

explorers



International Yachtsman

EMERGENCY PACK



# ONCE UPON A CHARTER

Chartering in Turkey on board the 98-foot *Clarissa* offers a glimpse into the history of one yachting family — and into humanity itself — along with endless views and destinations.

Text and photos by Kim Kavin

It's just after 10 p.m. on the southwest coast of Turkey when dessert is served on the covered aft deck of the 98-foot gulet-style motorsailer *Clarissa*. Ours is the only yacht in the peaceful, starry-skied anchorage, and though I can't see our dinghy, I can hear its outboard roar on approach from the sprawling vacation town of Marmaris in the distance. With it comes *Clarissa's* owner, a Danish businessman who tells me, over chocolate cake and red wine, the shocking story of how this beautiful charter yacht came to be.

"I chartered a boat in Turkey once, and my three-year-old daughter, Clarissa, fell overboard," he begins. "She was up on the front deck with our nanny and I was inside the salon, holding our baby in my arms. All of a sudden the deckhand was yelling. It was open ocean, and we hadn't seen it happen.

"I jumped overboard and started swimming," he continues, lowering his eyes as if in a trance. "I saw her, and she was lying in the water with her face down. She was okay, but my wife had a breakdown. It was a nightmare."

They didn't want to stop cruising; in fact, they wanted to cruise around the world. But the trauma of their daughter's near drowning left them deeply disturbed about safety at sea. They liked the style of gulets — which offer far more interior space than monohulls and a very easy motion at sea — but after two years of searching, they couldn't find one that made them feel safe and comfortable.

And so the building of *Clarissa* began. She is a gulet in the sense that she looks like a traditional Turkish motorsailer, but she is different in terms of construction and outfitting for both the owner's use and for charter. He visited the shipyard in Bodrum, Turkey, some 54 times, serving as project manager to ensure that every material and part he shipped from Denmark was properly installed and certi-



**Clarissa has traveled some of the most beautiful waters of Turkey and has a storied past that has attracted several notables to charter her throughout the time at sea.**



# TURKEY CHARTER

fied—including a system of stainless-steel line that can ring the boat and attach to lifejackets worn by children.

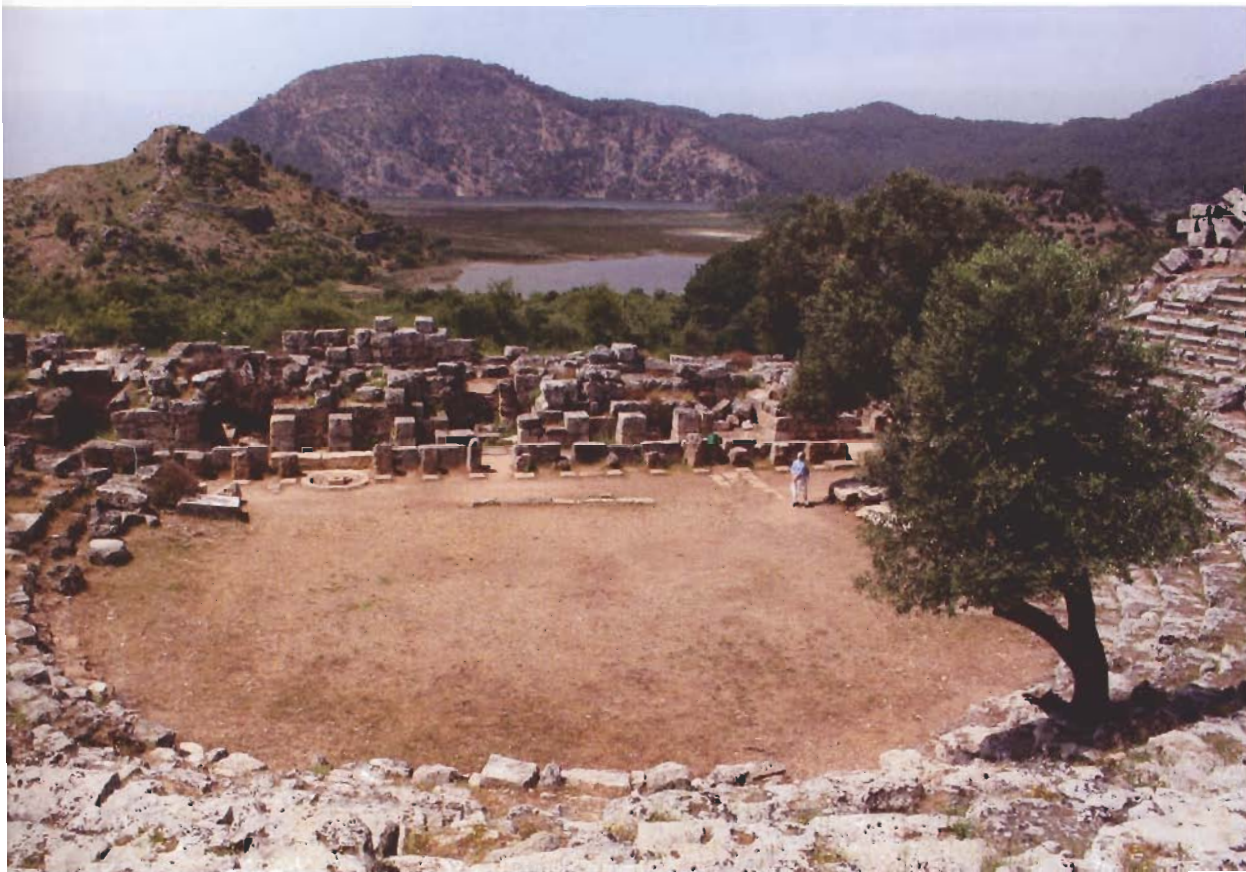
“I would have liked to have changed a little bit the shape of the boat,” he tells me as we finish our last bites of cake, “but if you start to change what they have learned in building the gulets over centuries, you don’t know what you’re going to get.”

The comment is especially poignant, I think, in a cruising ground where different civilizations have changed the reality of human existence over thousands of years.

Southwest Turkey is not just a gorgeous, turquoise-water coast, but it is also part of the Fertile Crescent, the birthplace of civilization itself. Before the owner joined me for dessert onboard, I spent the day cruising up the Dalyan River to Caunos Archaeological Park, where I sat in the remains of a Roman-built amphitheater on ground that experts believe has been inhabited since about 600 B.C. As my guide, Abidin Kurt, who offers private tours regularly to *Clarissa’s* charter guests, told me, “Wherever you go to Turkey, you step on history, right on top of culture.”

I couldn’t help but marvel that afternoon at what all those moments that people experienced throughout history had contributed to life as we know it today on land. And as I sat just a few hours later with *Clarissa’s* owner in a nearby harbor, hearing the story that led to the building of his yacht, I couldn’t help but wonder how his personal moments were going to contribute to the continued evolution of people’s experiences here on the sea, at least in terms of tourism in Turkey’s evolving, high-end charter market.

Most of the yachts in Turkey continue to be gulets, motorsailing vessels originally designed to haul cargo. Today, gulets are being built as vacation boats, but the standards vary widely — and you’ll need a reputable broker to ensure you get your money’s worth. What you pay for, too, is something to consider in Turkey, as base prices for charter yachts often include less-than-base prices elsewhere — and sometimes fail to factor in the nation’s 18-percent VAT. Still, even given these concerns, many brokers consider Turkey to be the best value in yacht charter today. As Missy Johnston of Northrop & Johnson Worldwide Yacht Charters says: “Americans don’t realize that Turkish history is the same as Greek and Roman history. You will see the ruins here. And it’s an inexpensive charter market, so you get a lot for your money.” For the charter of a lifetime, visit Northrop & Johnson Worldwide Yacht Charters at [NJcharters.com](http://NJcharters.com).



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**Above:** Caunos Archaeological Park has the remains of a Roman-built amphitheater on ground that experts believe has roots since 600 B.C. **Below:** The sprawling vacation town of Marmaris is just one of the lures of Turkey.

Sometimes, the best part of chartering is not the boat or the service or even the destination itself, but the inspiring conversations you have onboard in which you learn more about another person, some golden glimpse that tells you a bit not just about him or her, but also about how you both fit into the world as we know it.

Such was my experience this day while on charter aboard *Clarissa*. I was reminded that a single life is simultaneously awesome and fleeting, that many other lives will go on long after mine is gone — and that it is important to charter in a historic destination like this, in the comfort of a safe yacht with a broad view of the land, and with the company of interesting people who can help me understand my own precious moments in time. 🍷

