



The mountaineous hinterland of the Turkish riviera - beautiful landscapes and nature

Southern Turkey is well-known for its beaches, the blue water, and the warm weather. But travelling through the mountain ranges in the interior apart from the centers of mass tourism offers an insight into turkish culture as well as beautiful landscapes and nature.

Camera kit

- Canon EOS 30
- EF 28-80mm, EF 24-105 mmL, EF 90-300mm, Sigma EX 105mm Macro
- Film: Fujichrome Velvia 50
- Polarization filter

To most tourists southern Turkey just means water, beach and sun. This made the country one of the most favorite locations for holidays at the seaside. But the country has much more to offer than this. Archeological sites with old roman buildings, several

lycilic necropolis, and other ancient buildings give an impression about the importance of this coast in these times. When leaving the small coastal strip with its adjustment to mass tourism towards the interior, the landscape changes. Mountain with peaks up to 3000m dominate the scenery, covered with pine forrests at the lower levels. There is not much traffic on the partly small streets through these mountain. The complete mountain ranges is called the Taurus mountain.

It is divided into three parts: the lycilic Taurus in the west, the Olympos mountain with the national park, and the pamphylic Taurus in the east.

The western parts

The mountain reach the mediterannean sea resulting in a rocky coast line with a winding road along it. Near the small village of Phaselis, the ancient city of Olympos and the "chimera" can be visited. The latter one is reached via a winding

Above: Single mountain, lycilic Taurus.
Canon EOS 30, 24-105mmL at 30mm, polarization filter, Velvia 50

mountain path. The stones seem to burn and this light can be seen from the mediteranean sea by night. The phenomenon is caused by gas escaping from the rocks that catches fire due to the sun shining directly onto the stoness facing south. Ancient seamen thought that the fire, probably brighter two thousand years ago, was the breath of a mythical creature, the chimera.



Left: wild poppy at flowering time in mid-june. Canon EOS 30, 24-105mmL at 70mm, Velvia 50

Between Fethiye and Myra, numerous ancient buildings of the two dominating cultures can be visited: lycillic and roman

civilizations. The famous rock necropolis of Fethiye and Myra dominate the otherwise even towns. But stone sarcophagus and rocky

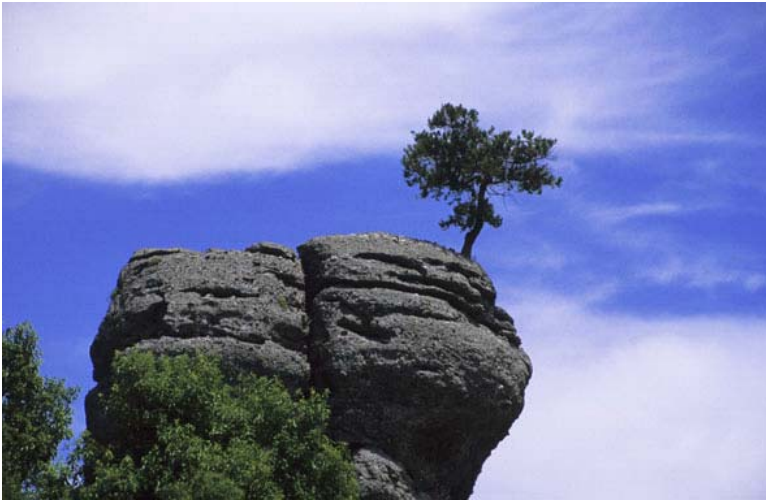
graves are distributed within the whole area between these two cities. In Myra, ruins of both civilizations lay in direct contact to each other.

Parts of the western Taurus mountain range form the Olympos national park. In the north, it passes on to the Termessos national park with the ancient city of Termessos in its centre. Here stand the ruins of one of the highest cities in ancient times in Europe at an altitude of 1050m.

The vegetation is dominated by the pine forrests but nearly all plants growing in warm mountain landscapes can be found. The largest mammals are deer and wild boars. Further north with even less population, brown bears and wulfes are present, but it is difficult to find them. The wild boars, however, are a real problem for the farmer because the muslimic people are not allowed to eat them. Therefore, they are usually not hunted and their population has grown up.



Left: the columns of the entrance of the ancient temple of Apollo, Side. Only this portal remained, the rest of the building is scattered in pieces over the area. Canon EOS 30, 24-105mmL at 24mm, Velvia 50, polarization filter



Left: single pine rooted in an isolated rock near Köprülü-canyon. Pines are well adapted to the rough environment in these mountain. Canon EOS 30, 28-80mm at 80mm, Velvia 50

Recently, some butchers and hotel owners have recognized that the European tourists like to eat these wild boars and now offer their meat in the restaurants. Land tortoises, chameleons, and other reptiles can be found and there exist 42 kinds of snakes, eleven of which are venomous. Eagles and several kinds of falcon are frequent seen in the upper regions of the mountains. The scenery is dominated by mountain ranges and single peaks. The pine forests are interrupted by farmland, even rather high up. Compared to central Europe or the US, however, the intensity is rather low and the used equipment somewhat antiquated. One can see goat herds up to 1500m which are accompanied by the native farmers and donkeys are often used for the work in the fields.

Eastern Taurus mountain

Flora and Fauna are rather similar to those found at the Olympus mountain. The Manavgat river brings water from the snow-covered peaks of the northern Taurus mountain to the sea and is well-filled even in summer time. The river is interrupted by two reservoirs. More interesting is the Köprü Irma river which formed a deep canyon, the Köprülü canyon. By the way, Köprülü just means canyon.

At the village of Beskonak, an old Roman bridge, approximately 2000 years old crosses the river. Downstream, numerous possibilities for canyoning

or rafting are offered by different companies and native people. The underlying rock is a typical karst formation and the real canyon lays upstream the bridge. Innumerable caverns and underground canals exist beneath and beside the river in this area and that's the reason why the upstream river is not used for rafting. Indeed, it is forbidden because of some deadly events when tourists fell into the water and were sucked by the underground canals and springs. Within the steep walls of rock forming the canyon, several birds of prey can be found nesting within the ledges of the walls.

Country and people

To over 98%, Turkey is an Islamic country. Most people in the southern and western parts, however, are very kind and helpful. There is no anti-western attitude among the people just as little as hostile behaviour. Friendly asking



Left: Young chameleon on the arm of my guide through the hinterland of the eastern Taurus mountain. The reptile had tried to cross the country lane just in front of our jeep. It then crawled unimpressed on the arm and hand of the guide. We helped it to cross the lane and placed it within a pine tree. Canon EOS 30, Sigma 105mm Macro, Velvia 50

assumed, visiting of mosques is also allowed as taking photographs of the native people, even of women. When driving through the rural and mountainous areas, one should be aware of some general checkpoints of the Islamic ethics.

The most famous archeological sites are usually rather crowded. Unfortunately, the Turkish people are not really aware of these treasures and just use it as tourist attractions and it seems to me as if they do not invest enough in the maintenance of the buildings. The old city of Olympos is an excellent example for this: about ten years ago, the ruins could only be reached using a small and natural path along a beautiful beach through untouched nature. Today, there is a toll road to a

parking space and a restaurant has been built so that the path no longer leads through it. Nature is not untouched any more and the beach is used by more and more tourists. When travelling across the hinterland, one can find numerous Roman ruins, most impressive are the remnants of the old aqueduct bringing water from the Taurus mountain to the farmlands and cities of the coast line over a distance of more than 30 kilometers.

The streets correspond to western standards only within the coast line. Further inland the roads are getting worse, with the exception of some main traffic roads. These, however, are less attractive to nature photographers. Therefore, the use of cross-country vehicles is of advantage. Travelling these areas can

be a real adventure. In the cities and villages along the coast line, native people speaking English can be found and may serve as a guide through the mountains. Some of them even know bird nesting places, especially along the Köprülü-canyon.

The temperatures are rather hot in summer. Vegetation is almost burnt after July, so May and June are the most interesting months with regards to plants. Because of the drought in summer, a typical autumn corresponding to the Indian summer in northern latitudes is not seen. When travelling from April to May, the weathercasts are of great importance since unexpected showers and thunderstorms are possible in the mountains during that season. In summer, the temperatures are often too



Left: plateau at the Karaovabeli pass (1490m). Barren farmland within the small plateau in the Olympos mountain. Note the configuration of the tree in the foreground which seems to be pruned. However, this is the result of nature and the rough seasons of this region.
Canon EOS 30, 24-105mmL at 24mm, Velvia 50, polarization filter

high even for the air conditioning of most cars. Therefore, as nearly always in nature photography, one has to get up early to use the best light, to see some animals, and to travel during convenient temperatures. Indeed, most animals don't leave their hiding places even during sunset.

Southern Turkey is a beautiful and attractive country for nature and outdoor photographers when leaving the coast line with its centers of mass tourism. As a western oriented and moderate islamic country, it also offers insights into muslimic people's living.

Planing

- International airport of Antalya
- Several tour operators offer tours of souther Turkey
- Car hire stations are nearly everywhere along the coast line. One should be aware of technical issues and incomplete insurances. The cheapest is rarely the best. For trips into the mountain cross country vehicles are advantageous.
- Light but strong clothing, shorts are not recommended when wandering through the country because of snakes and ticks
- Wideangle zoom, telephoto zoom, macro, and tripod.
- Accommodation: Camping on the campgrounds. The hotels along the coast line are a good alternative. In the interior, the hotels get very rural and communication gets