



The weekender ALAYAÇATI

Arty, foodie, pretty and chic, this little Aegean village has it all, says Lydia Gard

The Çesme Peninsula on the Aegean side of Turkey draws the smartest of Istanbul society and nearby Izmir – in their yachts in the summer, and escaping the city to their second homes in winter. And, if Çesme is a stylish enclave, the epicentre of its social and gastronomic scene is found among the cobbled streets of Alayaçati. It's St. Tropez with slightly frayed edges – it's high-Europe with the café culture and the sophistication that brings, but with proudly Anatolian reminders and a staunch Asia-Minor character. And it's so damn pretty. One-way ticket, please.



ABOVE & LEFT Alanya hotel



HERE: Mitu living room
RIGHT: A suite at Alanya



STAY Though the village and its environs are no strangers to the boutique hotel, nothing can rival the newly opened Alanya (+90 232 716 6632; alanya.com.tr). Local designer Hakan Ezer has created a haven of elegant, whimsical rooms and suites that are strung between a clutch of old town houses to make a village within a village. From your vast, lateral apartment with its

seven-foot wide bed, you might sip an espresso and drink in the higgledy red-tiled rooftops of the old town; or cast an eye across manicured laws to the pool – painted in stripes and begging for an *Elle Deco* award. Children are swept off to kids' yoga or cookery lessons, while parents can sip (excellent) coffee or cold chablis by the pool. To rub shoulders with the locals, bed down in one of the five rooms at Göz Oda (gozalacati.com). Decorated in an authentic Hacı Memis style (stone walls, white arches,

natural textures) the Sunday lunches held at the downstairs are fast becoming an informal club for the great and the good of the local arts scene, from painters and writers to fashion designers, and there's a palpable energy in the air.

EAT It is at Alanya's understated Mitu restaurant where a breakfast of kings will set you in good stead for the day. Plate after plate of local delicacies, from salty sheep's cheese sprinkled with onion seed to plump apricots drizzled in honey. Bowls of nuts and warm, crisp plaited bread await. Mind you, don't overdo it so much that you are late for lunch at Asma Yapragi (asmayapragi.com.tr). It's not that chef-owner Ayse Nur Mihci and her son will mind, but rather, when it's gone, it's gone. Stepping from the street into Ayse's kitchen, you feel as though you're trespassing, but the platter after platter of mezze, stacks of plates, clinking glasses and low ripples of laughter that float downstairs from her 'living room' are reassuring. This is open house, largely for locals until word got out that Ayse's cooking is grandmother's secrets gone upper-crust. What this woman does to an artichoke is deserved of a gong. If world-class food, with flair, skill and creativity makes you tick, then leave Heston at home and head up to Alanya, a five-minute walk from the village, and the best vantage point around (alancha.com). Young chef Kemal Demiral is extraordinarily well travelled, creative yet extremely professional, and his food, his food... The tasting menu is a journey of discovery; seamless, inventive and curated to tell a story. The food is matched with cocktails prepared by a mixologist that arrive at the table swirling with mystical smoke and curious freeze-dried ingredients that do things to champagne you would never have thought possible. It'll be among the best meals you have had in your life. The hilltop setting and incredible terraces are a bonus.



ABOVE & LEFT Alanya and chef Kemal Demiral



The daily mezze at Asma Yapragi

VISIT Çesme Marina is a great place for people-watching. What it lacks in authenticity, it makes up for in superyachts and culture. So, potter for an hour but set aside the rest of the day to visit URLA Winery (urlasaraçılık.com.tr). Already winning Decanter awards, the wine and building will impress the most seasoned oenophile.

DO Carve out some time to simply wander the streets of the village, which is walkable. Soak up the morning sun with a coffee on the pavement at Köşe Kahve (kosekahve.com). The coffee house is the social heart of the village and owner Tomris Maravent is a barometer of good taste. Since moving from Istanbul she has brought with her the sensibilities of a lifetime of creative and artistic indulgence, opening an atelier alongside the café, which has become a portal for chic homeware; and anything else that catches her eye. Sit for a few minutes and you'll no doubt be invited to chip in on a conversation between a gallerist and an artist about when to launch a new exhibition.

BOOK IT

Rooms at Alanya start from €300 per double room, per night including breakfast. Transfers from Izmir can be arranged through the hotel for €60. Turkish Airlines and Lufthansa offer fly daily from London to Izmir

BUY Forgo the urge to stay within the enclave of Alanya as the Capri-esque winding streets of Hacı Memi call for a wander. Start at Köşe Kahve to invest in Orge Tulga's exquisite handmade jewellery (orgetulga.com) – intricate Ottoman-inspired discs tied together to create a long necklace,

lattice balls of fine silver thread spin on a ring like a delicate globe. Drop into Eskiden (eskiden.com) for an interiors fix. Light fittings, baskets, ancient metal urns, bread plates and architectural salvage pieces – shutters and doors with requisite peeling paint – have such history, they make LASSCO look like B&Q. No wonder many of the chic local hotels buy from here. Get a dose of the 50s at POP and wander into any one of the antiques shops in Hacı Memi to pick up a vintage teacup, tin toy or some other unusual paraphernalia that will become a talking point back home.



URLA winery