos to protect her twins from jealous Hera. The local shepherds drove her off but the wolves sheltered and fed her and the babies. In gratitude she named the area Lycia (*lykos* is the Greek word for wolf). A well preserved theatre has 16 masks above the entrance to the vaulted passage beneath the upper seats on the southwest.

Xanthos

Xanthos is only about 1km from the main road. It was the leading town of Lycia. It was famous for a pride so fierce that twice it chose to self-destruct rather than surrender to overwhelming enemies. In 540 BC, when the Persian general, Harpagos, advanced across the plain and besieged the citadel, rather than submit, the men of Xanthos enclosed their women, children and slaves within the walls and burned the place to the ground. They then marched out to meet the enemy and were killed to a man. In 42 BC, two years after the murder of Julius Caesar, Brutus besieged Xanthos but again the people fought to the death and he gained control of a city that had been razed. Following Mark Antony's victory over Brutus, he poured money into rebuilding Xanthos which became the capital of Roman Lycia.

The site was virtually intact when British explorer Sir Charles Fellows arrived there in 1838. He returned four years later in *HMS Beacon*, whose sailors spent two months carting away the monuments for exhibitions in the Lycian Room at the British Museum.

Today, two tombs that tower above the upper seats of the theatre and an inscribed obelisk (in fact also a tomb) have become the trademarks of the site.

Patara

Patara was another powerful Lycian city. Today it is probably more known for its white sand beach, which is the longest and widest in Turkey. There are also the ruins of ancient Patara but these are scattered over a wide area and many are overgrown. Patara had an oracle as famous as the one in Delphi. At the official entrance to the old town stands a **triple monumental arch** (1st century BC) which doubled as part of an aqueduct. There is a theatre (2nd century BC) which is intact but mostly filled in by sand. The most important recent discovery is the **Stadasmus**, a survey of the Roman roads of Lycia, inscribed on a huge monument. The granary of Hadrian stands to full height.

Patara is also known as the birthplace of St Nicholas, better known today as Santa Claus. (Saint Nicholas later became Bishop of Myra where he died. Myra is to the east of Kas.)

Kalkan

In the years immediately before the massive exchange of population in 1923, the area at the base of the Lycian bulge was inhabited mainly by Greek fisherman whose attractive whitewashed towns, such as Kalkan and Kaş, would still seem more at home in Greece than in Turkey.

Kalkan has become one of the most sought-after resorts on the Mediterranean coast, with narrow streets of overhanging Ottoman-Greek houses clinging precipitously to narrow alleys that swoop down into a harbour. The mosque near the harbour appears to have been converted from a Greek church by little more than the addition of a minaret.

The dramatic cliff-hugging route eastwards winds around several small sandy coves linked to the road above by steps. The best is tiny **Kaputaş Beach** 6 km east, which also acts as the official beach for Kaş. From here you can swim round to beautiful blue-green phosphorescent sea caves.

Kaş

Superb views mark the entrance to Kaş. It is described as a sophisticated resort and a delightful centre from which to explore the coast.

The town of **Antiphellos**, on the site of present day Kaş, began to develop in Hellenistic times and, by the Roman period, was one of the leading ports of the region. Little has survived as the site remained inhabited, but there is a well-preserved **Hellenistic theatre** less than 2km west of the town on Hastane Caddesi (towards the peninsula). Rock-cut Lycian tombs can be seen on the cliff face above, while the sarcophagus-style **Lycian Lion Tomb** stands on Uzun Garşı.

As a resort, Kaş has style, with some of the best shops and restaurants on the Mediterranean coast.

Day 9

Off-shore

The island of **Meis (Kastellorizo)**, just out to sea from Kaş, is the eastern-most of the Greek islands. Day trips can be made from Kaş. An even more popular boat trip is to the island of **Kekova**. Plenty of excursions leave from Kaş or Andriake (seaport of Demre). Alternatively, you can hire a boat from Üçağiz.

Along the edge of Kekova Island, facing the mainland, lies the half-submerged remains of a sunken city destroyed in Byzantine times by a vicious earthquake. You can dive or snorkel around the ruins.

Üçağiz

Üçağiz is a tiny fishing village but also serves as a base for some onshore and offshore sightseeing. It is about 30 km east of Kaş you need to turn off the N-400 after 11 km and follow the signs.

Almost next door to Üçağiz is the **Lycian necropolis of Teimiussa**, its chest-type tombs spread out along the shore.

Kale (ancient Simena)

Further round the coast, still on the mainland but accessible only by water, the village of Kale (ancient Simena) sits below the crenellated ramparts of an **Ottoman castle**, within which is a small Greek theatre seating only about 300 people. A loan Lycian sarcophagus standing in a few inches of water at the western side of the harbour's edge often lures visitors to pose beside it for photographs.

Demre and Myra

In addition to the village of Kale (ancient Simena), Demre is also known officially as Kale. While Demre is actually called Demre (no mention of Kale) on the photocopied maps sent by Ferris Wheels; it is called Kale (no mention of Demre) on the Hema Road Map of Turkey.

Whatever it's called, it is described as an expanding modern town set in an ugly sea of tomato growing greenhouses.

Myra is situated 1 km north of the town centre of Demre/Kale and was founded in the 5th century BC. It grew into one of the most important cities in the Lycian League and later into a Christian bishopric, visited, amongst others, by St Paul. It was destroyed by the Arabs in the 7th century, but they left intact some of the finest examples of **Lycian funerary architecture** in the country.

There are two impressive sets of rock tombs. A few of the more accessible tombs have the inscriptions in Lycian script. The Roman city below the cliff is dominated by a large theatre.

In the town centre, the **Noel Baba Kilesi** (Church of St Nicholas) is described as a charmingly painted reconstructed Byzantine church on the site where St Nicholas was bishop in the 4th century AD. The existing church was built in the 6th century over his tomb, repaired by Emperor Justinian, extended by Constantine IX in 1043, and by the Russians in the 19th century. However, St Nicolas' remains have not been there since 1087, when a band of merchants carried them off to Bari, Italy, where the Basilica of San Nicola was built to receive them.

The following is from an insert in one of the guidebooks:

St Nicholas was born at Patara in about 300 AD, later becoming Bishop of Myra, where he died. He was a leading member of the church and a delegate to the Council of Nicea in 325, known for both his immense kindness and the miracles he performed in his lifetime. The link with Father Christmas stems perhaps from two legends: that he cast three bags of gold coins into the home of a merchant who had hit hard times, enabling his daughters to marry; and that he restored to life three boys who had been cut up by a local butcher. The first of the stories is also said to be the origin of the three gold balls that are still used today as the sign of a pawnbroker. Eventually this busy saint became patron of Greece, Russia, prisoners, sailors, travellers, unmarried girls, merchants, pawnbrokers and children. The Dutch, who corrupted his name to Sinterklaas (hence Santa Claus), began to celebrate his feast day on 6th December by filling the children's clogs with presents. This custom was soon attached to Christmas and the shoe became a stocking. The jolly man in red with a white beard was the 20th-century invention of the Coca-Cola Co -- one of their most enduring advertising campaigns.

Finike

Finike (ancient Phoenicus) is famous for its huge sweet oranges. It has some fine Ottoman houses and sandy beaches but little else to offer save the recollection that this was the site of the "**Battle of the Masts**" in 655, the first major naval victory of the Muslim Arabs over the Byzantines.

Finike marks the southern end of one of the few roads to cross the mountains to the interior of Lycia. Although we do not head that way, there are a few sites within close proximity of Finike that are worth a mention.

Limyra

Limyra is only 7 km up the northern road and 3 km from it along a narrow road through the villages. Limyra was the 4th century BC capital of Pericles, ruler of a section of Lycia, whose tomb, the **Heroön**, topped the highest point of the most extensive necropolis in Lycia. The elaborate carvings from the tomb are now in Antalya Museum. It is a 40 minute climb up but the views of the coast are said to be astounding. Within easier access is the mausoleum of Gaius Caesar, the grandson of Augustus, who was destined to be Emperor but died here of battle wounds before he could wear the purple robe.

Arykanda

A further 21 km up the main northern road is the stunningly beautiful Roman city of Arykanda. This is one of the most remote and least known of all Turkey's ancient cities, situated at the end of the plunging valley sprinkled with wildflowers and surrounded by peaks, snow-capped in spring. The lower area is centred on a bathhouse built in the 4th century AD from recycled materials. The sheds above cover the mosaic floors of a large **Byzantine basilica**, while further up the hill are the odeon, theatre, stadium and agora of the 1st-2nd century AD Roman city. From here, the road twists round the mountain to a superb **bathhouse and**

gymnasium with 10m high arched ceilings, picture windows with views that stretch forever, and mosaic floors.

Olympos

Back to the main road on which we travel to Antalya (or just off it) is the beautiful ancient city of Olympos. It is said to be tantalisingly close to the main road but difficult to reach down a steep roller coaster road of narrow hairpin bends. Once there, the visitor is offered the shattered remains of a monumental gateway, an acropolis, a river port, a small theatre and two sets of baths, all so overgrown that the site doubles as a wildlife sanctuary. Olympos also has one of the longest large-pebble beaches in Turkey.

Çirali

Çirali is a small, increasingly popular backpackers' hangout. From Olympos, you can walk along the river and ford it to get to Çirali or go back towards Olympos and take a turn to Çirali. A small hill at the back of the village is the site of an extraordinary natural phenomenon – a natural fire belching flames from tiny fissures in the rock, apparently the result of linking methane gas. It is thought to be the origin of the Greek myth of the **Chimaera**, the fire-breathing monster with a lion's head, a goat's body, and a serpent's tail that was finally destroyed by Bellerophon. The people of Olympos constructed a sanctuary here dedicated to Hephaestus (Vulcan), the god of fire.

Phaselis

Further along the main road, Phaselis is probably the most accessible of the cities along the Lycian coast. It is also said to be one of the most charming -- set on a wooded peninsula between three curved bays, all used as harbours by this busy trading port. It was supposedly founded in the 7th century BC by colonists from Rhodes, who paid for the land with dried fish.

Days 9-10

PAMPHYLIA

Less proud and more pragmatic than Lycia, Pamphylia was happy to cooperate with Alexander and the Romans, assuring itself a good share of the conquerors' largess. Pamphylia would seem to cover only a fairly short stretch of the coastline - from Antalya to more or less the southern-most part of Turkey around Anamur.

Antalya

Antalya is the hub of Turkey's Mediterranean coast. The city was founded in 158 BC by King Attalus III of Pergamon and bequeathed to Rome in 133 BC. Although badly battered by the Arab invasions of the 7th century, it remained in Byzantine hands until the Seljuks arrived in 1206, and was a regular staging post for Crusaders on their way to the Holy Land. In the 1390s, control was handed to the Ottomans and remained with them until the area was occupied by Italy in 1919. Three years on it was returned to Turkey.

The heart of the city is a beautifully restored old citadel of **Kaleiç**. However, the attractions of this city are far too numerous to include in this document. You'll need your guide book.

Termessos

The plateau behind Antalya was a separate ancient kingdom known as Pisidia. It is as studded with ruins as the shores of the Mediterranean. One of the most remarkable of these inland sites is Termessos, high in the mountains 37 km north-east of Antalya.

The car park is about 9 km along a forest road from the main road; then there is a steep 2 km walk to the site.

The defences of this Pisidian city so daunted Alexander the Great when he came conquering in 333 BC that he raised in the siege, burned down their olive groves and slunk away. It is easy to understand why: the steep winding road and the remains of the stout defending walls are enough to show the visitor a little of what the Greek adventurer would have faced.

Day 11

Perge and Aspendos

Back along our coast road, the most impressive ruins on the Pamphylian coast are at Perge, 15km east of Antalya. Known to the Hittites as far back as 1300 BC, the city was a successful trading centre, which kept itself alive and healthy through pragmatism. It had no defensive walls until fortified by the Seleucids in the 2nd century BC. Alexander the Great was welcomed in and used the city as a base throughout his Anatolian campaigns.

The red **Hellenistic Gate** towers still stand almost at their original height but most of “modern” Perge belongs to the period of *Pax Romana*. It includes a 14,000 seat theatre, a resplendent agora belonging to the 4th century AD and a stadium seating 12,000, which is said to be the best preserved of the ancient world. There are many magnificent finds from this ancient city on display in Antalya Museum.

Nearby, imposing **Aspendos** is graced by **one of the finest surviving Roman theatres** in the world. Built during the reign of Emperor Marcus Aurelius (161-180 AD) and seating 15,000, the elaborate structure is nearly intact except for part of the upper cornice. Its architect was a local person, whose secret formula for creating such perfect acoustics has not yet been discovered. Today, the ancient theatre hosts concerts and an important opera and ballet Festival in June and July².

Behind it lie the ruins of the acropolis, agora, nymphaeum (associated with the first meaning of *nymph* in the Oxford Dictionary rather than the second!), and what may be the best surviving example of a **Roman aqueduct**.

Side

Although founded as long ago as the 7th century BC, the peninsula town of Side has undergone a huge transformation over the past 20 years owing to its growth as a tourism destination. The incoming road is a maze of twists and turns, littered with Byzantine ruins. Suddenly, past the entrance gate and Vespasian monument, the vast Roman **theatre** looms into view. Beside it are the agora, the remains of 24 seat **public lavatory**, a **Byzantine basilica**, Episcopal palace, and remnants of the city wall, beyond which is access to the beach. Across the road from the theatre, the old **Roman Baths** now house the town museum displaying finds from local excavations, including many fine headless statues. St Paul was so convincing as a speaker that the newly converted Christians rushed out and in a fit of wild over-enthusiasm decapitated their former pagan deities.

Alanya

Alanya is one of Turkey's most popular resorts. The city centre is sliced emphatically in two by a magnificent 250 m high promontory of sheer red-gold rock jutting out into the Mediterranean. On the summit, nearly 7 km of ancient curtain walls with 150 bastions wind around three towers, forming the most spectacular and effective fortress on the Turkish coast. Although the exact foundation date of Alanya is unknown, it traces back to Hellenistic times, with the Romans, Byzantines, Armenians, Seljuks and Ottomans all taking their turn at power. Pirate chieftan, Diototus Tryphon, built his fortress on the peak in the 2nd century BC. This was the last bastion to fall to the fury of the Roman General Pompey in his crusade to wipe out the pirates in 65 BC. As the Byzantine Empire declined, the south coast was poorly defended and various Armenian dynasties took advantage of the weakness. The Seljuks (Sultan Alâeddin Keykubat I), with much trouble, wrested control of it in 1222 and it was captured by the Ottomans in 1471.

Just west of the fortress at sea level is the **Damlatas Mağarasi** or “Weeping Cave”, an exquisite grotto with curtains and dripping stalactites and stalagmites 15,000-20,000 years old.

Directly east the citadel is the city harbour, heavily fortified by Sultan Alâeddin Keykubat I. Chief among the defences was the 35 m octagonal **Kızıl Kule** (Red Tower) designed in 1227 by a Syrian architect.

² If anyone is a hoarder of National Geographic magazines, the May 1994 volume has a double page coloured photo of one such concert as part of a cover story on Turkey. It is noted that the cameraman, from the very top of the theatre, could hear an orchestra member's chair move.

There are fine views from the battlements. Round the point, at the harbour entrance, is another tower the **Tophane Küle** (Arsenal Tower) used as a cannon foundry by the Ottomans. Between the two is the **Tersane** (best seen from the water), a series of five huge open workshops which were the centrepiece of the Seljuks' naval dockyard, also built in 1227.

CILICIA

The road snakes along soaring cliffs above crashing waves, while Hellenistic, Byzantine and Seljuk ruins stud the tiny coves of this most dramatic coast.

Anamur

Anamur would seem to have no particular claim to fame. It is a nice small resort with several good basic hotels and fish restaurants along a white sand beach.

About 5 km west of town on the southern-most tip of Asia Minor are the ruins of ancient **Anemurium**, meaning "windy cape". Founded by the Hittites in about 1200 BC, the city became a great trading centre and bishopric. The well preserved ruins of the town are overwhelmed by the **cemetery**, a fast sprawl of some 350 domed tombs.

5 km east of Anamur is **Mamure Kalesi** (Anamur Castle). The first fortress here was built in the 3rd century AD but it has had many other incarnations: as a 10th century pirates' lair and as the property of 11th to 12th century kings of Armenia. The surviving magnificent castle was built in 1226 by the great Seljuk Sultan Alâeddin Keykubat I. In the late 14th century it became a mainland toehold for the crusading Lusignan kings of Cyprus (see notes on Crusades) until it was seized by the Ottomans in 1469. It remained in use until the end of World War I.

Ayatekla

Ascending and descending in a series of hairpin turns, passing several more aesthetically pleasing but anonymous castles, the coastal road finally hits the Göksu delta near **Taşucu**, one of the two ferry embarkation points for the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

About 5 km further on, at Ayatekla, just left of the highway, a ruined Byzantine basilica towers near the underground **hermitage of St Thecla**, one of St Paul's first converts. On hearing Paul preach the virtues of chastity in Iconium (Konya), she promptly renounced her betrothal. On a later visit to the apostle in prison, she too was arrested and sentenced to be burned at the stake and tied naked to a pyre in the arena. A divinely inspired deluge doused the flames. Wild beasts were brought in to devour her but "there was about her a cloud so that neither the beasts did touch her, nor was she seen to be naked," according to Acts of Paul and Thecla written in the 2nd century. Once the Romans had given up, she set up a nunnery near ancient Seleucia, where her miraculous cures were said to have taken business away from the town doctors. Eventually she flew bodily up to heaven.

Silifke

Like all coastal cities in Turkey, Silifke has ancient roots but precious little remains of ancient **Seleucia ad Calycadnum**, which was one of the nine sister cities founded by Seleucos Nicator in the 3rd century BC after he gained control of Syria on the death of Alexander the Great.

The town is dominated by a vast **hilltop castle**, which is 4 km from town and reached from the Konya road. Built originally by the Byzantines but heavily altered by the Armenians and Crusaders, it was captured by the Turks in the late 13th century. From the ramparts there is a superb view, with all the town's other monuments laid out like a mat at your feet. Directly below are the **Roman necropolis**, **aqueduct** and a vast **Byzantine cistern** carved from the bedrock. The **stone bridge** over the Göksu River also has ancient origins (it was first built by Vespasian in AD 78).

Narlikuyu and Susanoğlu

Some 20 km east of Silifke, is a pleasant cove lined with seafood restaurants. It is also home to the remains of a famous **Roman bathhouse** with a dusty 4th century AD mosaic representing the Three Graces. Just south of Narlikuyu is Susanoğlu and the **Mausoleum of Priape the Fearless Satrap**. From this massive monument, in all its erect glory, juts the sculptured metre-long Phallus of the god of fertility. Legend recounts that Priape was the illegitimate son of Zeus and Aphrodite; and that Hera, jealous wife of Zeus, deformed the child, giving him a phallus equal to his height. He was abandoned out of shame by his mother near the Dardanelles and was brought by shepherds to Lapsacus (Lapseki).

Heaven and Hell

3 km north and inland of Narlikuyu lies your chance to glimpse paradise and hell without abandoning the comfort of Earth. The **Corycian Caves**, better known as **Cennet ve Cehennem (Heaven and Hell)**, were formed by underground chemical erosion. Like all the best of natural phenomena, they are considered sacred by pagans, Christians and Muslims alike. Heaven is larger than Hell, with 452 stairs leading down to a **Byzantine chapel** dedicated to the Virgin Mary. This in turn blocks the entrance to a cave-gorge with an underground river thought by some to be the **Styx**. The cave at the far end was home to an oracle. Just north is the gloomy pit of Hell, happily inaccessible without climbing equipment as the sides are concave. It is here that Zeus imprisoned Typhon, the many-headed, fire-breathing, monster serpent, father of Cerberus, guard dog of Hell.

Kizkalesi

Kizkalesi is a small town about 25 km east of Silifke. Here we find twin medieval castles. On terra firma, 13th century **Korykos Castle** reuses materials from a city first mentioned by Herodotus in the 5th century BC. On an offshore island, across a 200 m channel, is its sister, **Kiz Kalesi** (the **Maiden's Castle**), which was a refuge for pirates before it was fortified by Byzantine Admiral Eugenius in 1104, as a link in the empire's border defences during the Crusades. It was later appropriated by the Armenians, Turks and, in 1482, the Ottomans.

Day 12

The Road North

Silifke is the beginning of the road over the mountains to Konya and Cappadocia.

The early stages of the road follow the turbulent path of the **Göksu River**. The Third Crusade came to an abrupt end some 16 km north of Silifke when the Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick Barbarossa drowned while bathing on his way to Jerusalem in 1190 (see notes on Crusades); a **memorial** marks the spot. He was a long way from home and in order to preserve his body until they could get him to Antioch for burial on Christian land, he was stored in a barrel of vinegar.

Mut

Further upstream is the town of Mut, with a 14th century mosque, a fortress and two domed tombs. About 20 km north of town, the beautiful 5th century **Monastery of Tarasius** (at **Alahan**) teeters on the edge of the wild Göksu Gorge, with traces of frescoes still visible in its baptistry and churches.

Karaman

The road now rises over the **Sertauul Pass**, where migrating birds of prey congregate in spring and autumn. Another 70 km from Alahan, Karaman was a powerful autonomous emirate from 1277 to 1467, so famous that early travel is referred to the entire coast as Karamania. Three fine religious schools, a mosque, and a ruined castle are all that remain of a glorious past; while the small museum contains finds from **Canhasan**, about 13 km north-east of town, a settlement dating back to the 6th millennium BC.

ANATOLIA

CENTRAL ANATOLIA

Central Anatolia is a vast plateau circled by rugged mountain chains, its inland characterised by flat, fertile steppes and gentle rolling hills, broken by occasional mountains such as the snow-capped **Mount Erciyes**, an extinct volcano rising 3,917 m above sea level.

Some of mankind's earliest settlements are found in Central Anatolia. It was here that man probably first abandoned hunting and gathering for agriculture, the domestication of animals, and trade, about 10,000 years ago. Dating back to around 6000 BC, **Çatalhöyük**, south of Konya, is the world's second-oldest town. Some way north (later on our route), **Boğazkale**, was the capital of the Hittite Empire which flourished from about 1800 BC at the same time as the Pharaohs of Egypt.

Throughout history, however, few civilisations have survived the relentless tramp of the invading armies. Julius Caesar marched his Roman legions through the territory. In AD 1402, the Mongol despot Timur (Tamerlane) and his hordes thundered across the region. More recently, in 1919, the Greek army invaded the region in its ill-fated campaign to reconquer all of Anatolia. A resurgent Turkish army under Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) fought back and pushed the Greeks into the sea after bitter fighting.

The broad plains make ideal agricultural land and Central Anatolia served as a granary to both the Roman and Byzantine empires. Its capture by the Turks in the 11th century deprived the Byzantine Empire of its agricultural wealth and helped speed its eventual downfall.

NORTHWEST ANATOLIA

This area is essentially north-west of Ankara and is not part of our journey. The population is sparse and much of the landscape is naked hillsides with hardly a tree to be seen; but it is worth noting that this is the heartland of ancient Phrygia.

In a famous corruption trial in ancient Rome, the orator, Cicero -- who was defending a sticky fingered Roman governor of Phrygia -- managed to ridicule prosecution witnesses by describing them as "ignorant Phrygians who had never seen a tree in their whole lives."

West of Ankara are the ruins of **Gordium**, capital off Phrygia under the reign of the fabled King Gordius and his golden son, Midas, in about 800 BC.

SOUTHWEST ANATOLIA

This area is essentially southwest of Ankara and again not really part of our journey, although at times we do run along the edges of it.

Some more interesting sites in this area are:

- The ancient **Antioch ad Pisidia**, founded between 301 and 280 BC on the site of a Phrygian settlement was later a Roman colony for veteran soldiers. It had an association with St Paul. It was here that Paul made his first recorded sermon. This was so successful that the Gentiles pleaded with him to speak again the following Saturday and the synagogue was packed. The Jews out of envy drove Paul from the city.
- The ruins of **Sagalossos**, which was the second city of Pisidia after Antioch. It is currently being excavated and is potentially one of the most complete cities in Asia Minor.
- **Konya (Konium)** was the capital of the Seljuk Empire between 1071 and 1308. It remains the centre of Sufic teaching and a pilgrimage centre for devout Sunni Muslims. It was visited by St Paul several times around AD 50. Konya also houses the **Mevlana Tekkesi**, the home of the **whirling dervishes**, founded around 1231. At the heart of the complex is the tomb of Mevlan, founder of the order. The function of the dervishes was essentially to find a mystic union with God through song and dance. They also appealed to the native Christian population of Anatolia and bridged the gap between them and their Seljuk rulers. Mevlana preached tolerance, forgiveness and enlightenment; and his poetry, even in the translated version, has an uncanny knack of tugging at the heartstrings. The dervish convent was shut down in 1925 on the orders of Atatürk, but the festival of the whirling dervishes is still held every December, although it now takes place in a local gymnasium. In their long white robes, the dervishes spin in a kind of ballet hoping to achieve a mystical union with the deity. The piety of most of the audience makes it clear that the *sema* (whirling ceremony) has not lost its religious significance.

Days 12-14

CAPPADOCIA

Cappadocia is famed for his eerie lunar landscape, astounding underground cities and spectacular rock churches, their walls decorated with vivid Byzantine frescoes. Cappadocia is essentially an area southeast of Ankara. What we call Cappadocia today is only a small part of the Hellenistic kingdom and subsequent Roman province which bore the same name. The original province stretched for hundreds of miles further east and west. The name is older still. The region is first mentioned in a monument bearing the trilingual epitaph of Persian King Darius as *Katpatuka* (the “Land of Beautiful Horses”).

A 10th century history tells us that its inhabitants were called troglodytes “because they go under the ground in holes, clefts and labyrinths, like dens and burrows.” In the 18th century, a French traveller thought he saw pyramids being used as houses and weird statues of monks and the Virgin Mary.

The reality is both more straight-forward and more bizarre than any of the legends. The whole area is dominated by **Erciyes Dağı** (ancient Mt Argaeus), the third highest mountain in Anatolia. Millions of years ago, Erciyes erupted, smothering the surrounding landscape with a torrent of lava stretching hundreds of miles in what must have been one of the greatest upheavals on the planet. Later, floods, rain and wind sawed away at the table of lava, creating deep valleys and fissures, while the slopes were carved into astonishing cones and columns. The white dust from the rocks is very fertile. Trees, vines and vegetables grow easily in it. It was also soon discovered that the stones of the rock valleys is soft until it comes into contact with air, making it a perfect medium for carving entire buildings, sculptured out of living rock. Generations of local people have carved innumerable doorways and rooms in the rock over an area of several hundred square miles.

Ürgüp

Ürgüp is a charming town known for its restaurants, wine and carpet weavers (the third one is optional!). It is considered a good base from which to visit surrounding sites.

Üçhisar

Üçhisar is famed for its immense fist-shaped tower of volcanic tuff, honeycombed with chambers. This citadel, the highest point in Cappadocia, offers a spectacular view of a typical Anatolian village below and the unworldly rock formations of the Göreme Valley.

Göreme

Göreme has become a major tourist destination. However, many townspeople still live in cave dwellings and it can be very pleasant to walk among their extraordinary houses. About 2 km from Göreme village on the Ürgüp Road there are over 30 of the finest churches in Cappadocia clustered together in the **Göreme open-air museum**. Almost all date from the 9th-11th centuries and so escaped the activities of the iconoclasts who gouged the eyes from many human representations. Impossible to visit all, but a few of the unmissable highlights are the following:

- The **Church of St Barbara** is decorated with red symbols and figurines, including Christ enthroned and Santa Barbara, the patron saint of soldiers.
- Next door is the main dome of the stunningly restored **Elmalı Kilesi**.
- Also nearby is the **Yilani Kilesi**, its walls covered with depictions of St George killing the dragon and paintings of strange creatures.
- The **Karanlık Kilesi**, originally part of a larger monastery, has some of the finest wall paintings in the history of Christian art, including the painting showing the betrayal of Christ by Judas.
- The **Tokali Kilesi**, also known as Yeni Kilesi, has a glorious profusion of well-preserved murals on deep blue backgrounds.

Çavuşin, Zelve and Avanos

Çavuşin, 3 km to the north of Göreme town, resembles a gigantic caved-in ant hill. Nearby is a ghost town that was evacuated down the hill after a collapse in the 1960s. The **Church of Çavuşin**, accessible by a metal ladder, has archaic, cartoon-style strip narrative frescoes painted in bright green, pink, orange and dove blues.

Ghost towns, cave houses and churches can also be found in and around **Zelve**, an area made out of three valleys east of Çavuşin. The area has a vast **underground monastery** which requires serious physical effort to explore.

Avanoa, on the northern bank of the Kizilirmak River, is famed for its pottery.

The Underground Cities

An astounding 400 underground cities exist in Cappadocia. The underground city of **Kaymakli** has eight floors. The most impressive of the underground cities is **Derinkuyu**, a complex web of settlements including stables, wine presses, kitchens and wells. Derinkuyu has eight underground floors reaching a depth of 55 m.

Day 15

Boğazkale

At the height of his prosperity in about 1400 BC, the ruined city known today as Boğazkale and to the Hittites as **Hattuṣaṣ** was the capital of an empire that stretched south to Cyprus and west to the Aegean. Although the higher slopes are now largely bare, it is not difficult to people them in the mind's eye with homes, warriors, priests, clerks, saddlers, cobblers and slaves. The site is made more evocative by the knowledge that, not long after 1200 BC, the imperial city was stormed and burned and never recovered its former greatness.

From the ramparts you look down at **King's Gate** and **Lion Gate**. It is possible to see the great stone ramparts more or less as they looked in Hittite times. Further proof of the formidable nature of Hittite architecture is also provided by the **Yerkapi**, a 70 m tunnel under the walls.

Lower down, on an outcrop of the hill overlooking the valley, the **Büyükkale (Citadel)** was the site of the **Imperial Palace** and it is here that the majority of the 3,350 clay tablets from the Emperor's archives were found. Thanks to them, this great vanished civilisation, virtually unknown 100 years ago, now has a detailed written history. Lower down other clearly preserved foundations of the **Büyük Mabet (Great Temple)**, which, in its day, may have been the largest building in the world.

The religious heart of the Hittite kingdom lay slightly over 2 km northeast of Boğazkale in the rock shined **Yazilikaya**. What survives today as largely from 1275 to 1220 BC when the shrine was enlarged by two Hittite emperors.

Day 16

The Black Sea Coast

Ancient Greek accounts of the Black Sea -- notably the legendary adventures of the rebel Jason and his Argonauts in about 1000 BC -- paint the region as a terrifying place full of killer rocks, sea caves leading to Hades, brutal Amazons, and numerous other bizarre tribes. Most of the legendary adventures took place to the east of where we travel.

Sinop

Sinop, situated on a peninsula jutting far out to sea, has a superb natural harbour and is the basis for underwater excavations. These include beautifully preserved Byzantine shipwrecks as well as human settlements from more than 7000 years ago (now 19 km out to sea), when a great flood inundated the coast. The oldest city on the coast, Sinop was settled by Greeks from Miletus in the 7th century BC, although legend tells us it was founded by the Amazon Queen Sinova, who managed to brush off the ever amorous Zeus by getting him to grant her one wish: virginity. The remains of a 2nd century BC **Temple of Serapis** stands in the town centre. Most impressive of all are the enormous **city walls**, parts of which stand to a height of 25 m.

Day 17

Amasra

Amasra is a stunning old town between two fortified promontories with Hellenistic foundations and surviving Byzantine walls. It seems more like a Greek village, with sweeping sea views and steep cobbled paths from which you can easily view the magnificent **14th century fortresses**, built when Amasra was a Genoese trading colony. At the southern end of the city are **Roman ruins** which may have been either a provincial Parliament house or the gymnasium and bath, and there are several Byzantine churches (later converted to mosques).

Day 18

Safranbolu

Safranbolu has some 800 of the finest **19th century Ottoman houses** in Turkey that have been beautifully restored. The houses are especially grand as the city has been prosperous since the 17th century. The town was and still is famous for its **leather, copper and iron craftsmanship**, which was quality controlled under a sophisticated guild system. There are many marvellous historic attractions in the old quarter of Çarşı. Check out the **Yemeniciler Arastasi**, the original leather workers' bazaar. The old Governor's Residence is now host to the museum. The 17th century **Ottoman bathhouse** has been beautifully restored for use, with separate male and female sections -- a splendid marble setting for luxury of a Turkish bath.

Day 19

Doesn't seem to be much of particular interest along the way.

Zonguldak and **Ereğli** are mentioned as coal-mining and industrial areas. **Akçakoca** is a resort town but was very badly hit by the 1999 earthquake. I suspect today the horses will smell only the water of Istanbul.