

August 21, 2007

After our very fast pace schedule last year experiencing the sights of Rome, Italy, Israel, Sardinia, Sicily, and Greece, this year we decided to enjoy a laid-back summer exploring just the classic cruising grounds of Turkey from Finike to Bodrum in southwestern Turkey. This allowed us time to both relax and also work on the boat. With the cruising in Turkey being the best in the Mediterranean, this summer couldn't have been more delightful.

In May 2006, Mary had injured her left knee. At the time she thought it was an acute case of bursitis. While back in Florida over the winter she found out that she had completely torn her ACL (Anterior Cruciate Ligament) causing her knee to become quite unstable. She underwent arthroscopic surgery on February 26 to have a new tendon attached.

After arriving back in Turkey on April 16, we spent 9½ weeks in Marmaris before setting sail for the summer's cruising. We spent the first two weeks on the hard at Marmaris Yacht Marine before putting Kuhela back into the water. While Mary's knee continued to heal, Phil used the time to work on needed boat projects. Our marina had quite a multi-cultural atmosphere, and Mary's knee brace became a great way to meet a variety of people. Everyone wanted to help her whenever possible, and it was amazing the number of other cruisers that had had a similar operation. In the beginning, Mary was unable to walk long distances and became tired quite easily, even while wearing her flexible knee brace, due mainly to the uneven pavement encountered in Turkey. Finally at the beginning of June, Mary was once again walking two to three miles a day, and we were ready to go cruising.



*Marmaris Yacht Marina*

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Our original plan was to depart Marmaris Yacht Marine on June 7, the day our contract ended, but boat problems caused a delay. About a week before our intended departure, the tip of our starboard spreader supporting the upper shroud fell off. When it occurred it sounded like the “sky was falling” as the entire boat shook. We ran outside but couldn’t figure out the problem until a couple of days later. It was hard for us to believe that we had an aluminum mast with wooden spreaders, and now that Kuhela was 28 years old the wood had acquired some dry rot. Luckily, it happened while we were in the marina. It would have been devastating to have had happen during our passage back across the Atlantic next year. After new wooden spreaders were made and covered with fiberglass for added strength, Phil installed them. On Thursday, June 21, we at last departed the marina.



The two great cruising areas in Turkey encompass the Lycian coast from Marmaris to Finike and the Carian coast from Marmaris to Bodrum. Both of these coasts take their names from the indigenous Anatolian people that initially occupied each area. After leaving Marmaris, we first headed east along the Lycian coastline.

The Lycians were thought to have appeared in this region about 2000 BC. They quickly established a number of settlements along the Turkish southwestern coastline, about 23 in all. Being very skilled, their craftsmanship can still be seen in the amazing rock tombs and sarcophagi they left behind. From the 6th century BC onwards, the Lycians came under the influence of different foreign invaders, and with each invasion new ideas were brought into the area, mainly from the Persians, Alexander the Great, and the Romans.

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Our first anchorage was in Ekincik, 15 nautical miles east of Marmaris. On Friday we enjoyed a boat trip up the Dalyan River with some other cruisers to the ancient city of Kaunos and afterwards to the Lycian rock tombs at Dalyan. Located on the border between Caria and Lycia, Kaunos' customs resembled that of the Lycians even though its inhabitants considered themselves Carian. It was a major seaport until its harbor silted up. Now over 2000 years later, Kaunos' setting remained compellingly beautiful with the Mediterranean Sea, once at its doorstep, currently 3 miles further south. Most of the ruins such as the theater, temple, baths, and agora dated from the 2nd century BC.



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In order for us to see more of the site, our tour boat captain dropped us off on one side of the ruins and picked us up on the other side. He had his nine year old son be our tour guide. As this was Mary's first hike since her operation, she had checked beforehand that it would be an easy hike. Unfortunately, nine year old boys think differently. Speaking only the two English words "come" and "no", he led us through the ruins. Thinking we had to ascend a part of the knoll behind the Roman theater to get to the other side, we cruisers willingly started to climb the rocks behind our fearless leader, only to find out in the end that we had climbed up the rocks just for the view. And, as one knows, it is much easier to climb up a hill than go down.



Afterwards, we continued our boat trip a short distance up the Dalyan River to view the Lycian rock tombs carved into the cliffs overlooking the river and the village of Dalyan. Dating from the 4th century BC, these temple façade rock tombs were impressive with their Ionic columns. We enjoyed lunch along the waterfront, a most tranquil setting with its abundance of flowers.



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After Ekincik, we headed 30 nautical miles east to Fethiye Gulf, and in particular Skopea Limani, an area on the west side of Fethiye Gulf encompassing a dozen islands and countless coves. As we entered this area we encountered hot furnace winds. These dry, strong winds were known to occasionally blow here, and it was as if someone had opened huge furnace doors.



In Skopea Limani, we spent eight days anchored in Boynuz Buku. Our arrival also marked the beginning of a six day heat wave with temperatures in the low 100's. There couldn't have been a better place to survive a heat wave than in Boynuz Buku with its lush green setting and many amenities. Every evening we headed to shore to enjoy a beer under the restaurant's shady trees with our Canadian cruising friends Liz and Jim. If we needed to take on water there was cool spring water available, and trash service was also provided. Even an ice cream man came by once or twice a day selling ice cream. Moreover, swimming in Boynuz Buku was a great way to cool down, especially as we didn't have air-conditioning. We easily could have stayed longer, but by Monday, July 2, we had run out of supplies and needed to head into Fethiye.



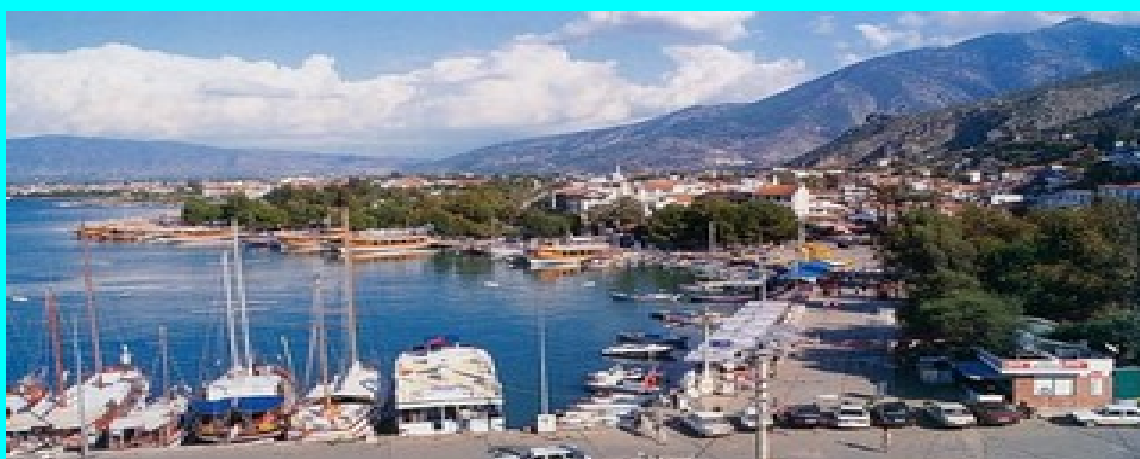
*Extended Happy Hour*



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We spent one week in the town of Fethiye. Although touristy, Fethiye had the attributes of a working Turkish agricultural town, and we enjoyed our stay very much. At the fish market in Fethiye many small local restaurants cooked the fish you purchased from the fish market, even helping you with your selection if needed. This service was now a huge tourist attraction.



While in Fethiye we anchored next to the mosque, and the Islamic chants we heard were serenely melodic, different from the chants we had heard in Morocco. As the Turkish elections were to be held the latter part of July, campaigning was in full swing. Often from our anchorage we could hear the loud speakers from candidate's campaign vans as they drove through the streets. With July being a very, very hot month in Turkey, we took down the panels from our dodger allowing more air circulation while sitting in the cockpit. What a difference it made in our dispositions! With no rain and almost 100% blue sky days throughout both July and August, we never put the panels back on again until early September.



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In antiquity (400 BC), Fethiye had been the Lycian town of Telmessos and Lycia's principal port. Because of earthquakes, the necropolis on the cliffs behind the town was now virtually all that remained of ancient Telmessos. We walked up to the freestanding Ionian temple tomb of Amyntas, and inside the tomb there were three stone benches where bodies had once laid. The craftsmanship on the tomb was remarkable, from the detail on the façade to the huge funeral door. From the tomb, the view of the city and harbor was spectacular and our boat could be vaguely seen anchored in the far left of the harbor behind the marina.



On Friday, July 6, we took a tour to Tlos and Saklikent Gorge with another cruising couple. We had planned to take the local bus, but because of Mary's knee brace the Fethiye tourist office arranged for us to join a full day tour for a price more reasonable than if we had done it on our own. This tour became one of our treasured memories of the summer. Tlos had been one of the main Lycian cities in the Xanthos valley. On the Tlos promontory were some Lycian rock-cut house tombs from one to three stories high, some Lycian sarcophagi, plus an Ottoman fortress.



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After visiting the archeological site of Tlos, we traveled a short distance to beautiful Yakapark, a local trout farm restaurant high in the hills. Here we enjoyed a delicious Turkish luncheon, including traditional Turkish flat bread. Only drinks were extra. My, did we feel luxurious sitting Ottoman style on wooden platforms and pillows, listening to the waterfall and stream nearby!



Next, we visited the showroom of a carpet co-op. In the co-ops, Turkish women were continuing the ancient skill of carpet weaving that had been handed down from generation to generation. In an effort to keep the art alive, the Turkish government was providing monthly health insurance and stipends to village women. In this showroom, we saw the different stages that went into weaving a Turkish carpet -- from carding (combing) the wool to spinning, dyeing, and weaving the carpet. Only Turkish carpets are woven with a double knot; all other carpets have just a single knot. Besides seeing the wool process, we also saw how silk thread was gathered from the silkworm cocoon. In the end, we were shown some finished carpets and especially beautiful were the silk carpets as the colors changed from dark to light as the carpet rotated.



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Last, we visited Saklikent Gorge, the longest and deepest canyon in Turkey formed ages ago when the Taurus mountains were split by an earthquake. In its entirety, the gorge was about 11 miles long and 1000 feet high. In the heat of July, walking through the cold stream at Saklikent was refreshing. After crossing the stream, we hiked a mile further up the gorge.



In Turkey all foreign nationals are required to have a visa, and the Turkish visa is good for only ninety days. One must leave the country and return in order to get a new visa. As our ninety day limit was fast approaching, we left Fethiye on Monday, July 9, and headed towards Kas. We stopped overnight in Cold Water Bay, 15 miles away. The small cove in this bay was picture-perfect with its crystal clear water. A Turkish couple came by in the afternoon selling gozleme (Turkish crepes), and we purchased a cheese gozleme. It was interesting to watch the woman make the gozleme. First she made the flat bread, then added the cheese mixture, and last heated it on her small stove on the boat. The next day we continued on to Kas, 42 nautical miles further east, anchoring in Bucak Deniz, just a 15 minute walk from town.



*Bucka Denýz & Town*



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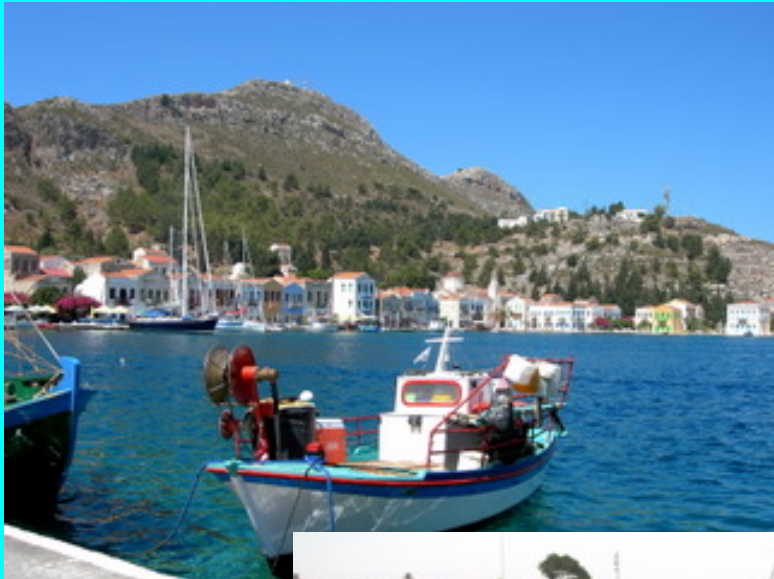


Wednesday, July 11, we traveled onboard a small Turkish gulet from Kas over to the Greek island of Kastellorizo in order to obtain our new visas. This Greek island was only a few miles from Kas and the Turkish coast but 72 miles away from Rhodes, its nearest Greek neighbor. Kastellorizo had such a wonderful laid-back atmosphere; it was the perfect Greek island for us. It now had about 200 permanent residents, but in the 19th century Kastellorizo was a thriving island with about 15,000 people. In 1920 when the Italians took possession of the island, much of the population immigrated to Australia, and during World War II the island was heavily bombed. Now Australian-Greeks were slowly returning, and many buildings were starting to be rebuilt. During the summer the Australian-Greeks were the island's main visitors. It was easy to observe that everyone was having a good time. We enjoyed the island so much that after our visa run we returned the following day with our own boat, and then again a month later on our return to Marmaris from Finike.



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One of our favorite Turkish cruising areas this summer was Kekova Roads, 15 nautical miles east of Kastellorizo, and it was here that we next went. In all, we spent 16 days in July in this lovely protected area enjoying three different anchorages. Along the entire Lycian coastline we had seen Lycian sarcophagi, but never in such abundance as in the Kekova Roads. Here, the Taurus Mountains had made this section of the coast by road almost inaccessible to outsiders until the 20th century, and so a large number of tombs and sarcophagi remained intact.

We spent 4 days at our first anchorage in Polemos Buku enjoying its clear water and peaceful surroundings. On Monday, July 16, we walked through goat pastures across the isthmus following the Lycian Way to Sicak Bay and ancient Aperlai. Here, around 530 AD, an earthquake took place submerging parts of this Lycian community. Still standing were parts of the city wall and many sarcophagi, all containing a stepped base, a lower grave chamber, and a hollowed lid suggestive of a house roof.



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The next day we moved on to Ucagiz Limani, our second anchorage in Kekova Roads, spending 7 days in all at this location. In this sheltered bay we anchored next to Ucagiz village (ancient Theimussa). In the Kekova Roads, only Ucagiz had limited food supplies. While anchored here we enjoyed a few meals ashore. The two waterfront restaurant owners in the village offered free bread in the morning to those cruisers who ate at their restaurant. Each day we'd watch them drive their skiffs out to the boats with the free bread, amusingly observing to see which owner had more boat stops. Our first morning after eating ashore we expected the bread, but our restaurant owner kept returning every morning afterwards with another loaf, naturally obliging us to patronize his restaurant when wishing again to eat ashore. Just right of Ucagiz village were some sarcophagi, ever so beautifully blended with their rock surroundings.



Close to Ucagiz were Kalekoy village (ancient Simena) and the 'sunken city' along Kekova Island. The same devastating earthquake that had hit Aperlai had also hit this area. We traveled by dinghy to visit these two places. As tourist season was in full swing, we shared the ruins along the 'sunken city' coastline one morning with lots of day tripper boats. Some of the remains we detected were a solitary entryway, a place where foundation marks had once been cut into the rock, and stairs leading to nowhere. Near ancient Simena was a lone sarcophagus.



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Another morning we took the dinghy to Kalekoy and climbed to the top of its 15th century castle. On top were spectacular views of the Kekova Roads. We probably would never have hiked up the entire way on our own as we had to climb up rocks in places, but our agile tour guide never took no for an answer and Mary couldn't be outdone by someone older than she. As we hiked up, our delightful guide shared her expertise in the surrounding plants and ruins. Naturally in the end we bought one of her beautiful handiworks. Afterwards, she showed us another path down to the village through ancient sarcophagi.



*View Looking Northeast*

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*View Looking Northwest*



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In Kalekoy lived 175 permanent residents. Even today, all village supplies were brought in by boat. Here we felt like we were in a rural Turkey village, and we enjoyed our stay very much. In the evening, we returned for dinner. As we approached the dock with our dinghy, each family came running out to the end of its pier, hailing us to come alongside and patronize its restaurant. Throughout our entire summer cruising Turkey, including Ucagiz, we often experienced this same scene. With the abundance of flower boxes at the restaurant we chose, the setting was most picturesque, especially with the castle above lit up.



Our last anchorage in Kekova Roads was in beautiful Gokkaya Limani. As tourist season was in full swing, this anchorage was also a favorite with gulets (traditional Turkish sailboats generally made of wood and beautifully varnished). During the season these boats were chartered out to groups for typically 3 to 7 day excursions. Due to cold freshwater springs bubbling up from underneath the sea in parts of this area, swimming was most refreshing. At night with the full moon, this entire area became like a stage set and a beautiful backdrop for moonlight swims.



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Sunday, July 29, we finally left Kekova Roads and motored to Finike, 15 nautical miles away. As there was no anchorage in Finike, we had to stay in the town marina. Finike was a Turkish market town of 11,000 people and one of Turkey's main citrus growing areas, with the earliest and latest fruits of the season grown in this region. The town's logo was an orange as it was especially known for its oranges. There was little tourism, and so almost everything was less expensive, from groceries to eating out. On walks we were stopped frequently by locals wanting to practice their little English, and when buying goods at local stores we were invited for not just one cup of tea, but often 2 or more cups. We were without doubt charmed by this town.



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Thursday, August 2, we rented a car and drove first to Demre (ancient Myra) and then up to the mountains to visit the archeological site of Arycanda. Myra had been one of Lycia's six principal cities, and some of the best examples of Lycian house tombs exhibiting richly carved house facades were located here. Next to these rock tombs was a well-preserved Roman theater. About 1½ miles away was the small Church of St. Nicholas, built in the 7th century over the same site as the original church. In the 4th century AD, St. Nicholas (the real Santa Claus) had been the bishop of Myra. Coming from a wealthy family, he had devoted his life to helping the poor and at Christmas secretly brought gifts to the poor children. His identity was discovered one year by townsfolk, and soon afterwards they began calling him Santa Claus (Father Christmas). Following his death on the 6th of December, 343 AD, St. Nicholas became known as the patron saint of children and seamen. Now every year in Demre a festival takes place on December 6, St. Nicholas Day.



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Afterwards, we drove to the ancient town of Arycanda, 21 miles north of Finike. This town dated back to 3 AD. Located up in the mountains, logging had been one of its industries, and the cut logs were floated down the river to the port of Finike for sale to other countries. Although relatively unknown, this site had been extensively excavated over the past 39 years, mainly during the summer with the help of archeological students, making it relatively easy for us to now visualize. Being a very hot day, after a short visit we headed back down the gravel road to the nearby Turkish highway rest stop and vegetable stand located by a cool freshwater spring. Here we enjoyed refreshing water and corn-on-the-cob, popular among Turks in the summer.



We had been planning to spend some time this season cruising with our German friends, Uli and Imke. They arrived back from Germany on Sunday, August 5. Early Wednesday, we all departed Finike en route back west to Fethiye. Mostly motoring, we made overnight stops in the Kekova Roads and Kastellorizo before arriving back in Fethiye on Saturday, August 11.



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Sunday we all visited the Greek ghost town of Kayakoy, 6 miles SW of Fethiye. This town had once been the thriving Greek town of Levissi but was abandoned in the Turkish-Greek population exchange in 1923 following the Turkish War of Independence. During World War I, the Ottomans had sided with Germany and the Central Powers. With the Allies' victory, the Ottoman Empire fell and parts of it were carved up. The Greeks, hoping to take back parts of the Byzantine Empire, occupied Izmir in May 1919 and pushed eastwards toward Ankara. This stirred Turkish nationalism, and a bitter war ensued between the Greeks and Turks from 1920 to 1922. Under General Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the Turks finally pushed the Greeks out of Turkey in late 1922. Soon afterwards the Turkish Republic was born.

As part of the peace settlement, Greece and Turkey agreed to a population exchange. Around 1.25 million Ottoman Greeks and 450,000 Greek Muslims were exchanged. As there were more Greeks than Turks in the exchange, some Turkish Greek towns, like Levissi, became derelict. When this community left for the outer suburbs of Athens in 1923, it left behind 2 large churches, 14 chapels, 2 schools, and about 1000 houses. Remarkably, all of these houses had been constructed so that no house blocked the light and view of another. Now, looking down over the remnants of what had once been a thriving town was a poignant, unforgettable sight; the sadness these people must have felt leaving everything they had ever known. For centuries, the Greeks and Turks in this valley had lived together as neighbors and friends. Overnight, all had changed, and these people had become the silent casualties of war.



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Tuesday, August 14, we departed Fethiye for Skopea Limani to enjoy for a last time three of its beautiful anchorages: Gocek, Boynuz Buku (our favorite), and Kapi Creek. Five days later we left our German friends, intending to rendezvous with them again along the Carian coastline, and headed back to Marmaris, 42 nautical miles away, to restock the boat and do laundry. With our arrival back in Marmaris on August 19, our exploration of the Lycian coastline had come to an end. In all, we had spent just over 8 weeks cruising this amazing coastline.



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