

Kayaking Turkey's Turquoise Coast

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Three SSKA kayakers participated in a guided kayaking tour of Turkey's Turquoise coast from 1 to 8 June 2024. It was a wonderful experience which we will share in detail at a SSKA presentation next April. This article is a brief summary.



Kayaking to Simena for lunch

The trip was organized by Exodus Travels, and our guide was Alper, a young, personable and very competent kayaker from Kas. He had a young assistant Bugra who helped with all the heavy lifting and group photos. We were spoiled – we just kayaked, and stayed in comfortable accommodation! In addition to the three of us from Victoria, there were two couples from the UK and a guy from Toronto – a total of eight plus two guides.

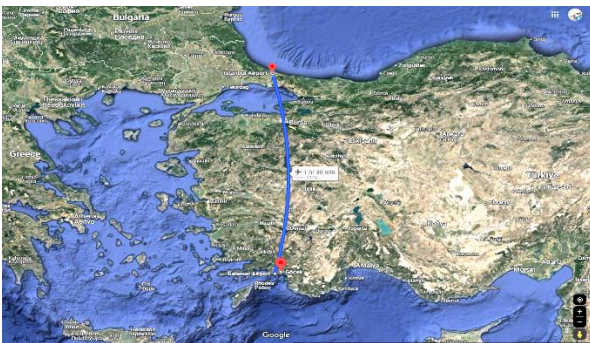
All were strong paddlers and it took us no time to get acquainted with our Prion plastic sea kayaks, paddles and PFDs – no need for spray skirts as there were no winds, waves or currents. Also, we stopped for a swim in our kayaking clothes about every hour. The water was a clear turquoise warm 24 C. The first few days the air temps were in the mid 20s and then a heat

dome arrived adding 10 degrees. Our swims became our air conditioning! Every night we were in a pension or hotel with air conditioning.



From the left – SISKA members Pat Hill, Norm Smyth & Vic Turkington, plus Mike from Toronto, our guide Alper and the two couples from the UK.

We each made our way to a small hotel on the outskirts of Gocek, a small Mediterranean town in South West Turkey – a 1.5 hour flight south from Istanbul. We got acquainted over a home style dinner and the next morning walked about 1 km to the beach where our kayaks waited.



The Turquoise Coast in SW Turkey



Our Hotel near Gocek

Our first two days paddling were along the rugged coastline near Gocek. The first day we covered a total of 10 nm westward past caves, arches and gravelly beaches, stopping at a spectacular white sandy beach for lunch at a restaurant with lounge chairs and sunbrellas. It was their opening day for the 2024 summer season. That night a few of us went into Gocek for a tasty seafood dinner at a dockside restaurant. Next day we headed along the shore line in an easterly direction turning around after a stop for a swim, coffee and snacks at a resort with a sandy beach. This paddle was only about 8 nm as we moved by comfortable air conditioned bus that afternoon to our next stop 2 hours east – Ucagiz.



Our launch beach at Gocek



Kayaking near Gocek

We spent three nights in a lovely pension in Ucagiz – a tiny pretty seaside village with artisans, restaurants, and docks with fishing and sightseeing boats. Ucagiz is on the 800 km long Lycian trail, so it is packed with 2000-year-old history. We loved this area. There are ruins of towns demolished by earthquakes, castles and Lycian tombs everywhere. The clear clean 24C water was an intense turquoise blue. It was spectacular for kayaking and swimming! Each day we paddled around 10 nm, stopping for lunch at local eateries.



Ucagiz



Kekova sunken city

Our next paddle was 1 nm across the bay to the island of Kekova. After a swim in a bay with ruins of a settlement destroyed by an earthquake 2000 years ago, we spent a few hours noodling along the protected area of a sunken city. It was fascinating to look at and paddle over the ruins of houses, stairs, water ducts, and harbours. This was one of the highlights of

our trip. We stopped at Simena for lunch and afterwards some climbed up to the ancient castle overlooking the bay while others browsed the artisan shops, swam, or had more refreshments. We then paddled back to Ucagiz, with a stop along the way for another swim. That night at a local restaurant, we were entertained by huge turtles swimming by looking for dinner!



Kekova ruins – house walls



Kekova Ruins – Roman bath



Simena Castle



Alper "swimming"

The next day we paddled back across the bay to Topak Adasi, a small island near Kekova, where we stopped for a swim and explored the ruins of a small settlement and lookout fort. From there we followed the shore line west to the end of the bay, to a restaurant and ruins of an ancient Lycian port city, Aperlai. After visiting and swimming over the ruins, we had a scrumptious barbecued fish lunch. Then it was a long paddle plus a few swim stops eastwards back to Ucagiz.



Kakova from the top of Topak Adasi island



Swimming amongst Aperlai ruins

Our last day's paddle was eastward, past Simena, past more ruins, past more Lycian sarcophagus, past more swim stops....to a large cave. Then back to a bay for lunch, a swim and an opportunity to climb up to another ruined castle. This was a shorter day as later that afternoon we were bused to Kas, our last stop.



Cave



Waterfront Sarcophagus

We spent one full day exploring Kas – a lovely small town, tumbling down a steep hill to the Med. It was full of boutiques, restaurants, coffee shops and waterfront bars. We enjoyed the weekly farmers market and that evening our guide Alper and his wife hosted us to a homemade farewell dinner at his very scenic condo high up in the hills overlooking Kas. A great conclusion to an amazing experience.

So where are we going next? We are working on it.....



Happy Kayakers (*=SISKA): Hannah, Claire, *Pat, Alper, James, Gillian, *Norm, *Vic & Mike