

THINGS TO SEE IN ALANYA

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The Alanya region, the Mediterranean's most important tourism centre, is part of the province of Antalya, although it is candidate to become a province itself in a short while. Alanya can be roughly divided into two, with the first part being Old Alanya, built along the slopes of the towering, rocky peninsula that divides the city in half. This part of the city is gratifyingly well preserved, keeping its old charm. The magnificent castle, which dominates the peninsula, has a bird's eye view of both sides of the city. Builders laid the first stones of the 6.5km long city walls, which climb up to the Old Quarter on a flat plateau of the rocky peninsula, during the Hellenistic period. Later the Seljuk Turks, who ruled the area between the 11th and 13th centuries extended the walls and added 110 towers. New Alanya stretches to the east and west of the peninsula. The sand beach, broken by the rugged peninsula, stretches kilometres from Ulas Burnu (Point Ulas) to Gazipasa and is the main feature of Alanya. Over the past ten years, hotels, pensions and residential apartments have mushroomed along the main road that runs parallel to the beach and along the streets that bisect it. Many new apartment buildings now replace what used to be banana fields and orange groves lining the shores. To view the remaining fields and new development you can drive up to the surrounding Turbelinas and Gedevet Plateaux from the city centre. Alanya has expanded rapidly to the east over the last few years merging smaller towns into Alanya city. Obakoy, Tosmur, Camyolu, Mahmutlar and Kargicak are some of the towns and villages on the Alanya Gazipasa road. All of these small towns have now become suburbs of the city. Numerous rivers and streams originating from the Taurus Mountains empty their waters into the Mediterranean sea. Fed by melting snow and spring water, these rivers bring relief to citizens and tourists of Alanya during the hot summers. Picnic Areas have been established around these pleasant rivers. The Old Quarter

Its is a good idea to begin a tour of central Alanya from its port.

During the summer, it is best to start the tour in the early morning hours before it gets stifling hot, or in the late afternoon or early evening when the weather cools down. You can visit Kizil Kule, the Red Tower, and the nearby Tersane, the naval shipyards. The Red Tower

The Red Tower is a symbol of Alanya and one of its chief attractions. Built in 1226 by the Seljuk Sultan Alaattin Keykubat, the crenellated building served as a defensive structure. The octagonal five-storied tower, 33 metres high, gets its name from the red bricks that were used in its construction. The ground floor serves as the Alanya Museum, where Ottoman period ethnographical objects, such as robes handicrafts and looms, are on display. You reach the open air observation decks of the tower by walking up the 87-step staircase. You can view the city from the various openings in the tower as you climb. A panoramic view of Alanya greets those who reach the observation decks. Price: 2 YTL

Time: 08.30-12.00 / 13.30-17.30 The Shipyards

If you walk along the walls of the city from the Red Tower, you will come to Tersane, the naval shipyards, where wooden framed warships were constructed during the Seljuk and early Ottoman period. Constructed by Sultan Keykubat two years after the Red Tower, the shipyards have five chambers, each 43 metres wide, opening out to the sea. They are the only Seljuk shipyards standing today. Alanya Castle

The castle can be reached from two directions. The first is from a road that runs from the back of Kuyularonu Mosque in the city centre. The other is from the Damaltas Magarasi (cave). Numerous outdoor cafes are located along the road up to the castle where you can take timeouts. Interesting sites begin about halfway up the hill. You can get a good view of the surroundings after entering through the double gates and climbing up the towers, or anywhere along the sharply winding road. In the still inhabited Old Quarter, you can also view the Suleymaniye Mosque, which was once an 11th century Byzantine church, the Bedesten, or ancient bazaar, which now serves as a restaurant, bar, cafeteria and hotel, and Ehmedek, where the castles commander once resided. The Old quarter also has charming Seljuk and Ottoman period houses, as well as the Aksede Sultan Mescit (small mosque) and tomb. To enter the castle courtyard you have to pay a small fee but it is well worth a visit because of the stunning views of the Alanya peninsula, mountains and coastlines.

Price: 5 YTL

Time: 10.00-18.00 Damaltas Cave and Beach

After touring the castle, you can visit Damaltas cave on the western side of the peninsula by following the second road down. The Damaltas Beach, is located in front of the cave. Colourful stalactites and stalagmites greet visitors to the enchanted cave, which has a permanent temperature of 22 degrees to 23 degrees Celsius. The humidity inside the cave is 90 to 100 percent. The cave which has a very high percentage of carbon dioxide and a degree of radioactivity is said to be therapeutic for those suffering from non-allergic asthma and rheumatism. The cave is 13.5 metres long and 15 metres high. Price: 3.50 YTL

Time: 10.00-18.00 Sailing to the Phosphorescent, Lovers and Pirates Caves

You can take a motorboat or traditional Turkish Gumluk boat from the marina to travel around the peninsula and visit the Red Tower, the shipyards and view Alanya Castle from the sea. During this trip you will visit three caves. The first is the Pirates cave which is ten metres long and five metres high. It is possible to enter the cave with a small boat and you can view the colourful rocks inside the cave or follow the corridor to where the water comes to an end or plunge into the dark refreshing water to cool down. From this point on your boat will head towards Cilvarda Burnu, which is the tongue of land at the very end of the peninsula, where you turn in the direction of Antalya. You will soon see the castle, another Byzantine church and the Darphane (mint) and the walls, 250 metres above you on your right. It is possible to visit this church and other structures by taking the difficult path through the middle of the castle above. The next stop by boat is at the Lover's cave. The 72 metre cave has two entrances, though neither is large enough for boats to go through.

Next you come to the Phosphorescent Cave which is also accessible to boats. The phosphorescent glow that comes from the bottom of the water gives the cave its name. Jump into the water and have a swim amongst the glowing water. The last visit by boat is Damaltas Beach, where you can stop for a swim and then return by boat to the marina. Alanya Museum

By any standard, Alanya is a city rich in cultural heritage. You can get a good grasp of this heritage by visiting the Alanya Museum. The museum is composed of three sections. Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine artefacts are displayed in the first section, along with Prehistoric finds. The bronze statue of Hercules is impressive. The second section contains artefacts of ethnographic significance, mainly from the Ottoman period, including hand written Korans, artistic calligraphy and old Alanya house. The garden, which is the third section of the museum, holds numerous sarcophagi and other archaeological remains. The famous statue of Heracleus, made of bronze 51.5 cm high is also exhibited here. It is thought to have been produced in II century BC but it is not known where it was made. The bronze statue has a special place among standing figures in the history of sculpture as it has a structural standing form never seen among statues produced in the name of Heracleus. Price: 2 YTL

Time: 08.00-12.00 / 13.30-17.30 Dimcayi

Dimcayi is located six km east of Alanya, rises on the slopes of the Taurus Mountains and flows 60 km before emptying into the Mediterranean. An asphalt road left of the Dimcayi bridge takes you up into the foothills. The roar of the torrential river and verdant surroundings soothes the senses. The water is cold in the summer and winter. If you can't cool down by swimming in the sea, try plunging into the waters of the Dimcayi. Restaurants, some of which are open year round, line the river, offerings grilled fish, chicken, meat and beverages. But if you want to have fresh trout for a meal, you must drive up the Dimcayi regulator, about 7.5km from the turnoff. About 500 metres past the regulator, the picnic area around the lake has an abundance of trout restaurants. It is also possible to go rafting and kayaking on the Dimcayi. Dim Cave

At the Dim cave you will notice numerous colourful waterfall-like structures. The cave situated 230 metres above sea level, also offers a panoramic view of Alanya and Dimcayi valley. The cave was opened to the public in September 1998. To reach the cave you must drive to the town of Kestel, 11km east of Alanya and turn left at the sign. The cave is located six km from the turnoff. Sultan Ahmet Koftecisi a Turkish Kofte restaurant, has opened a branch at the entrance of the cave at Seyrantepe, which has a panoramic view, and you can sit there after visiting the site. The cave, Turkey's second biggest, is 360 metres long, 10 metres to 15 metres high and is located at an altitude of 232 metres. It is open to the public throughout the year from 9am to 5pm. The cave, which is always around 18 degrees centigrade, has excellent pedestrian boardwalks and lighting. Authorities protect the stalactites and stalagmites with wire meshing. In the third section of the cave there is what resembles a frozen waterfall. The last section has a pool. Photography is allowed. An emergency generator is available when power outage strikes. Leartes

Some of the remains of this Roman city are located seven km from the Dimcayi turnoff and 12km from Alanya, in the town of Mahmutlar. However, the real ancient city is 15km up into the mountains, 27 km from Alanya. You can reach it only with a four-wheel drive vehicle as the dirt road is in a poor condition. The city is located on the cliffs of Cebelireis Mountain at an altitude of 900 metres. The brightest era of Leartes is believed to have taken place between the 1st and 3rd centuries AD. The ruins of churches, public baths, cisterns, houses, a stadium and an amphitheatre can be seen. The frescos on the church next to the stadium are outstanding.