

The Lycian way trip in May 2024-by Ozlem Hammond (Ozzie)

For those of you who don't know me, I am a Turkish/British citizen lived in the UK since 2006 as a physician/researcher with a recently discovered love of outdoors and walking. I found my walking heaven joining Ramblers in January 2024 choosing my main group as SCR after being looked after so well during my first walk!

My interest and curiosity of ancient cultures was inevitable having lived very close to one of the most well-preserved ancient cities in Europe, Ephesus and taken all my visitors there over the years when I lived in Izmir, Turkey, ended up visiting the site at least 20 odd times. I always consider myself to be extremely lucky to have been born in Turkey, the melting pot of many civilizations.

The Lycian Civilization

The Lycian Way is named after the ancient Kingdom of Lycia, a civilization that has left an indelible mark on the region. The Lycians, known for their unique culture and governance, lived during the Late Bronze Age. They established a democratic union, a first in recorded history, among its many city-states. These city-states, including Xanthos, Patara, Myra, Pinara, Tlos, Olympos, and Phaselis, stand as a testament to their architectural and administrative prowess.

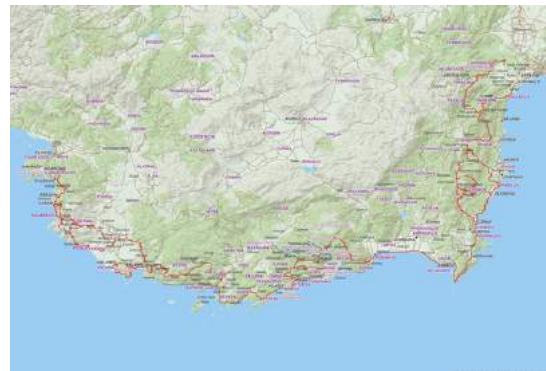
Over the centuries, Lycia was occupied by various civilizations, each leaving its imprint. The Persians in the 6th century BC, the Greeks, and later Alexander the Great in his eastern campaign of the 4th century BC, all played roles in shaping Lycia's destiny. By 43 AD, Lycia had become a Roman province, as evidenced by the Patarensis inscription, which lists at least 69 roads and 53 cities.

The Lycian Way

The Lycian Way is the first long trail walking path, selected amongst the best 10 by Sunday Times in 1999. It evolved over the years from 315 miles and today it is a 472 miles, 35-day way-marked footpath around the coast of Lycia in southern Turkey, from Fethiye to Antalya. The route, marked with white-red stripes painted on stones, is considered a moderate difficulty grade hiking trail.



Location of Lycian Way in Turkey



Lycian Way in red Fethiye to Antalya

The trail consists mainly of Roman roads, old footpaths and mule trails, often hard and stony. Lying between the coast and mountains, it often has steep gradients. It was researched, designed and waymarked by Kate Clow, a British/Turkish amateur historian, in 1999. I have had a chance to meet her during our walk at Sidyma where she lives in harmony with the remains of the ancient town in her village house.

The Walk

A three day walk starting from Ovacik, a small town on the outskirts of Fethiye, where most walks start from and finish at the astounding Lycian town of Sidyma with its current inhabitants living in an intertwined way with the ancient remains. This walk is graded as upper moderate-level 3.

We were a mixed nationality group from Turkey, Netherlands and Britain with varying prior experiences in walking long trails. I organised the walk with the help of a professional guide, had been on my bucket list for a long time. We had transfers arranged to and from the airport as well as in between accommodations carrying our belongings.

We arrived the day before and stayed at the Faralya Guest House, 70 km from Dalaman Airport, a local family run place. Faralya is about 15 km South of [Ölüdeniz](#), it is known as the village above the Butterfly Valley, only accessible by boat, home to 80 butterfly species and especially the Tiger butterfly. There was a beautiful view from the terrace, rooms were basic, clean and the food was amazing. Breakfast had local produce and presented nicely, loquats were in season and they were delicious. The staff was very polite and welcoming.



Day 1 Ovacik to Faralya (9 miles) ascent- 595m(1952ft) descent-300m(984ft)

Started at 9am, beautiful blue sky, highs of 23-24 °C seemed to be perfect but felt a bit warmer when we started the ascend, better than rain perhaps! We arrived at Ovacik after a short bus ride from Faralya where we started to walk. The route first followed a dirt road and we then joined an old migration route.



At this point, a magnificent panoramic picture was laid out in front of us: Ölüdeniz and its lagoon extending like a pallet into the sea below, the view of Fethiye Bay, which ends with Gemiler Island and İblis Cape right behind it, and Kurtoğlu Cape at the rear.



The old migration path, which was laid by hand using picks and shovels centuries ago, was also a historical road used by villages to go to the market in Fethiye with horses, donkeys and mules. The old road, which has deteriorated in places, continues to rise by curving in a serpentine way.

This path was quite steep at places and felt like a constant climb for the initial 4 miles, bringing us to around to 800m(2624ft). The scenery was so beautiful and path was adorned with oak, scrub and centuries-old olive trees, we did take our time as not to miss the magnificent view at every level below.



At the highest point of the route, the path turned into a dirt road and straightened. We refreshed our waters at the fountain at the entrance of Kozağaç Village. Then, we followed the asphalt road where we took a lunch break at Halil's Café a place run by locals.

The food was home-made and there was a variety of very tasty local food, including Gozleme, a pancake cooked on wood fire with fillings (spinach, cheese etc...) by villager ladies on the spot, fresh, vegetables cooked in olive oil, Ayran-a salty yogurt drink-and local pine honey.



After lunch we walked amongst the very old pine trees quite dry dirt path full of pine needles, leading to a lovely fountain surrounded by centuries-old olive trees in the village of Kirme, where we had a short break, refreshed our waters. We left the village and walked down to a river bed with uneven, stony surface admiring the beautiful wild flowers descending back to around 300m (984ft). Just before arriving to Faralya we stopped for a view from natural observation terrace on the cliffside overlooking the Butterfly Valley.



Back at our guest house around 4pm, we regrouped to go to Paradise (Cennet) Bay Beach 20 mins by car for a swim. A pebbly turquoise beach, very well preserved with couple of places to eat, not overdeveloped at all, thanks to the very steep descending narrow bendy road. It was lovely to relax by the beach after the challenging walk. Dinner was included in our room rate, a three-course meal was served at the terrace was delicious.

Day 2 Faralya- Ge Village (Yediburunlar): 7 miles, ascent- 400m (1312ft)-descent 200m (656ft)

Another beautiful crisp day, our walk starts from the guest house in Faralya, on the asphalt road for a while before joining the dirt road ascending slowly around half an hour through the pine forest. As we moved through the pine forests on the hills running parallel to the sea, we saw truly breath-taking views while watching the Mediterranean Sea on the left and the bays hidden between the different capes on the right.



An old migration path followed around a deep valley below with small ascends and descends, reaching to around 640m (2099ft) where we spotted a bird of prey potentially an Eagle hovering above. As the path finally curved out of the valley, we have seen first glimpse of Yediburunlar peninsula, breath-taking! Lunch was at Yediburunlar viewpoint, small restaurant, we were served rice, tomato/cucumber salsa, chicken or vegetable casserole, freshly baked bread/butter...was delicious.



After lunch we first proceeded at similar level walking on the stony path amongst oleander plants winding down into a steep descent crossing the dry stream in the valley bed.



This path led us to a plain with barley fields and olive trees, we spotted an old cistern. A lovely surprise was finding a little tea hut run by a villager lady and her dog when we did really needed a break. She made Turkish tea in a stone stove, we sat in red chairs under a huge oak tree and replenished before the last leg of the day.



We continued to the path leading to forest of Strawberry Trees also known as sandalwood (*Arbutus menziesii*) for me was the first time to see them.



We also spotted beautiful caterpillars (Leafy Spurge Hawk Moth caterpillar) and grasshoppers.



We arrived at our 2nd night accommodation at Bayram's House around 5 pm at Ge Village. This was a family run farm house, pretty, clean, welcoming place although not the comfiest of the beds. However, the excellent open buffet home cooked food with classic Turkish mezes combined with the tiredness

of the 2 days, we all slept well and woke up to an amazing Turkish breakfast, local honey, homemade jams and freshly baked bread.



Day 3- Ge Village to Sydima-5 miles 349m(1145ft) ascent 300m (984ft) descent

A cloudy day to start with, cooler but fresh, leaving Bayram's house we walked up through a dirt road leading to a water conservation area-multiple underground cisterns and a very old oak tree.



We then left the coast and started walking inland. A very pleasant 4 mile walk amongst beautiful hills, maquis, olive trees, oleander plants, thistles, cacti, poppies, beetles, bees, turtles around us.





We arrived at Sydima mid-day after a short break by a water fountain. First, we had lunch at Fatma's place (local villager lady opened her house for walkers) where we had the pleasure of meeting Kate Clow and she signed her book for us, the 2022 edition of the Lycian Way guide authored by her.



Lunch was delicious and there were hand woven kilims in the typical village house which is now renovated and is the centre of "Culture Routes Society-Turkey" (<https://cultureroutesinturkey.com>) at Sydima.



Then we walked around the remains and the village of Sydima, truly amazing place where ancient-Lycian tombs, roman stones, ottoman style mosque, village houses and villagers- who refused to leave their homes when government declared the area as historical protection area-live all together in

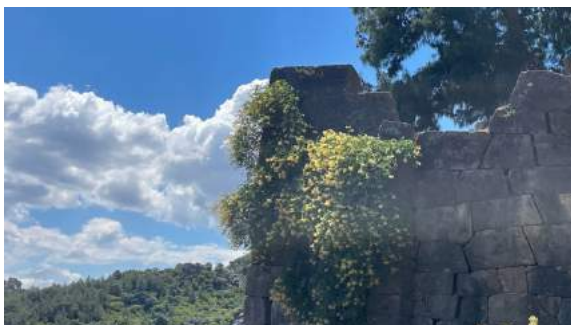
harmony. You can see sheep/goat herds amongst the ruins or houses made by a stone from an ancient period, very conveniently repurposed.





A small group of us continued by car another 2 days as we did not have enough time to see other nearby Lycian cities on foot, Xanthos, Patara, Pinara, Simena, staying at Kas and Kekova. Below pictures are from those two days. The Lycian way continues to these places from Sydima on foot.

First stop was Pinara- The settlement of Pinara was one of the principal cities of Lycia and existed as early as the 5th century BC. The site is in untouched mountain setting and offers stunning view of the Xanthos valley.



Xanthos- A beautiful Unesco world heritage site since 1988. As the former Lycian capital, it is a must see for history fans.



Patara-The ancient city through the ages was a key city under Lycian rule, later Greek and Ptolemaic rule and finally a key Roman port city. Patara beach is backed by large sand dunes, this splendid, 11mile-long sandy beach is one of Turkey's best.



After Patara we stayed in Kas, a lovely town with energetic vibes but still quiet at least in May. The next day we travelled to Kekova, a very well-preserved fisherman's town where we took a boat to be able to reach the sunken city and Simena. The sun was out so we were able to jump off the boat for a refreshing swim! It was delightful not cold at all! if you like sea swimming.

Kekova - The whole area around the city of Kekova has the same name. There are famous ancient monuments, cities immersed in water - Aperlai, Kekova, Simena and Theimussa that were founded in the 10th century BC by the Lycians.





We had lunch cooked by captain's wife and he grilled sea bass on the boat bbq to go with it!



After lunch we visited the Simena Castle.





Here is the end of our 5 days trip, 3 days walking 2 days by car to pack in as much Lycian ancient cities as possible. I visited most of them by car before, but walking is amazing and I would love to do the whole trail. Hopefully soon.