



8
OF THE
Best
**ONLY-IN-TURKEY
EXPERIENCES**

**Laura French rounds up
unique Turkey activities**

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1 From hectic bazaars bursting with colour to hot-air balloon rides over iconic Cappadocia, via kayaking trips, cooking classes, gulet cruises and everything in between, Turkey isn't short on things to see and do.

And with demand "storming away", according to Jet2holidays head of trade Alan Cross – plus UK visitor numbers predicted to rise 69% this summer, according to Abta – now's the time to be pushing the destination.

We've rounded up some of the best experiences you can only do here, helping you capitalise on a country where rich culture, abundant adventure and pretty-as-a-picture scenery combine to meet exceptional value served with a side of warm hospitality.

1 FLY OVER CAPPADOCIA IN A HOT-AIR BALLOON

Few sights are quite so captivating as the marble-swirled formations of Cappadocia rising up like honeycomb pyramids from a sea of volcanic rock. Age-old monasteries, underground cities and the rock-cut churches of Goreme (a Unesco World Heritage Site) are just a few of the draws here. They're worth exploring on foot, but for a special way of witnessing them, suggest gliding over them in a hot-air balloon. Viator combines an hour-long flight 300m high in the sky with a buffet breakfast and champagne (from £143), while G Adventures offers the

ride as an add-on to its 15-day Absolute Turkey itinerary – picture floating through a pink-orange sky as the sun comes into view, canyons, spires and plateaus gradually unfolding beneath.

Book it: G Adventures' Absolute Turkey tour from Istanbul starts at £960; the hot-air balloon ride costs from £129 as an add-on. gadventures.co.uk

2 SEE A SUNKEN AEROPLANE WRECK

Turkey is a hotspot for divers, with shipwrecks scattering the crystal waters of the Aegean Coast. Mandarin Oriental, Bodrum, offers divers the chance to explore its highlights, including the Amphora Fields – a memorial site strewn with 3,000-year-old vessels – alongside shipwrecks left over from the Second World War.

But the most unusual wreck here has to be the Airbus 300, a huge plane lying 32 metres beneath the surface of the water. Deliberately sunk off the coast of Kusadasi in 2016 to create an artificial reef, it takes the title of world's biggest diveable aeroplane wreck, measuring a whopping 54 metres long, with a wingspan of 44 metres – a wise one for qualified divers looking for their next undersea challenge.

Book it: Six Senses Kaplankaya offers Aegean wreck dives, including the Airbus 300, from €180. Room rates start at €400 per night, including breakfast. sixsenses.com

3 BARTER YOUR WAY ROUND THE GRAND BAZAAR

Narrow lanes bursting with colourful patterned wares, hanging gold lanterns, fragrant spices and sweet Turkish delights make up the enormous, chaotic covered market that is the Grand Bazaar, where more than 4,000 shops are scattered across 60-plus streets.

Dating back to the 15th century, it now attracts up to 400,000 visitors daily, with tourists flocking to witness artisans at work while sampling, sipping and shopping their way round the world's biggest souk and centrepiece of the city's culture-rich Old Town.

Book it: Attraction World offers a visit here as part of its Istanbul Grand Tour, combining the market with attractions including the Blue Mosque and Topkapi Palace, from £63 for adults and £32 for children. attractionworld.com

4 EXPERIENCE THE WORLD'S HIGHEST PARAGLIDE

Fancy lifting off the mountainside, soaring over the Blue Lagoon and then swooping down onto the Olu Deniz promenade? If the answer is yes, then there's only one thing for it – a tandem paraglide from the top of Mount Babadag. "Thrillseekers can jump more than 6,000ft and paraglide down to the beach," says Alexander Regelmann,

vice-president Turkey for D-Resorts and Hotels, Dogus Tourism Group. "It's the only place in the world where adrenaline junkies can jump from such a height," he adds.

Book it: Located around an hour's drive from Babadag, D-Resort Gocek makes a good base for exploring the region. Kuoni offers a week in a Penthouse Standard Room from £1,270 per person, based on two sharing in September and including British Airways flights from Gatwick, with private transfers. kuoni.co.uk

5 GO ON A GULET CRUISE

Nothing says Turkey like a cruise in a traditional wooden gulet, wind whipping your hair as you glide carefree along cobalt-blue water.

For a luxury option look to Peter Sommer Travels, which offers a selection of scheduled one and two-week cruises along the coasts of Ionia, Caria and Lycia, with an onboard chef and expert guide. Prices start from £2,475 per person.

For those on a slightly slimmer budget, try Explore, whose Family Cruising the Turquoise Coast takes parents and kids out to discover the uninhabited islands and pristine sands that speckle the region, throwing in plenty of snorkelling opportunities plus intriguing stops ranging from the mud baths near Dalyan to the cliffside village of Kalkan. ➔

PICTURES: SHUTTERSTOCK; EXPLORE



RIGHT:
Local
snacks



LEFT:
Kekova
Island

New hotels

- ▶ Istanbul welcomed the five-star, 127-room Millennium Istanbul Golden Horn (*below*) at the end of April.
- ▶ Design-centric Seya Beach Hotel has just opened in the coastal town of Alaçati, on the western coast.
- ▶ Six Senses Kaplankaya opened on the Turkish Riviera in May, with a huge spa, health clinic, villas, hotel and beach club, set on a reserve twice the size of Monaco.
- ▶ The Bodrum Edition has just opened, with 102 rooms, beachclub and hammam.



PICTURES: TAMER HARTEVIOGLU; INTREPID TRAVEL/MICHAEL STASTNIK

➔ **Book it:** Explore's guided eight-day cruise costs from £1,140 per adult and £1,060 per child, including most meals, transport, onboard accommodation, and return flights. explore.co.uk

6 EXPLORE A SUNKEN CITY BY KAYAK

Just off the turquoise-ringed Kekova Island on the southeast coast of the country lies the sunken city of Dolchiste, an ancient Lycian settlement that was part-engulfed by the sea following an earthquake in the second century.

Today, gulet cruises take visitors out to glimpse its ruins, but get closer by kayaking around them. Fairlight Jones's two-day Sea Kayaking at Kekova package combines paddling trips in the region with a night sleeping in a wild beach camp on the ancient site of Aperlai, a cut-off Lycian city - perfect for active types wanting to combine history with adventure.

Book it: The two-day private trip with Fairlight Jones costs from £220 (fully catered), or from £1,020 when combined with seven nights' B&B at Deniz Feneri Lighthouse in Kas, and British Airways flights from London. fairlightjones.com

7 TRY A TURKISH COOKING CLASS

From hearty kebabs to hot, melting pide (Turkish pizza), indulgent lamb kofte to sweet baklava, Turkey knows how

to do food, and what better way to get to know its diverse dishes than by cooking some yourself?

Intrepid Travel gives guests a chance to do just that on its Turkey Real Food Adventure, with an Anatolian-inspired cooking class in Goreme, while Trafalgar offers a traditional bread-baking session with local women in the village of Demircidere on its Highlights of Turkey trip - providing clients with an insight into local life and the opportunity to taste various regional specialities and local wines.

Book it: Trafalgar's Highlights of Turkey tour costs from £1,195 per person including seven nights' accommodation, breakfast, the Be My Guest lunch, six dinners, coach transport and a guide. trafalgar.com

8 WALK THE LYCIAN COAST

For keen hikers looking to meander through postcard-perfect scenery while learning all about Turkey's ancient history, the Lycian Way is an attractive bet. Spanning an epic 300-plus miles and stretching from Fethiye to Antalya, the route offers ample rewards by way of pristine beaches, bottle-green pine forests, verdant farmland and tranquil, sleepy villages.

Inntravel picks out the best sections on a 10-day The Lycian Way itinerary, beginning in the tiny village of Beycik - set beside the mountains in the Beydaglari National Park - and winding up in Simena, where historic,

abandoned settlements greet culture-curious travellers wanting to delve deep into this country's intriguing past.

Book it: Inntravel's 10-night self-guided trip costs from £1,145 per person including half-board accommodation, four picnics, luggage transport, route maps and notes. inntravel.co.uk **TW**



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