

# Dalaman dreaming

Mud baths, ancient cities and a vitamin D boost: Steph Dyson explores Turkey's popular Dalaman coast with Jet2holidays



I'm lying face down on a warm marble gobektasi, the air thick with steam and my skin slick with foam that's been dolloped liberally onto my back like whipped cream. The worries and stresses of the past few years are being pummelled expertly out of my back by Kadek, who's barely five feet tall but has a vice-like grip. She knuckles into each and every muscle, before reaching for a kese, a rough, handwoven cloth that she uses to scrub my skin to leave it pink and glowing.

It's my first experience of a Turkish hammam, the traditional cleansing ritual that's almost a rite of passage when visiting the country. It's one of the treatments available at Liberty Fabay, a five-star, all-inclusive hotel on Turkey's Dalaman coast, a region "offering customers fantastic hotels, great beaches

and unrivalled value", according to Alan Cross, head of trade sales at Jet2holidays. The hotel is part of Jet2's Luxe Collection and is a place to "sample some affordable luxury".

#### TOURISM BOOM

Turkey and the Dalaman coast are having a moment. In May, Jet2.com boosted flight capacity to popular Turkish destinations including Dalaman from Manchester with two new 327-seat Airbus A330s, while in June, almost half of all passengers landing at Dalaman airport were British.

It's not hard to understand why. With practically year-round sunshine and temperatures that barely dip below 20C, the region has a clear appeal for sun-starved Brits.

With its golden beach, 12 outdoor pools and assortment

Dalyan, Dalaman  
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# DESTINATIONS

## WINTER SUN | TURKEY

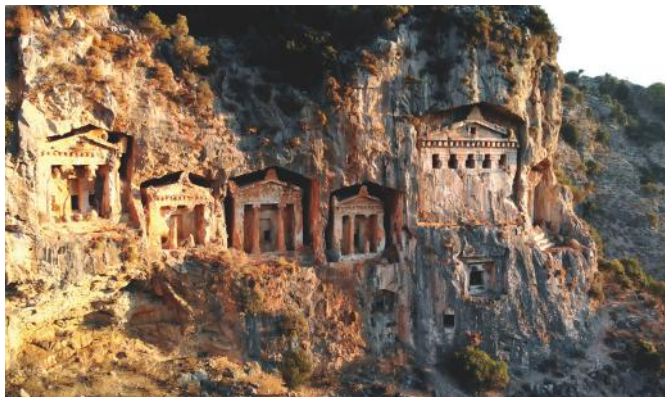


### LIBERTY FABAY, FETHIYE

Liberty Fabay opened in June 2021 and its 535 light-filled bedrooms ooze contemporary, if completely untraditional Turkish, decor. Shaded balconies and vast sliding windows frame sea views, plus swim-up bedrooms and six-person villas connect to one of 12 outdoor pools.

With its private beach and photogenic swimming pools flanked by cyan loungers, the resort has wide-ranging appeal for couples and families. An aqua park and children's club provide welcome distraction for kids of all ages, while adult-only areas, plus DJs, foam parties and a palm-fringed swim-up bar ensure escape for those seeking it. A plethora of daily activities, including yoga, beach volleyball and water Zumba, and, at an additional cost, access to the brilliant spa, with its traditional Turkish hammam treatments and massages, complete the bill.

Food choices are ample, with three buffet and three à la carte restaurants available to guests; for finer dining options, foodies should head into nearby Fethiye.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Tomb temples cut into the rocks at Kaunos; Liberty Fabay hotel, Fethiye; mud bath, Dalyan; and İztuzu Beach  
PICTURES: Shutterstock/Illhan Kuyucu, Kvitka Fabian, Raul C7



of restaurants and bars, there's little need to stray from Liberty Fabay. "Some people land at the airport, get to the resort and never leave," explains my guide, Tolga Olay. "Although, I'm not sure you can say you've seen Turkey if you don't leave the resort," he adds with a smile.

### MUD FOR IT

Luckily, the Dalaman coast boasts an abundance of sun-soaked beaches and the opportunity to engage with Turkey's ancient history. Taking a boat across the Dalyan River, an hour's drive northwest of the hotel, we arrive at Camur Banyosu Dalyan, a mud bath where clouds of sulphur belch out of the 37C thermal springs that are the first step of the bathing process. From here, I clamber into the mud pool, joining others in scooping squelchy handfuls of cooling mud to lather on to my arms, legs and back, before letting it dry in the sun.

Rich in minerals that, allegedly, help eczema and rheumatoid arthritis, mud baths have historically played a more conjugal role in Turkish society. "It was traditional for my parents to spend long hours there chit-chatting and gossiping," Tolga explains. "During that time, marriages were arranged," he adds, assuring me I'm not about to be paired off and instead offering me a tart but refreshing glass of freshly squeezed pomegranate juice.

### TOMBS AND TURTLES

Back on the river, we head out towards the Dalyan Delta, past fertile plains where cattle graze and pampas grasses create natural corridors by the water. We spot the

elaborately carved, Hellenistic-style tombs of the ancient city of Kaunos, cut into the soft limestone cliffs high above. Built in the 4th century BC to house the bones of aristocrats from the once powerful port city of Kaunos, they form part of 170-plus necropolises that span the coast.

Where the river meets the Mediterranean, we reach İztuzu Beach, an important breeding spot and conservation site for three turtle species. As if in welcome, a loggerhead as large as a clash cymbal paddles beneath our boat, while on land, metal cages rest above turtle eggs buried beneath the sand to avert beachgoers from placing their sunbeds on top. Stepping into the sea, we discover the water is wonderfully warm, with gentle breakers heading into shore and sand so soft it begs you to sink your toes right in.

I end the day at lantern-slung Yengeç, a restaurant located 30 minutes around the bay from the hotel, and whose tables line the marina, overlooking a dozen luxury yachts bobbing in the harbour. As the evening cools, juicy grilled grouper, feta-laced salads and crisp sauvignon blanc are on the menu. It's the perfect end to a soul-soothing, vitamin D-boosting holiday. **TV**

### BOOK IT

Liberty Fabay is new to **Jet2holidays** for 2022. The operator offers seven nights' all-inclusive at the Fethiye hotel, including flights, from £839 per person, based on two adults sharing, for a departure on April 23, 2023. [jet2holidays.com](https://www.jet2holidays.com)