Turkey was once a popular destination for summer cruising and winter berthing. After steep price increases, many sailors are now staying away. But is the reality as bad as the reputation?

Five years ago, Turkey was considered a paradise for cruising sailors. It was beautiful, unhurried, welcoming and low cost. Thousands of cruisers used to split their summers between Greece and Turkey, and Schengen refugees (non-EU citizens who are limited to 90 days out of six months in the Schengen Area, which accounts for nearly all of Mediterranean Europe) would spend warm winters in affordable Turkish marinas. Many boatowners would get maintenance work done here, from sailmaking to teak replacement. However, in recent years the number of foreign boats visiting Turkey, whether for cruising, wintering or repairs, has dropped like a stone.

The marinas and anchorages are still full, with large motor yachts, chartered *gulets*, charter yachts and privately-owned Turkish boats, but there are remarkably few boats with foreign crews. It used to be easy to strike up a conversation with an English-speaking neighbour in an anchorage – now it’s hard to find one unless they’re chartering. The reviews on *Navily*, a popular app for finding marinas and places to anchor, have become noticeably thinner in recent years. I know dozens of fellow liveaboards who have previously wintered in Turkey – today it is almost unheard of.



Anchored boats near Bodrum in 2026 – visiting yachts are rarely seen

So, what changed? The prices went up. And up and up.

After several years of rapid increases, and the addition of 20% VAT in 2024, Turkish marinas are now the most expensive in the Mediterranean, except for the glamour hotspots like the Costa Smerelda or the Côte D'Azur. Unlike elsewhere in the Med, Turkish marinas don't publish their rates, so here are some prices recently paid by fellow sailors (as reported on various forums):

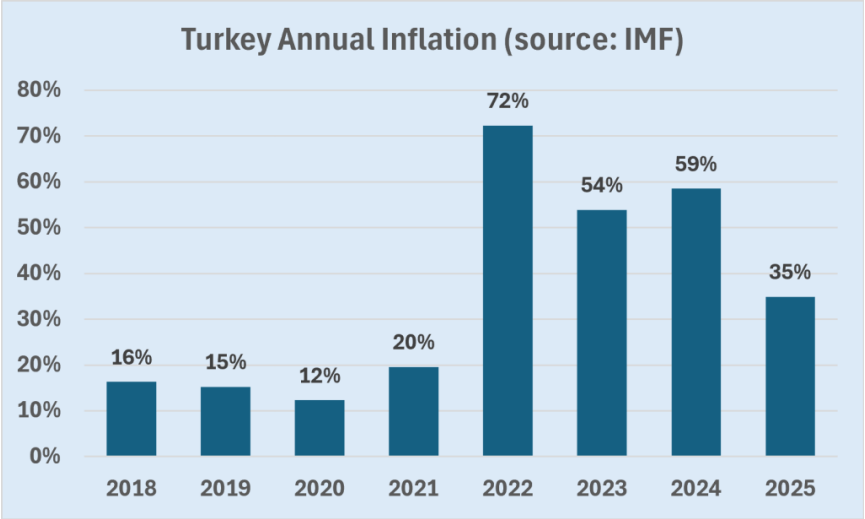
- Kuşadasi, April 2026, 14m catamaran: €440 per night
- Turgutreis, July 2026, 15m monohull: €260 per night
- Bodrum, August 2026, 13m catamaran: €500 per night
- Fethiye, March 2026, 13m monohull: €210 per night
- Kaş, June 2026, 12m monohull: €148 per night

What about wintering in Turkey, which used to be such a popular non-Schengen option? I obtained some quotes from a selection of five once-popular marinas for Winter 2026-27, for a 14m monohull. Prices ranged from €7,091 to €12,340, with a mean of €9,232. That's three times the typical cost of winter berths in Italy and Spain, double the private marinas in the Ionian and 50% more than deluxe Porto Montenegro.

There are three main reasons behind the rise in prices. Firstly, inflation has spiralled out of control, and while foreign visitors benefit from a weakened *lira*, price increases are still shockingly evident in everything from boat parts to beer.

The second factor is the fallout from the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. As most of Europe cleansed itself of Russian tourists and Russian yachts (including 29 of the oligarchs' superyachts which were famously impounded), Turkey rolled out the welcome mat. The marinas filled with Russian boats along with charter boats catering to Russian tourists. Russians became the top foreign purchasers of Turkish property in 2022 and they still are.

Thirdly, a new generation of wealthy Turks is pouring money into boating. While average wages sit at around €19K per year (compared to €26K in Greece), wealth inequality is the highest in Europe. Turkish sailors that I have spoken to, many now berthing and cruising in the nearby Dodecanese islands of Greece, blame corruption.



So it was with great trepidation that we brought *Ambiente* back to Turkey for three months in 2026, three years after our first visit. However, we were pleasantly surprised that our spending turned out to be no different to Greece and lower than in Croatia. We quickly learned how to navigate the opaque pricing and avoid the worst extravagances, in marinas and elsewhere. Anyone planning to cruise in

Turkey *affordably* should follow these ten tips:

1. **Avoid private marinas**: If you must dock, say for water or electricity, use a government harbour in a smaller town such as Bozburun or Datça. The large private marinas, usually operated by D Marin or Setur, are the ones with the high prices. When checking in to the country, make sure your port of entry has a customs dock or allows you to anchor while your agent processes the paperwork.
2. **Choose your agent carefully**: Use of an agent is mandatory for check-in, check-out and any changes to the crew list. While choosing our arrival port and shopping around for an agent, we obtained quotes ranging from €230 to €380 for inward clearance (including government charges). *Navily*, *NoForeignLand* and the Facebook groups all have agent recommendations. Use Whatsapp to contact them for prices.
3. **Fill water at town quays or restaurants**: Some marinas will allow you to fill up for no more than the cost of the water (we paid €9 for 1000L of water at Marti Marina with no berthing fees), but this is rare. Public harbours often have a special rate for a two-hour stop to fill water and go shopping. Many of the restaurant docks offer free water (provided you are dining) – *Navily* and *NoForeignLand* will tell you which ones.
4. **Shop around for pump-out**: Turkish law requires all boats to have holding tanks fitted, and you are required to pump out at regular intervals at a recognised station. For a typical sailing yacht, the interval is about 15 days. While the official price is 450 Turkish Lira (€9), some marinas charge five times that, often citing a “minimum quantity” which is on the superyacht scale.
5. **Arrive in Turkey with empty fuel tanks**: Diesel is currently (mid-2026) priced at approximately €1.40 per litre, compared to €1.85 in Greece and more than €2 in Italy and France.
6. **Shop at markets**: On *Ambiente*, we love markets for the sights, sounds, flavours and smells of local life, and in Turkey they do not disappoint. Most towns have a weekly farmers’ market and we organise our itinerary around these. We can fill our dinghy with magnificent fruit and vegetables at crazy low prices, most memorably cherries at €2 per kilo.



The weekly farmers' market in Güllük: fresh produce at bargain prices.

7. **Get cash at PTT (post office) ATMs**: Most market traders only accept cash, and bank ATMs charge an eye-watering withdrawal fee of 10%. Cash withdrawals from the ATMs at PTT post offices are free.
8. **Get SIM cards and data from independent phone shops**: Data is expensive in Turkey. On arrival we compared the three major providers and naively bought 50GB for €44 at an official Türk Telecom shop. Later we found we could buy 100GB for €30 at a small phone repair shop.
9. **Avoid the restaurants in the yacht charter hotspots**: As is evident in Croatia, charter boats seem to push up the price of waterfront dining. Around Göcek Bay, just looking at the menu might give you indigestion, but we found the places around the Gulf of Hisarönü to be reasonable, even *normal*.
10. **Give up pork and wine**: Or import them! At our departure port in Greece, we stocked our freezer with ham and pork chops and filled our wine cellar (bilge) with wine. And we're glad we did. We did eventually find a packet of sliced ham at one of the gourmet supermarkets – it was €20!

So it is certainly possible to sail through Turkey on a budget designed for Greece. While wintering in a marina may be out of reach, a summer cruise remains as enjoyable and affordable as it ever was – with a little planning.

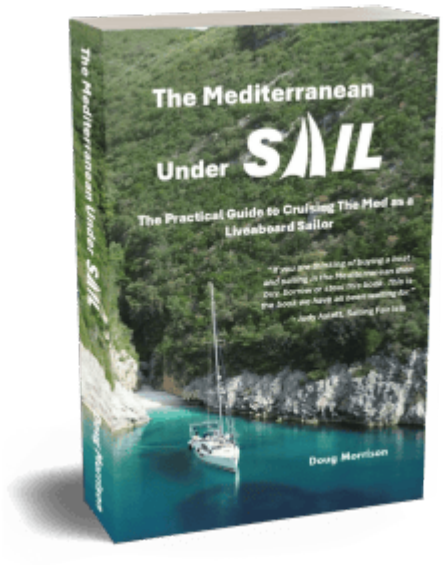


Many anchorages in Göcek Bay now have payable mooring buoys, but just around the corner you can anchor for free with a private lap pool

Doug Morrison is a retired IT consultant and RYA Yachtmaster. Since 2022, together with his wife Malini, he has been cruising the Mediterranean aboard their Jeanneau 45 *Ambiente*, covering over 12,000 miles and twelve countries.

This article is extracted from Doug's book, *The Mediterranean Under Sail: The Practical Guide to Cruising the Med as a Liveaboard Sailor.* The 340-page paperback can be delivered worldwide.

Get the Book



© 2026 Doug Morrison. All rights reserved.
This article may not be reproduced or republished without permission.