Standing between the eerily quiet houses of ‘ghost town’ Kayaköy, it’s hard to believe we’re just a few minutes’ drive from two of Turkey’s busiest coastal resorts.

While Oludeniz throngs with sunseekers flocking to the famous Blue Lagoon and Fethiye’s market traders haggle with locals and tourists alike, this now-derelict town sits empty and uncannily silent.

Behind every set of peeling wooden shutters and every yard now overgrown with weeds lies a tragic story of the Greek community forced to abandon their homes in the wake of the Greco-Turkish War of the early 1920s. Yet it’s also a poignant reminder of how much more there is to this region than its sun and sea reputation would suggest.

While the majority of visitors come for the picture-perfect beaches or the family-friendly hotels, there’s as much for thrill-seekers or history buffs as there is for sun-worshippers, provided they know where to look.

**Sell: Mixed Blessings**

Turkish gateway Dalaman is well served by flights from across the UK – departure airports include Gatwick, Birmingham, Bristol, Newcastle, Glasgow, Manchester and Belfast – with low-cost carriers keeping prices competitive. Add to that just a 45-minute transfer from Dalaman to Fethiye, or an hour to Oludeniz, and accessibility is a real selling point for these resorts.

Broadly speaking, Oludeniz’s sandy beaches and shallow waters steer it toward the family market, while Fethiye might be a better fit for couples or older clients who like strolls around the harbour or bargain-hunting in the market. Yet there’s plenty of crossover appeal in either resort, so there’s no need to pigeon-hole them too strictly.

“Oludeniz has arguably Turkey’s most famous beach,” says Olympic Holidays commercial director Photis Lambrianides. “It’s one of the most beautiful places in Turkey and a protected area of outstanding natural beauty – the perfect place to go on holiday if all you want to do is relax, soak up the sun and watch the sunset.”

Yet it’s also the nearest resort to Babadag Mountain, famed for its world-class paragliding, thanks to favourable thermals. Novices can take a tandem flight with a qualified pilot while more experienced paragliders can go solo, but either way, it’s a serious adrenaline boost.

Fethiye, on the other hand, has a different vibe, with its weekly market and homely, harbour-front restaurants as much...
Fethiye is more of a town than a resort, and great to visit for shopping and sightseeing. The ancient harbour is the starting point for boat cruises to the islands of the Aegean Sea. 

There’s also a great variety for keen shoppers, with the Grand Bazaar in the old town offering hand-crafted goods, and the modern Erasta AVM shopping mall with designer shops, bowling and a cinema. For a romantic evening overlooking the marina, the Arena Restaurant has a great terrace and is famous for its seafood.

See: Rock The Boat

tenue from getting to the most interesting spots. The 2,500-year-old Lycian rock tombs, carved into the cliffs above Fethiye, are visible from ground level, and there are sarcophagi from the same period dotted around town, sometimes in quite unexpected spots (we had to dodge one right in the middle of the road, for instance).

But if it’s not too hot, the climb to see these rock tombs up-close is a rewarding one. There are steps, and lots of them, up to the Tomb of Amyntas (entrance about £1.25), but break up the hike with photo stops to admire the sweeping views over Fethiye harbour – plus the promise of a drink at King’s Garden Restaurant, opposite the tombs – and it won’t seem so tough.

More ancient ruins await at Tlos and Xanthos, each an hour away, but to find out more about the region’s more recent history, the ‘ghost town’ of Kayakoy has been transformed into a living museum, paying testament to the touching stories of its one-time residents.

If clients would rather turn their attention seaward, however, Fethiye is establishing itself on the scuba-diving scene, plus its harbour is a popular calling point for the traditional gulets that ply their way up and down the coast. An overnight gulet cruise forms part of The Family Adventure Company’s new itinerary, based entirely in Fethiye, which combines the natural beauty of Saklikent Gorge and Patara Beach with exploring the archaeological ruins of Xanthos and Letoon, and all-in family fun at Oludeniz Water World Aquapark.

The Family Adventure Company product manager Tim Winkworth says: "Fethiye is more of a town than a resort, and great to visit for shopping and sightseeing. The ancient harbour is the starting point for boat cruises to the islands of the Aegean Sea. There’s also a great variety for keen shoppers, with the Grand Bazaar in the old town offering hand-crafted goods, and the modern Erasta AVM shopping mall with designer shops, bowling and a cinema. For a romantic evening overlooking the marina, the Arena Restaurant has a great terrace and is famous for its seafood."

See: Rock The Boat

Frequenting locals as tourists. It’s busy year-round, so clients who like to rub shoulders with locals will find plenty of opportunities. Nearby Calis Beach provides the obligatory helping of sand, and a promenade packed full of boutique hotels and cafes.

Andrea Godsmark, Jet2holidays contracts manager for Turkey, says: “Fethiye is more of a town than a resort, and great to visit for shopping and sightseeing. The ancient harbour is the starting point for boat cruises to the islands of the Aegean Sea. “There’s also a great variety for keen shoppers, with the Grand Bazaar in the old town offering hand-crafted goods, and the modern Erasta AVM shopping mall with designer shops, bowling and a cinema. For a romantic evening overlooking the marina, the Arena Restaurant has a great terrace and is famous for its seafood.”

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For example, although the beach at Oludeniz is long and fairly flat, many of the hotels are built into the hillside, some with steep paths that mean access for those with mobility difficulties isn’t always easy. Fethiye is a much better choice, particularly the hotels along the harbour front, so anyone who has trouble walking will be able to get around much more easily and have a more relaxing and enjoyable experience.”

ASK THE EXPERT

Akin Koç, managing director, Anatolian Sky Holidays: “When recommending resorts to older clients it pays to know about the layout of the resort – simple facts can make all the difference to creating a really special holiday. For example, although the beach at Oludeniz is long and fairly flat, many of the hotels are built into the hillside, some with steep paths that mean access for those with mobility difficulties isn’t always easy. Fethiye is a much better choice, particularly the hotels along the harbour front, so anyone who has trouble walking will be able to get around much more easily and have a more relaxing and enjoyable experience.”
Fethiye is a great place to relax and soak up culture, plus it’s close to historic sights.