

Out of the blue

Oludeniz and Fethiye make ideal bedfellows for Turkish travellers

@Katie_McGonagle

Standing between the eerily quiet houses of 'ghost town' Kayakoy, 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

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Oludeniz is one of the most beautiful places in Turkey

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



→ frequented by 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."

▶ SEE: ROCK THE BOAT

Sightseeing in Oludeniz or Fethiye can be as effortless or strenuous as you like, depending on how close clients



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want to get 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-out family fun at Oludeniz Water World Aquapark.

The Family Adventure Company product manager Tim Winkworth



ASK THE EXPERT



Akin Koc, managing director, Anatolian Sky Holidays:

"When recommending resorts to older clients in particular, 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 steps 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."



LEFT: Fethiye Harbour
BELOW LEFT: Lycian rock tombs
BELOW: Diving in Fethiye

PICTURES: TURKISH CULTURE AND INFORMATION OFFICE; JET2HOLIDAYS; THOMSON

→ says: “Fethiye is fun, vibrant, and full of history so we thought this was a perfect place for our next family adventure. It’s a great place to relax and soak up culture, plus it’s close to historic sights so families don’t have to brave long journeys. Plus there’s a trampoline in the harbour, and what kid doesn’t love that?” Prices start at £976 per child and £1,084 per adult, including flights, accommodation and some meals.

STAY: SMALL PACKAGES

The accommodation is as diverse as the clientele in these neighbouring resorts, with small family-run boutiques rivalling larger all-inclusive hotels, though you won’t find as many of the latter here as in some Turkish resorts. The majority of hotels have fewer than 100 rooms, and locally-owned properties far outnumber international brands.

Among family-friendly properties, Thomas Cook’s top picks are Liberty Hotel Lykia in Oludeniz and Majesty Club Tuana & Park in Fethiye. The former, a five-star hotel in a private bay, has more than enough to keep kids amused, with 10 pools, water slides, tennis courts, a climbing wall and evening entertainment, as well as spacious family rooms for when



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the little ones conk out from their exertions. If that sounds like fun for grown-up clients too, suggest the next-door Sentido Lykia Resort & Spa,

an adult-only property with a relaxed atmosphere, but access to all the facilities at the family hotel.

Many larger properties straddle the divide between family resort and romantic escape, from the 330-room Hillside Beach Club, featured by Prestige Holidays, to the all-inclusive Sensatori Resort Fethiye, which opened last summer. While parents are swayed by Sensatori’s swim-up rooms, adult-only pool and daily yoga and pilates, the kids will be easily won over by a Play House children’s club, Sensory Nursery and daily kids’ activities.

But if couples want a more personal touch, try one of the many boutique-style properties around these resorts. Top-sellers in this sector include the family-run Oyster Residences, where each of the 26 rooms is individually decorated and the restaurant – which sticks to traditional Turkish and Mediterranean cuisine – has a great vantage point over Belckiz beach.

High up in the hills, Beyaz Yunus has just seven suites each boasting a private pool or Jacuzzi and Turkish hammam-style bathrooms, all hidden away in the cliffs above Oludeniz bay. It’s new for Anatolian Sky Holidays and Ilios Travel this year, with prices via the former starting from £999 for a week’s B&B with flights and transfers.

But if clients are focused on saving pennies, the good-value Montebello Resort in Oludeniz – a favourite of Monarch customers – makes up for its lack of beachfront location with a regular beach shuttle, free Wi-Fi, daily activities and bright, modern rooms, all at a surprisingly affordable price. **TW**



Olympic Holidays offers a week’s half-board at the five-star Ece Saray Marina & Resort in Fethiye from £665 for travel in May, with Gatwick flights and transfers. olympicholidays.com

Thomson offers seven nights’ all-inclusive at Sensatori Resort Fethiye from £510, based on two sharing with flights from Luton on May 6, and transfers. thomson.co.uk

Travel 2 offers a week’s B&B at the Oyster Residences in Oludeniz in a double pool and garden view room from £529, with Gatwick flights and private transfers departing May 2. travel2.com



ABOVE: Sentido Lykia Resort & Spa

LEFT: Sensatori Resort Fethiye