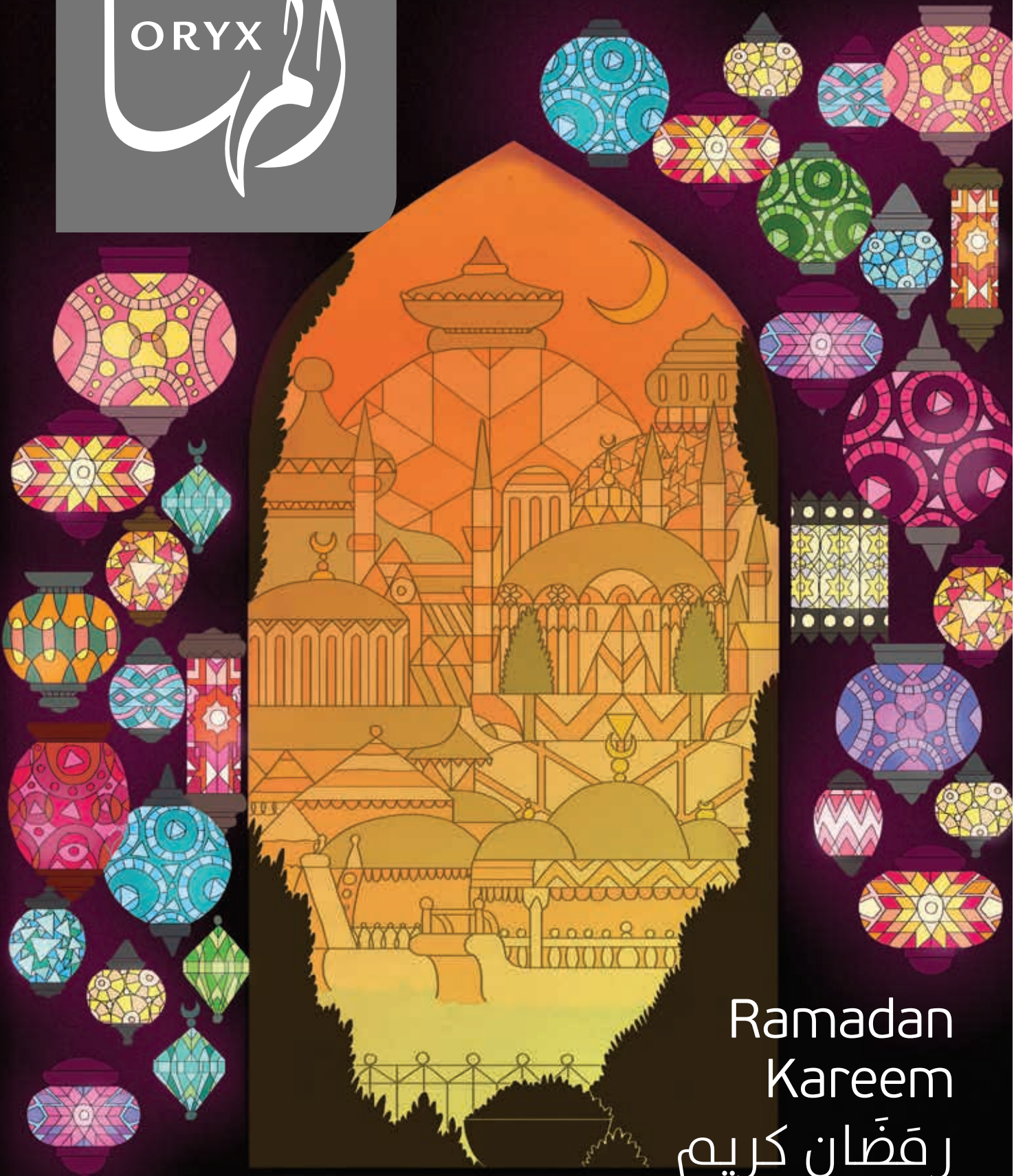


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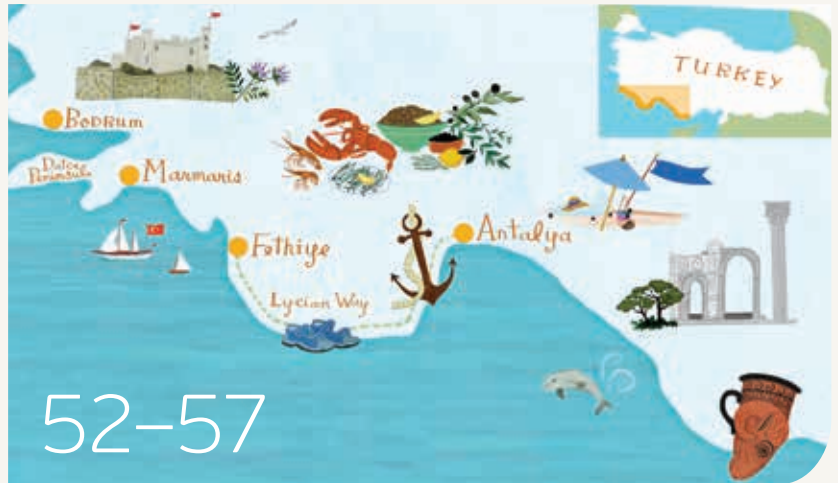


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The Aegean Coast

The Aegean's thousands of kilometres of seldom-visited coastline is awash with Roman ruins, villages, and Turkish restaurants. Sea breezes and empty beaches make the Turquoise Coast a perfect place to spend the summer. Turkey-based author Tristan Rutherford sets sail to explore the pristine coast.

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Croatia

Wedged between the royal blue of the Adriatic Sea and the towering peaks of the Dinaric Alps, Dalmatia has been proclaimed the 'new French Riviera'. A timeless place, here the past is preserved by the region's enduring culture.

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Hong Kong

In a vibrant corner of Hong Kong Island, the traditions of the past are fusing with the trends of tomorrow as restaurants, boutiques, and galleries migrate west into the former shophouses and warehouses of Sheung Wan.

Aegean Coast sets sail

Words by Tristan Rutherford



SEA BREEZES AND EMPTY BEACHES MAKE THE TURQUOISE COAST A PERFECT PLACE TO SPEND THE SUMMER. TURKEY-BASED AUTHOR TRISTAN RUTHERFORD SETS SAIL TO EXPLORE THE PRISTINE COAST.



➔ In Turkey, Ramadan is known as Ramazan, although the holy month is observed in the same fashion as in the Arab world.



The Aegean's thousands of kilometres of seldom-visited coastline is awash with Roman ruins, villages, and Turkish restaurants. Peace and privacy is categorically assured – most of the coast can only be reached by boat.

Over the last decade a gradual wave has swept Turkey's Aegean seaboard. Three thousand kilometres of pristine coastline – once the haunt of the occasional fisherman and sponge diver – now welcomes a sea of sails. Visitors range from solo yachtsmen seeking solitude to the mightiest yachts in the world. Indeed, the growth in the Turkish yachting industry is a success story by which other sailing initiatives in the Mediterranean are measured. Welcome to **Turkey's Turquoise Coast**.

What a watery Eden it is. Arcing from **Bodrum** in the west to **Antalya** in the south,

the Turquoise Coast makes up the Mediterranean's least-visited shores. Tarmac roads only reached the tip of this vast landmass five years ago. Most beaches remain isolated, untouched – and accessible only by boat. A dozen empires have littered these shores with sunken tombs, lost ruins, and Roman columns by the score. Yet Turkish entrepreneurship means that a shabby-chic beach shack serving fresh squid and sea bass is never far away.

That theme is accentuated by Neil Cheston, Director of Sales & Charter at Y.CO (www.ycoyacht.com), a luxury yacht company that maintains offices in

Monaco, London, and Doha. "One of the most appealing qualities of Turkey's Aegean Coast is that so many of the highlights are a short sail from each other," he explains. "This allows guests to take in pristine beaches, archaeological wonders, and top restaurants in a single afternoon."

Y.CO certainly represents the top tier of luxury yachting. For yacht charter in Turkey this summer Cheston recommends luxury sailing yacht *Elena* (from US\$70,000 per week for 10 guests), a faithful reproduction of the 55-m vintage schooner that smashed the transatlantic speed record in 1928.



FETHIYE FISH TALES

The freshest fish is available in the sailing resort of Fethiye. A decade ago, the mayor of this Turkish town revived the flagging fish market by encouraging visitors to purchase sea bass, prawns, and lobster by the kilo directly from the fishermen – then get a local restaurant to grill, sauté, or barbecue their catch for a nominal fee. Swordfish – or *kılıç* as it's known in Turkish – can be served on shish kebabs. Prawns (or *karides*) come bathed in garlic butter. Monkfish (or *fener*) can absorb deeper flavours like black olive and tomato stew. Platters of salad and *meze* are thrown into the bargain too.

→ Aside from rock tombs and sunken ruins, one of the coast's most eerie sights is the abandoned village of Kayaköy.



Also available for charter is *Spirit* (from US\$270,000 per week for 11 guests), a 54-m superyacht launched in 2011 that features an iPad-controlled sound system.

Cheston sees “more and more superyacht charter clients including Turkey on their summer itineraries”. All industry hands agree that more sophisticated marine developments will bring additional yachts of all shapes and sizes to Turkey’s shores.

Fortunately this sentiment is shared by Turkey’s Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Its UK director Tolga Tüylüoğlu tells

Oryx that: “Much of Turkey’s coastline is only accessible by boat, making sailing the ideal way to explore its secret beauty.” According to Tüylüoğlu, Turkey now boasts 352 Blue Flag beaches and 36 world-class marinas, and opened “three new marinas in 2013 as part of our ongoing investment in yachting tourism”.

Both Tüylüoğlu and Cheston agree that the Turquoise Coast’s unique selling points are peace, privacy, and a crystal-clear sea. “The Turkish coastline is very different from the French and Italian Rivas,” asserts Cheston.

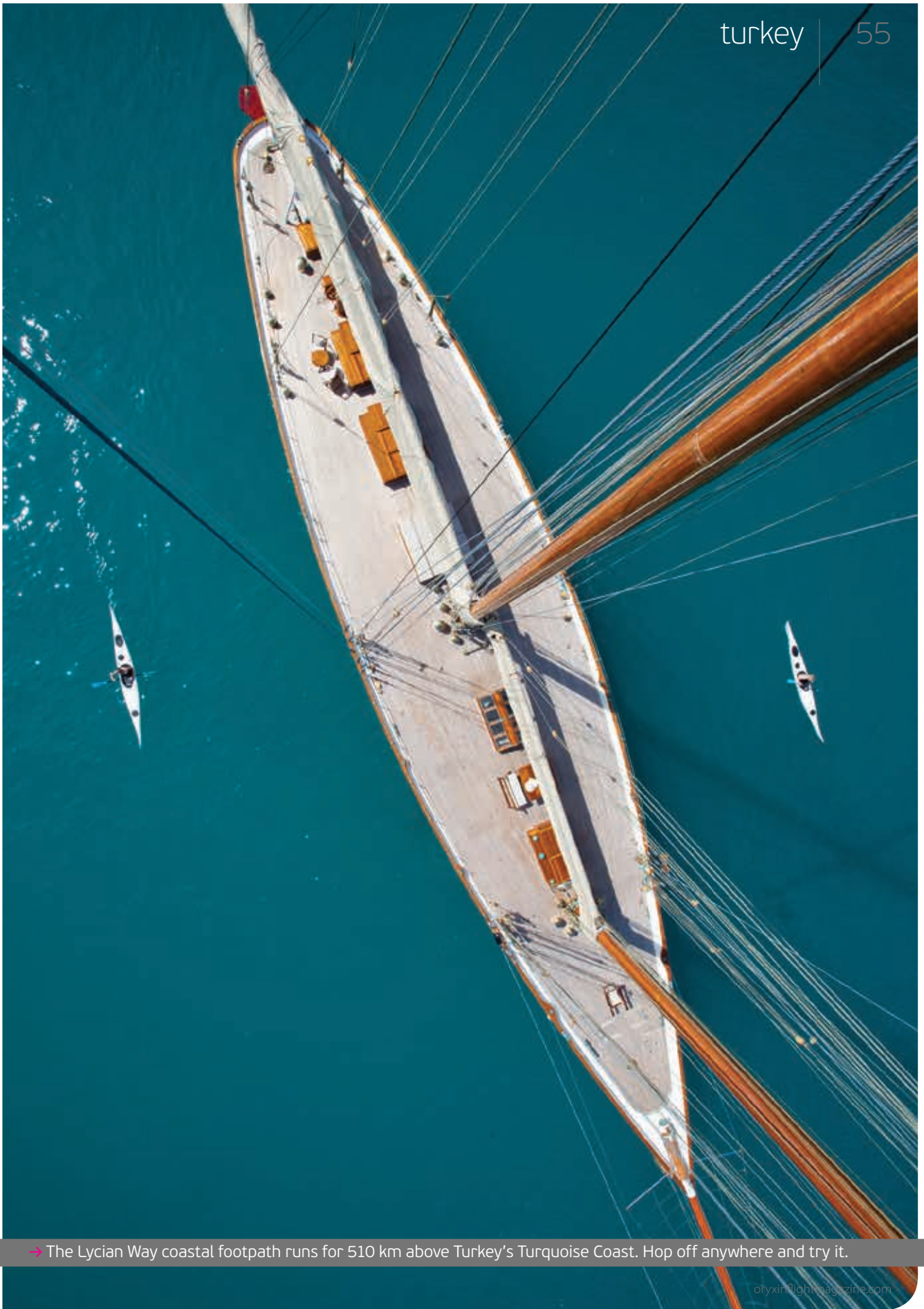
“While France and Italy are hotspots to see and be seen in, visitors to Turkey enjoy its solitude, tranquillity, and outstanding cuisine.” Indeed, there are countless places in which to retire and contemplate along the coast.

Superyachts aside, the most traditional and most common vessel in local waters is the timeless Turkish *gulet*. As Ministry Director Tüylüoğlu explains, these classic boats have “evolved from traditional Aegean cargo vessels into their present form with sunbathing decks, dining area, and cabins below”.

THE DISCOVERY OF BODRUM

Spare a thought for poor Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı (1890–1973). This bohemian intellectual was exiled to the sleepy fishing village of Bodrum in 1923 for seditious writing – and inadvertently put the town on the tourist trail. As proof of Bodrum’s former isolation, it took Kabaağaçlı two weeks to travel south from Ankara. But on arrival here he saw the Aegean Sea, which “cracked upon the horizon without warning like a vast blue thundering infinity”. Kabaağaçlı lived, wrote, and rejoiced in Bodrum for the rest of his days. A keen environmentalist, he even wrote to the British Museum to demand the return of objects pilfered from Bodrum Castle.

→ Luxury 55-m schooner *Elena* was built using the original drawings from the 1928 yacht of the same name.



→ The Lycian Way coastal footpath runs for 510 km above Turkey's Turquoise Coast. Hop off anywhere and try it.



The 54-m superyacht *Spirit*.

© Kristina Stobel



The man with the inside line on these Turkish cruising craft is Eyüp Bayraktaroğlu, Managing Director of TurkYacht (www.turkyacht.com), the market leader for *gulet* charter. "Unlike any other production-line boat, *gulets* are handmade and unique," explains Bayraktaroğlu, "which allows for a highly personalised vacation."

For example, epicurean guests who wish to sail between **Marmaris** and **Bodrum** – the *gulet* industry's two main hubs – may charter a luxury vessel like 35-m *Bedia Sultan* (from US\$26,746 per week for a party of 10). Guests may purchase stocks from local fishermen and street markets en route, parley with the chef about ancient Anatolian

recipes, or even make sushi on deck. Halal diets are naturally catered for year-round.

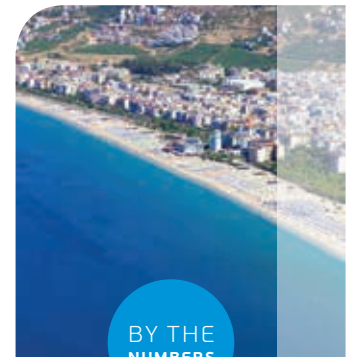
To explain the concept of small luxury sailing, Bayraktaroğlu uses the analogy of a cruise ship. "Instead of a 5,000-person liner, this industry moves away from the notion of serving a large group of strangers and shifts to small groups with a tight social connection." And unlike a cruise ship, guests on a *gulet* can stop wherever they please. Keen divers, for example, can charter a smaller *gulet* like *Gökçe 3* (from US\$11,230 per week for a party of 16) to explore the lonely creeks of the **Datça Peninsula** with masks, snorkels, canoes, and paddleboards. These traditional boats have moved a long way from ferrying oranges and olive oil around the Aegean...

But for ultimate seclusion sailors should look to smaller, not larger, yachts. Nothing beats the privacy or versatility of captaining your very own boat. With this in mind Wilma, Hasan, and Aziz Simsek

set up Budget Sailing (budgetsailing.com) in the Turkish resort of **Gocek**, a 20-minute taxi ride from Dalaman Airport. Their small yacht fleet ranges from 7.5 m (from US\$870 per week for four guests) to 19 m (from US\$6,020 per week for five guests). The thought of waking up in an isolated cove and diving into the sea – is an alluring one.

According to Wilma Simsek, "The Turkish Aegean Coast is filled with mountain ranges that close around countless creeks, inlets, islands, and peninsulas," so there's plenty of space to find a bay of one's own.

Moreover, "The sea around Gocek has no tides or currents and is warm until mid-November," she says, making it a perfect place for beginners. Indeed, in 2014, Budget Sailing will become the first boat rental agency in Turkey to offer official RYA yacht training. It seems like the legion of yachtsmen along the Turquoise Coast is destined to grow. ✕



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BY THE NUMBERS

2 km

The distance in kilometres from Kaş in Turkey to the Greek island of Kastellorizo. Hundreds of hardy swimmers paddle between these two ports in a bi-national swimming regatta each year.

352

The number of Blue Flag beaches in Turkey. These stretches of sand adhere to strict environmental norms. Among the best is Turkey's most famous beach, the arcing sandy peninsula of Ölüdeniz.

12

The number of islands in the Bay of Gocek. This cruising area is inhabited by turtles and dolphins, and is one of the most sheltered sailing spots in Turkey.



Advertorial



Glorious Bodrum – Turkey's Mandarin Oriental

Overlooking the Aegean Sea, one can be ensconced by the deep blue skies, crystal-clear waters, verdant flora, and a year-round temperate climate that serve as hallmarks of the Mediterranean experience.

Welcome to Turkey's Bodrum, whose golden shores welcome travellers from the four corners of the world, as the Aegean gleefully plays host to divers, swimmers, and countless boats along Homer's famed 'wine dark sea'.

Of course, one doesn't even need to step into the sea to enjoy the area, as the peninsula's ancient ruins are ripe for exploration, while verdant forests invite nature lovers on a relaxing horseback ride. **The Residences at Mandarin Oriental** aim to

elevate Bodrum to the top of the luxury resort destination list, especially amongst visitors from the Gulf States. With sumptuous dining offerings at six restaurants, an all-encompassing spa, and extensive fitness facilities, Mandarin Oriental will enable Paradise lost to become Paradise lived!

The project is scheduled to be completed in 2013, with a targeted opening date of the first half of 2014. In addition to the hotel, the Mandarin Oriental Bodrum will feature 98 villas and 118 apartments. Half of the residences have been sold – at a price between US\$1.6 million and US\$8 million – with a target of full sales complete within the next year. www.astasbodrum.com