# Sailing Serenity on the TURKISH RIVIERA

Photos: GoTürkiye Media, Pablo Ferrero | Words: Janine Devine










Thousands of years of history and the origins of modern civilization unfold before your eyes here in the sparkling waters along the Turquoise Coast of Bodrum. Once known as Halicarnassus, this city reflects the wealth of Persian, Roman, Greek, Venetian, and Ottoman influences over the centuries. Despite its rich heritage, it wasn't really until the 1970's that Bodrum was anything more than the well-kept secret of yachters and a gleam in a developer's eye.

We were returning once more to Türkiye for the start of the summer season and to immerse ourselves in the popular yacht charter show at Göcek, thanks again to our partners at **GoTürkiye**, the country's tourism authority. After we touched down in Bodrum airport and were sped by Maybach van to the port where hundreds of these traditional vessels were getting ready for the summer season. It's a sight that is breathtaking, exhilarating, and quite frankly, re-assuring in these seemingly chaotic times. Thanks to our expert hosts at **Scic** (pronounced ***"chic"***) **Sailing**, the S/Y LX1, a two-masted version of the traditional wooden vessel was waiting for us in one of the best locations of the Bodrum port. Sized just right for our small group, she featured five cabins outfitted in warm woods with relaxing en suites tiled in mosaics accommodating a total of ten guests, attentively managed by a first-rate crew of four: the captain, first mate, deckhand, and chef. The service onboard was perfection, with each guest enjoying every second at sea. Scic has been building its reputation in the Aegean with nearly three decades of VIP service aboard traditional gulets with contemporary styling and modern amenities, an impressive repeat guest percentage, and a variety of ***"themed"*** charters featuring no set itinerary, where guests enjoy the journey and the experience of actual sailing rather than just a series of destinations. Once the sails are hoisted, this is a subtle prompt for guests to unwind and relax, as there is nothing else to do but enjoy the sound of the wind in the sails and splashing of the waves against the ship.




**Best of Bodrum**

We weren't officially scheduled to embark until evening and Bodrum beckoned. We spent the afternoon walking the many attractions of this fantastic city. While the leaf-canopied bazaar was especially fascinating, we opted instead to immerse ourselves in the city's history. The ancient geographer and ***"Father of History,"*** Herodotus, who documented the Greco-Persian wars, was born here. And, still standing imposingly against marauders and pirates, is the Castle, built by the Knights Hospitaller. Like all worthy warrior monks, the Knights Hospitaller let nothing go to waste and parts of the castle hold scavenged portions dating to the 4th Century BCE incorporated at its base, believed to be from the palace and tomb of King Mausollos. With its towering height and four hundred freestanding statues, the tomb was once considered a wonder of the ancient world. The Knights maintained the castle for well over 100 years until the Ottoman rule and there are coats of arms in stained glass and on hanging banners after generations and multiple incarnations of this building as a mosque, a jail, and now the **Bodrum Museum of Underwater Archaeology** which is home to artifacts dating back some five hundred years before the Christian era, such as remnants of ancient shipwrecks and amphorae, gold ingots, and jewelry. The site provides fascinating perspectives on history as well as on Bodrum itself, with panoramic vistas from each of its towers. What remains of the original tomb and world wonder is sadly very little; LX1 and the sea awaited, so we returned to the ship. As night fell, the atmosphere onboard transformed with an exquisite dinner where sea bass, shrimp, and squid were harmoniously enhanced by intense and exceptional local wines.

**Bays and Beyond**

The next morning, we embarked on our culinary and cultural themed cruise. Our first port of call were the stunning bays of Knidos, a beautiful setting with crystal clear waters. An ancient Canarian city, Knidos was an important cultural, political, and trading center by the 5th Century BCE because of its large natural harbors. A key export center between Europe and Asia, Knidos' wealth and influence led to a profusion of grand buildings, such as temples and a ten thousand-seat theater with breathtaking sea views. The ruins here were nothing short of formidable.

On our return, the captain took us to the secluded **Bay of Mersin** for lunch. Onboard, the chef impressed us daily with visual and gustatory feasts. Lunch featured a meze of assorted salads, pickled and roasted vegetables like eggplant and peppers, and skewers of flavorful roasted chicken and lamb. Desserts included classic baklava oozing honey and pistachio, rich ice cream, and decadent cakes, all paired with local wines like the captivating Angora. These delights reassured our taste buds that we were in the perfect place.

Off the southwest coast of the Gulf of Gökova lies **Yedi Adalar**, or the Seven Islands. The charming outlets and areas between the islands create an idyllic setting to explore. We enjoyed the pristine waters and relaxed onboard. One can spend the day on the daybeds, gazing at pine forests along the hills. In the afternoon, we sailed to a more remote location to anchor for the evening. We disembarked for a short trek through the verdant site. Our captain led us up a small road through the hills, past tall pines and flowering bushes, to a high spot where we enjoyed a spectacular sunset with snacks and beverages—a perfect end to another day in paradise.











## Seduced by Sedir

Early the next morning, our captain sailed to **Sedir**, more popularly known as Cleopatra Island. Breakfast was as memorable as every meal we enjoyed, with dozens of small plates from which to choose the sweetest, freshest fruit, pastries, and the creamiest yoghurts and cheeses. Refreshed and sated, we ventured energetically to explore, this time by dinghy to the soft sands rumored to have been imported by multiple boatloads from Egypt at Mark Antony's request. Cleopatra, it seemed, had claimed this island as their private love nest and the silky golden sand was a surprise for his Egyptian queen. There are multiple ruins nearby, including an amphitheater and columns remaining from a temple to Apollo as well as a church. The island's location and sights were fantastic, the surrounding waters so unbelievably clear and placid and, of course, the enchanting tale itself created a connection through time with the legendary queen that immersed our day in a fairytale vibe. Thanks to our captain, we'd arrived early enough to be ready to depart just when the crowded tour boats began arriving. Smart move on his part.

## Optimal Ören

We sailed across to the town of **Ören**, which was once been known as ancient city of Keramos. Here we explored the vibrant local markets teeming with specialty handicrafts and the freshest local produce. Later that evening, our Captain had also booked a table in a small fishing town nearby for dinner, in a beautifully authentic and family-owned beachside culinary gem, Ihtiyar Balikçi (Old Fisherman). Here, our small group experienced a bevy of delightful dishes of the freshest fish and seafood, accompanied by amazing local wines.


OBRIEN
BALLER 2

## Vineyards and Vistas

We slept onboard in the bay of Ören. The following morning, we woke up sailing to another secluded inlet in **Kissebükü Koyu**. We spent the morning swimming, diving, and playing with the large array of water toys onboard, including kayaks, paddle boards, and jet skis. **Kargicak** followed, and, ashore, revealing lushly verdant surroundings and secluded settings that provided a peaceful contrast to the earlier bustling markets. Our journey took a more flavorful turn farther inland where we toured some local vineyards, including the renowned **Garova**, famed for the exquisite native Öküzgözü grapes which produce several varietals, including an impressive Shiraz and a Zinfandel. Here, a process of winemaking tracing back almost five millennia of heritage unfolded before us, offering another sensorial feast of this region's rich heritage.

## Tea and Carpets

The morning of our last day, we disembarked and went to another local village, **Etrim**, where a family of carpet makers offered us a traditional Turkish breakfast and told us the story of handmade carpets. Many of the weavers at the **Etrim Hali** carpet collective have roots in this village for 500 years and this visit highlighted the dedicated craftsmanship and tradition that both defines and reinforces the culture of small town life along the coast. Here the intricate art of carpet weaving was showcased alongside local culinary specialties like lahmacun (a local pizza-type dish with meat but without cheese). Brunch here as well was a magical experience, sitting on the floor atop colorful carpets and cushions, we enjoyed a large array of different dishes, served on low tables, accompanied by pots of traditional Turkish tea.

Our last day found us sailing back to Bodrum. One last traditional Turkish dinner at the popular **Bodrum Marina Yacht Club** was the perfect ending for this dream sailing which merged culinary delights with ancient echoes of history, highlighting the rich tradition and vibrant culture that are testaments to the enduring allure of Türkiye. Part retreat, part adventure, thanks to Scic Sailing, this sail along the Turkish Riviera unfolded as a journey for both body and soul:  each sunset, each meal, every deep breath, each contented sigh, and every dip below into the azure depths with endless blue skies above enchanting us and melding into a memory to be treasured forever. ⊕

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