



PHOTOS BY TERRY BOYD/Stars and Stripes

A solitary beachcomber negotiates a rock formation that marks the northern edge of the 14-mile-long Patara Beach in Lycia, Turkey. Though there is a nearby cluster of hotels and pensions, few people choose this magnificent, seemingly endless sand beach with its own ruin.

# Discover Lycia

Ancient region in southern Turkey escaped notice until recently

BY TERRY BOYD

*Stars and Stripes*

British teachers Polly and Ian Pearson have their own ritual for going from the chilly gloom of their home in west central England to the unremitting sun and heat of Lycia in southern Turkey.

"We check into the hotel and the first thing we do is turn off the air-conditioning in the room and open the windows," said Ian Pearson. "Then we just lie naked on the sheets, sweating happily. One night of that, and we don't even notice the heat."

Summer in Lycia is essentially a search for tactile bliss — the freedom of infinite mountains and seascapes, the sweet pain of the searing sun on your skin and — only slightly less intense — the sensation of floating in the cold sea.

Most visitors come for the beach, or to sail its unspoiled coast. The internationally known beach at Ölüdeniz is Lycia's most visited destination. But because this region of southern Turkey is little explored, few people make it to several other beaches longer and sandier than Ölüdeniz. One — Patara — even has its own ruin.

Even for Turkey, Lycia offers an incredible choice of destinations, especially amaz-

ing in that there weren't even any paved roads into Lycia until late in the 20th century. Though it has a rich history, Lycia disappeared from the world stage for 100 years until the Turkish government finally paved a road in 1981 past Fethiye on Lycia's western edge.

The Lycians lived here from at least 1,000 years before the time of Jesus, although it is not clear who they were or where they came from. Some historians believe that they were indigenous to Asia Minor. Others believe they came from Crete.

Though the Lycian civilization ultimately gave way to Persian, Greek and Roman, it didn't give up without a fight. At least twice, according to lore, the men of Xanthos, Lycia's principal city, fought to the death after killing their own wives and children.

Think about that a bit as you wander through the bramble-strewn outer fringes of Xanthos, walking amid fabulous floor mosaics unprotected from man and nature, or peeking into the elaborate rock tombs.

Today, Lycians are best known for the carved rock tombs they left all over the area, either free-standing, or carved into the sides of hills. You see them everywhere from Dalyan to Kas, even partially submerged in Kekova's bay. There are at least a dozen



Kayakers and tubers try to tame the icy waters that run out of mountain aquifers year-round, cutting streams through Lycia's arid plains. Even for Turkey, Lycia offers an incredible choice of destinations, especially amazing in that there weren't any paved roads into Lycia until late in the 20th century.

SEE LYCIA ON PAGE 4



PETER JAEGER/Stars and Stripes



PHOTOS BY TERRY BOYD/Stars and Stripes

**LYCIA, FROM PAGE 3**

significant ruins including Tlos, Xanthos and Patara. All are within short drives of Fethiye, which is a good base, or from Ölüdeniz.

Patara is an especially good choice because its ruins spill onto a 14-mile-long beach, perhaps Turkey's longest. The sand is deep, fine and untrod. The water is gin clear. And except for a few hundreds yards near a car park/entry area, it's empty.

That's because Patara, like much of Lycia, is a preservation area, with virtually no facilities. A few beach restaurants and beach chair rentals are clustered at the entrance just below Patara's ruins. That's a bit inconve-

nient because Lycia gets extremely hot, with daytime temperatures pushing 100 degrees Fahrenheit most of July and August.

Perfect, said the Pearsons. Last July, the Pearsons strolled from the beach through the parched fields to get a closer look at Patara's amphitheater. "It's a 'only mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the noonday sun' sort of place," said Ian Pearson, with a rather sweaty smile.

If you get far enough off the path, there's a bit of the land that time forgot feeling to Lycia, the Pearsons said. They prefer quiet rooms in remote areas. But you can find ultra-sophisticated quarters in the resort towns of Kalkan and Kas — if you can get a reser-

**There's activity in the air, in the water and on the sand at Ölüdeniz, Lycia's most famous beach. Paragliding 100 feet above the water behind a speed boat is faster, and probably safer, than plunging off the top of a mountain in a hang glider. Both options are available for about half the cost as in Europe.**

vation in these very trendy towns. For the traveler bored with the "ordinary" vacation destinations of Bodrum or Marmaris, this is the other Turkey.

Away from the resorts, Lycia can be an island of genuineness in a world of artifice. One of the most charming nights I ever spent was at the Mountain Lodge next to Tlos, watching a local courtship ritual. Because there was no access to interior Lycia until 20 years ago, locals are very conservative, said Melahat Scarborough, the Mountain Lodge's mistress. With no other mixed-gender spots in the village, local teens come to the lodge to meet over a beer or raki, Melahat said. But the girl always brings a chaperone on the "date," usually a sister or friend, she said.

In came two young girls wearing village garb — head scarves to complement their hair, not hide it. Loose-fitting blouses and skirts. Melahat poured them beers and they headed for a dark corner, giggling conspiratorially. The boyfriend followed discretely a few minutes later, ordering cola. The threesome was still flirting when I retired for the evening.

Whatever Americans expect of Turkey, Lycia can pretty much deliver. But its sensations are more intense on every level than the touristy Turkey. It's like trying to make sense of a robust Bordeaux after you've grown up on Hi-C.



Lycia is most famous for its carved rock tombs, which are spread in abundance from Dalyan to Antalya, Turkey. This good example is at Tlos, near Fethiye.



**A British man rides the top of a wave at Patara beach. As with the rest of the Mediterranean, Turkey doesn't have much in the way of surf. The one exception may be Patara in the afternoons.**

Terry Boyd is Stripes' Turkey bureau reporter. E-mail him at [boydt@mail.estripes.osd.mil](mailto:boydt@mail.estripes.osd.mil).



**SCHOOL BUS SAFETY STARTS WITH ME!**

**R  
U  
L  
E #4**

**Get off the bus, take 3 steps away and WAIT for the bus to leave**

A SCHOOL BUS SAFETY REMINDER FROM DODDS-EUROPE TRANSPORTATION DIVISION