

Gulet Cruise: Our First Yachting Experience Through the Mediterranean



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We just finished our first of many [Mediterranean](#) vacations sailing along the Turkish coast. Our journey began in Marmaris, Turkey with [MedSea Yachts](#) and over the course of a week we had an experience that we can add to our list of things to do before you die. Our week long sailing along the coast of Turkey and into Greece consisted of sleeping in tranquil bays, diving into turquoise waters, and dining al fresco under the stars. The Gulet is a unique ship to Turkish waters and is all about catering to the passenger's needs, making for a splendid experience of relaxation at it's prime.



Mediterranean Vacations on a Gulet

A gulet is a two or three masted wooden ship that traditionally comes from the southwestern coast of Turkey. The gulet is a purpose built ship for ferrying passengers along the stunning Turkish coast. Taking a gulet cruise is all about pleasure and nothing like sailing on a smaller sailboat. The allure of these boats is the wood, they're gorgeous and [constructed entirely out of the material](#). The wood is then varnished and polished to a point where they glisten in the sunny Mediterranean weather. With all that glistening wood the ships shift in colors with the day as the sun moves across the sky. These ships are seriously photogenic, we personally found it hard to resist snapping lots of photos.

Most gulets operate on a charter basis, meaning you rent the boat, crew, gas, and full board outright. The route is largely based up to the client, but the charter company more often than not can create a custom itinerary to cater to the interests of their client. It is the client's home for the week. Some gulets offer cabin sailing in which they sell cabins similar to how a cruise ship operates. The schedules for these vary and it is often best to contact the provider if interested, like [MedSea Yachts](#).

Our ship: The ES Canada

One of the largest gulets out there is at home in the MedSea fleet and features a large salon, spacious en-suite rooms, two dining tables at forward and aft, and a large sun deck with enough room for everyone on board. The ES Canada was once named the One-Star and had hosted a number of Turkish celebrities; however, after falling into a little bit of disrepair it was restored to its glory by the owners of MedSea Yachts. All we can say is that it was a job well done, because the ES Canada is a beautiful sailing vessel and held on course by a well-seasoned captain.

The ES Canada is 30 meters long and can accommodate 16 passengers with 8 ensuite cabins. It is certainly no little vessel.



MedSea Yachts Team

We trusted the advice of fellow [bloggers at Vagrants of the World](#) and contacted MedSea Yachts with an interest in taking up a voyage with them. A couple months later and we were in Marmaris on our way to meet Eileen & Cengiz who head up the MedSea Team. Eileen is a Canadian and wouldn't you know it one of the friendliest people we've ever met on the road. Our captain, Cengiz, is a figure within the gulet community of southwestern Turkey and has decades of experience. He's even sailed a gulet all the way to the Maldiv Islands! With the two of them and their professional crew we felt right at home for our week of relaxation.

Mediterranean Vacations & Week long charters

We had a week long charter which is the standard for gulet charters in the region. The two main ports of charter are Marmaris and Bodrum. Bodrum tends to be the posher city with high prices and more private gulets and yachts, a city known for the Turkish elite. Marmaris on other hand is famous for British tourists and those looking to charter a gulet for the week to go out and explore the beautiful Marmara peninsula. The majority of gulet cruises leave on Saturday afternoon and return the following Saturday; However, given enough notice most operators will be able accommodate a personalized schedule. You are chartering the boat out for a week or more, your crew will gladly sail to wherever you see fit or give you some great advice on where to go. If you go with a good crew such as MedSea yachts, you don't have to plan out your trip. We particularly enjoyed this as it allowed us to be surprised by different stops during the week.



Sailing Through Idealistic Bays on a Perfect Mediterranean Vacations

Our gulet cruise spent a short amount of time in Marmaris, before we were on our way out to explore the beautiful coastline. The waters along the coast are crystal clear and as you move through various bays, channels, and coves the water turns from deep blue, to turquoise, to aqua, and then to teal. Sailing along the coastline of this region of Turkey is really the only way to experience the many bays, small islands, and beaches that are only reachable by boat. You really get the chance to take in the famous coastline covered in pine trees and historical ruins chiseled into the cliff faces.



A Personal Chef

Once on board all food is taken care of by the boats chef and deckhand. Our Turkish chef, cooked us dishes from the region, and some of the best calamari we've ever had. Also, the aubergine with garlic yoghurt is delicious and healthy. We love many things about the Mediterranean, but their healthy diet has to be one of the best in the world. Most gulet cruises come with a chef who can cook you three square meals a day. We enjoyed a pleasant breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea (çay in Turkey), and dinner on the aft and bow of the boat allowing us to fully enjoy the beauty of our settings.

Release Your Inner Sun-Goddess and Enjoy the Sea

One of our (Tasha's) favorite things aboard our gulet cruise were the sun beds on the top deck. With the splendid Mediterranean weather we had plenty of time to lay on some of the comfiest sun beds, read a book, and catch a tan. It didn't stop there though, when the sun went down we took our big comfy blankets back to the roof to sleep under the stars for a unique experience. It's easy to fall asleep counting the stars with the sound of gentle waves rocking you goodnight.



From swimming, snorkeling, diving, water-skiing, kayaking, and windsurfing there were a ton of water sports activities to keep us entertained. I personally had a blast practicing my dives from the top of the boat.

While, Tasha had plenty of fun recreating childhood memories as Ariel from the little mermaid.



Greek Islands and Turkish Villages

One of the biggest highlights of a cruise on a gulet is pulling into a new port. Those of you who have taken a cruise on a massive boat are likely familiar with the disembarkation on a cruise ship with the hundreds of other passengers, various tours, and touts. On a personal ship like a gulet you motor calmly into a small port town, dock the boat and hop off in only minutes. You visit smaller ports and islands that larger ships often have to pass over. The Greek island and port of Symi was without a doubt a highlight of the trip and pulling into the colorful bay embodied the picturesque Greek spirit. Meanwhile, the port town of Selimiye was a stunner in Turkish waters.



Spending an afternoon or two in the small port towns make for some of the best experiences of the week, and it allows you to get your land legs back. Our afternoons were spent exploring the colossal old town of Rhodes, sipping on Turkish/Greek Coffee (is there really a difference?), strolling along waterfront promenades, and relaxing in an awesome hammock.



“Too Fast”

That’s all you can say after a week sailing along the coast – that it went by way too fast. Waking up every morning to a full Turkish breakfast, the sound of the open sea, and soaking in the sun was the epitome of relaxation. The hardest part of everyday was deciding whether to jump into the refreshingly cool Mediterranean waters.



Thank you to MedSea Yachts for this Mediterranean Vacation! As always all opinions are our own.

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