

Aegean sail-away

A memorable voyage along the Turkish coast. Evenings in out-of-the-way villages. Relaxation with your shoes off — captain's orders.

By Barbara Ann Rosenberg
Special to The Inquirer

BODRUM, Turkey — "Take off your shoes," called a voice from the aft deck of the Tifil, a 55-foot sailing yacht, as we started up the gangplank.

The voice belonged to Ersin Alparcam, the pink-cheeked captain, who would oversee our voyage down Gorkova Bay in the Aegean Sea. Four of us, my husband and I and two friends — all experienced sailors — had chartered the vessel out of this picturesque yachting center, and now we were boarding, carrying duffel bags and wearing our well-worn topsiders.

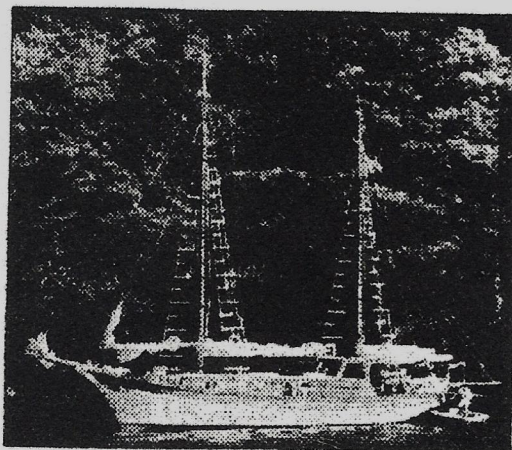
I lifted my foot to show him the shoes — rubber soles specially designed for boating, soles that wouldn't mar the beautifully maintained decks, soles that were safe in all kinds of weather. The captain shook his head, grinned and pointed to his own bare feet and then to a large basket, obviously intended for footwear.

So we tossed our sneakers into the basket, a little sheepish about our faux pas, and shook hands with Alparcam and his first mate, Hassan Husseyin. Hassan Husseyin, always called by both names, was reputed to be one of the best cooks in the Aegean. We'd soon find out.

Bodrum, on a scenic peninsula south of Izmir on the west coast of Turkey, was known in ancient times as Halicarnassus, home of King Mausolus (from whose tomb, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, the term *mausoleum* was coined). The modern Bodrum is full of charm, combining a smattering of the old with enough of the new to make it a favorite of poets, painters and a sprinkling of the international set, mostly from Britain, France and other cold-climate spots.

When we chartered the Tifil, we had opted to provision it ourselves, rather than leaving the choices to the folks at Gunduz Yachting, who had arranged the charter through correspondence and lots of phone calls between Philadelphia and Turkey. So, having signed the necessary rental

(See VOYAGE on 6-1)



With the Tifil lying at anchor, passengers could snorkel from it or row ashore.

A lazy sail along the Turkish coast

VOYAGE, from 1-1
papers and met our captain and mate, we went, along with Ebru Erhan Erkut, a bilingual young woman employed by Gunduz, to an open-air market on the edge of town.

Known as the Italian Market, it consisted of several acres of stalls manned by farmers who had trundled their wares to Bodrum from nearby villages. We found mountains of vegetables and fruits, home-cured olives, nuts, white cheese and bread and just about everything else edible in Turkey. Lucky we had Ebru along; these folks spoke not a word of English and, without her, it would have been difficult indeed for us to negotiate quantities and prices.

At Ebru's insistence, we bought 10 kilos of tomatoes (22 pounds for \$2), which she assured us would last until we got to the next market town, two days down the coast. We thought that would last a month — or, at the very least, until we returned to Bodrum.

We also bought piles of cucumbers, eggplant, okra, zucchini, lettuce, olives, bread and some of that wonderful home-cured white cheese. And lemons — lots of lemons, a mainstay of Turkish cuisine.

Our meat would be all lamb, mostly in chops. "You'll probably get some fish while you're out," Ebru said. "Captain Ersin and Hassan Husseyin know every fisherman in the bay."

Then we headed back into the center of town for "necessities," which came from a sweet shop on the street that follows the curve of the perfect crescent harbor.

Cafes and restaurants, mostly open-air, ring the harbor, and patrons can enjoy the soft salt air while surveying crowds that stroll by. The cafes are interspersed with shops of every description, some selling Turkish rugs in myriad colors and designs; chic sportswear looking for all the world as if it were designed in Italy, and butter-soft lambskin made into dresses, skirts, pants, coats and many other garments.



Special to The Inquirer / BARBARA ANN ROSENBERG

In traditional Turkish dancing clothes, Kaptan Ibrhim entertains at his restaurant in Cokerime.

Captain Alparcam (left) parties on the Tifil with the author's husband (center) and a rug dealer. Meals on board were delectable.



And, of course, there was that superb sweet shop to which Ebru led us, obviously her favorite, its shelves piled high with pistachio and almond pastries. "The best," she assured us. We bought enough to feed a small army and headed back to the boat.

Appropriately shoeless this time, we climbed the gangplank and went to stow our personal gear — put away our clothing and toiletries, a land-lubber might say — in commodious staterooms, each with a double bed and private head, or bathroom. It was a pleasant surprise; we were accustomed to sleeping in narrow bunks and sharing facilities when aboard our own, or friends', sailboats.

Hassan Husseyin immediately took charge of putting the food away and turning out a beautiful luach, complete with a tomato rose to grace the salad. Then, after thick, black, sweet coffee and some of that sinful pastry, we pulled up the anchor and headed down the coast, past the towering 15th-century Crusader fort of St. Peter's that dominates the Bodrum landscape.

The sky was clear, the October sun was warm and the water a calm deep blue. Eager to take advantage of it all, we doffed bathing suits and, with *raki* (the anise-flavored Turkish national drink) in hand, repaired to the plastic pallets on the forward deck to read and sunbathe and enjoy the magnificent scenery along the shore. Lolling on that forward deck became a favorite way to pass our days on board the Tifil.

There were days when we snorkled from the boat and days when we rowed ashore to swim in the tur-



quoise waters of Cleopatra's Bay. There, legend has it, Cleopatra enjoyed the crystal-clear water and basked on the white sand that, archaeologists say, was hauled from distant shores.

We even shopped, sometimes in the most unlikely places. There was, for example, one small port where we spent the night. All we could see was a dock and one tiny building, about the size of a garage. Not another structure anywhere.

"Well, girls, I guess you won't buy much here," said my husband, looking really gleeful. No sooner had he spoken, though, than a wiry little man, who evidently lived in the "garage," began to unfold a pile of rugs

that he pulled from inside.

"All made by my wife," said he, pointing to the wooden loom that stood by the door.

The wife was nowhere in evidence, and the rugs obviously were not of the weave or type of wool that would have identified them as having come from the region. No matter — the prices were right, and the fun of buying a rug under these circumstances proved irresistible.

On some nights we ate on board, and that night, with nowhere else to go, was such an occasion. We toasted one another with *raki* and danced to the captain's drums. Then we feasted on tiny lamb chops, stuffed vegetables, a fragrant pilaf, a glorious toma-

to salad and lots of good red wine. With nowhere to drive, we finished the evening with more toasts, this time with wonderful Turkish brandy, brought on board by our rug seller, who was (surprise!) a friend of our crew members. And (real surprise!) he was also a superb dancer.

On another night, our tiny port was Cokeritme — known chiefly, if not exclusively, for a little restaurant and watering hole called Kaptan Ibrihim's. We reached it by crossing an incredibly rickety narrow dock that quivered as we made our way.

Kaptan Ibrihim himself greeted us; wearing a T-shirt with his restaurant's name and logo. But after the three-piece band struck up, he donned traditional Turkish dancing duds, complete with fake mustache and cap pistols that he fired into the air whenever the mood struck.

The *mezele* we ate there (that's Turkish for appetizers) were concoctions of eggplant, chickpeas, white cheese, olives and other edibles with which we had become familiar on board the Tifil. Then the Kaptan served savory little, cigarette-shaped pastries known as *bourek*, which became everyone's favorites. But the highlight of the evening came after several more rounds of *mezele*, accompanied, of course, by *raki*, when the belly dancer we had all been promised emerged. She was a man; much to the consternation of our group. It was the locals' big joke on the tourists.

On another evening we pulled into the harbor at Karagagosut, a village of lovely vacation homes, a post office and a good outdoor restaurant serving the standard local fare. Again, we had the multiple appetizers, although not identical to Kaptan's. Then followed delicious preparations of fish and chicken. We were still lingering over coffee when the band struck up and the locals filtered in to join us, along with other foreign sailors who had pulled up at the same dock.

