

# Condé Nast Traveller

THE WORLD MADE LOCAL

MAY/JUNE 2024

## THE HOT LIST 2024

THE BEST NEW HOTELS  
AROUND THE WORLD

*Plus*

LOVE AND LOCAVORISM IN ANDALUSIA  
AN EPIC REUNION WITH MONGOLIA  
BRITISH FOOD RETURNS TO ITS ROOTS  
THE AEGEAN COAST'S FRESH SCENE



# CONTENTS

MAY/JUNE 2024

## THE HOT LIST p103

Our editors' picks of the best new hotels across the world

## MONGOLIA p130

Life comes full circle on the vast and empty steppes

## COSTA DE LA LUZ p144

Wild landscapes and sublime produce from Cádiz to Tarifa

## ÇEŞME PENINSULA p156

The fine-wine ageing of Turkey's most stylish corner

BEFORE SUNSET BEACH BAR IN ALAÇATI ON THE ÇEŞME PENINSULA

PHOTOGRAPH: TOM PARKER



# CONTRIBUTORS

WE ASKED OUR TRAVELLERS FOR THEIR MOST MEMORABLE RECENT STAY



## MICHAEL PALIN *In Conversation, p166*

"We had just crossed the border from Sudan into Ethiopia, and we were put in these pens. It was a farm, really, but the animal sheds were now rooms for people. I realised it was a hotel because there were other guests and one shower in the middle of the courtyard. It was extremely weird." *Michael's latest travel series covers Nigeria*



## LALA OLSSON *Cannes cover shoot*

"I fell in love with the Lapa Rios Lodge on Costa Rica's Osa Peninsula. My first shower was accompanied by a baby monkey chilling in the foreground. I'd spend the day trekking and jumping in waterfalls, and savouring colourful, wholesome meals. It all felt very raw and true." *Swedish Brazilian model Lala has shot for Karl Lagerfeld and Loro Piana*



## FRANCESCA AMFITHEATROF *The Pontine Islands, p90*

"I adore the Arizona Inn in Tucson, a salmon-pink hotel in the desert, where the stars of Hollywood westerns have felt at home since the 1930s. I love the ice cream trolley by the pool in the summer, but also sitting by the roaring fireplace in the colder months." *Francesca is the artistic director of watches and jewellery at Louis Vuitton*



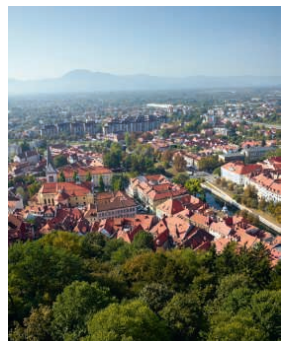
## TOM PARKER BOWLES *British food, p61*

"Although I've yet to stay the night, I've had a few fun evenings at Broadwick Soho in London. Not only does it look beautiful, and they mix a mean martini, but it has a proper Soho soul. It's sexy rather than corporate, and naughty but never sleazy." *Tom was a judge on Condé Nast Traveller's recent UK's Top New Restaurant Awards*



## SEVIL DELIN *Çeşme Peninsula, p156*

"Six Senses Kaplankaya on Turkey's southwest coast is a holistic spa and beach property that keeps my whole family happier than anywhere I can think of. The highlight of our last stay was an underwater exhibition, and the video they made of the kids diving down to look at the sculptures." *Writer Sevil is based in Istanbul*



## LARA BOHINC *Ljubljana, p48*

"Umaid Bhawan Palace in Jodhpur, India, is the coolest hotel I've ever stayed in. I went there in search of a palace for my friend's wedding. It was built in the 1930s for the maharaja, with a mix of art deco and Indian influences. The sheer scale, grandeur and elegance completely overwhelmed me." *Lara is a Slovenian furniture and object designer*

PHOTOGRAPHS: ANDREW CROWLEY/TELEGRAPH MEDIA GROUP LIMITED 2024; GETTY IMAGES; STEFAN GIFTHALER; JACK JOHNS; STEVEN JOYCE; CHRISTIAN KERBER/LAIF; KATE MARTIN; TOM PARKER



# Salt of





# the earth

WITH A RICH TERROIR AND INCREASINGLY SMART STAYS, TURKEY'S ÇEŞME  
PENINSULA HAS AGED AS GRACEFULLY AS ITS ROBUST WINES

BY SEVIL DELIN. PHOTOGRAPHS BY TOM PARKER







CHAKRA SUITES  
Sensory Special *Uda*  
☎ 0530 485 45 33  
@chakrasuitesurla





From left: chef Osman Sezener in his restaurant garden; almond and goat's cheese velouté at Teruar Urla; Urla old town. Opposite: street life in Urla. Previous pages, from left: pool at Alavya hotel; Demircili beach



THE FIRST TIME I WENT TO ALAÇATI, on western Turkey's Çeşme Peninsula, was 20 years ago. My boyfriend – now husband – and I were learning to windsurf. Back then it was all you could do there, and a Miss Universe 2002 contestant – a champion Turkish windsurfer called Çağla Kubat – had brought the sport and the town into the national imagination. The bay south of Alaçatı is renowned as one of the best places in the world to learn. It's shallow, which means newbies can easily jump back on their boards, and blows a steady, not-too-strong wind, always in the same direction. In those days most people camped on the beach, though a handful ventured to sleepy Alaçatı town 10 minutes up the road.

fide boutique hotels and excellent restaurants were creeping in. There were far fewer For Sale signs and much higher house prices. We had our toddler son with us, and it was our first proper family holiday. Instead of surfing, we wandered the streets, where every other house seemed to have the builders in. We stayed in a brand-new hotel, Alavya – named because its founder, Rana Erkan Tabanca, is half-English, half-Turkish, and it's how her son used to pronounce "I love you". It had 25 rooms, a small restaurant and a spa. I spotted a copy of *Condé Nast Traveller* in the lobby with an article in it about Alaçatı, and felt a pique at having been scooped.

## THERE'S A LEGION OF NATURE-INSPIRED BOUTIQUE HOTELS, A REIMAGINED WAREHOUSE AND A BEACH CLUB WITH THE ESSENCE OF AN IBIZAN SUMMER

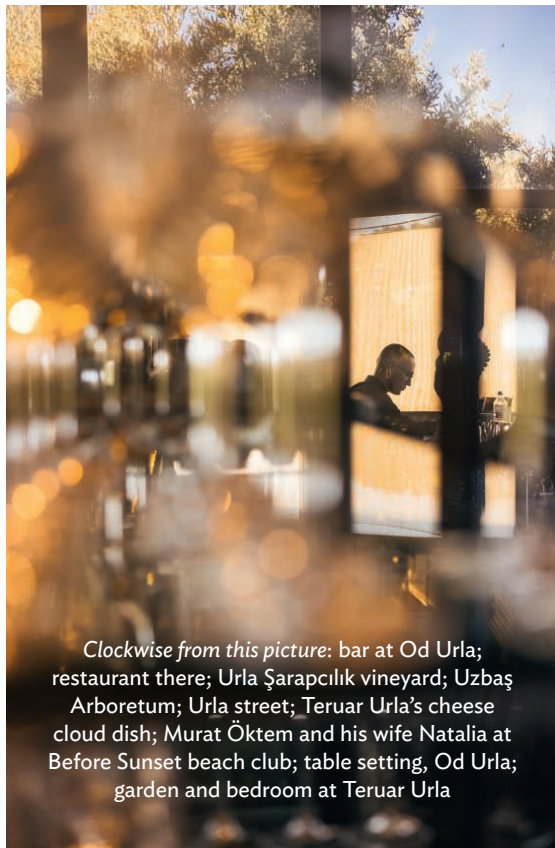
There wasn't a lot to see. Just a café on the main square and lots of run-down or ruined stone houses peppered with For Sale signs – the sad remains of a once-thriving Greek town.

Windsurfing turned out to be a lot harder and less glamorous than Kubat made it look. Having painfully learnt the fundamentals from a teenage instructor who screamed at me in exasperation from the shore every time I fell off, I headed home to Istanbul with a slightly dented ego. And tempted as I might have been by the dilapidated charms of Alaçatı town, I was reluctant to invest my minuscule funds in a place that had so little to offer. I've often kicked myself about that since.

A decade later, I returned. By this stage, Alaçatı had been discovered by the Turks. The windsurfers' bay was no longer the focal point. Bona

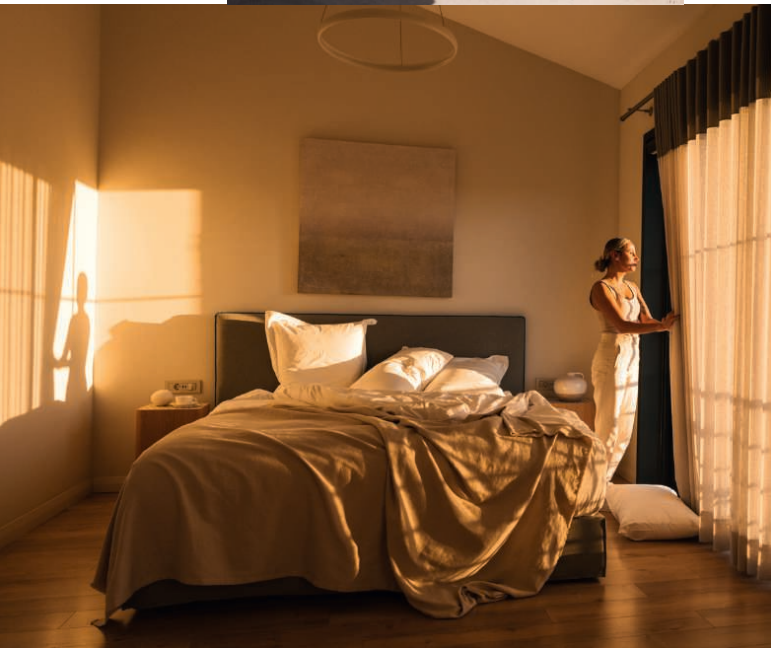
A decade later again, I returned to ring the changes, and was thrilled to find Alaçatı a destination in its own right, discovered by foreigners as well as Turks. The town was transformed. Ten years ago, Alavya stood out for offering rare creature comforts. Now, it faces competition from a legion of nature-inspired or antique-filled boutique hotels, a reimagined warehouse and a beach club with the essence of an Ibiza summer. I did have to squint a bit to see the quaint town of 20 years ago, but beneath the palimpsest of little stores and third-wave cafés, it retains its carefully preserved charms. The neighbourhood of Hacımemiş still evokes the town of a decade prior. And the Pazaryeri Mosque, built in 1874 as a Greek Orthodox church, is possibly one of the only religious structures in the world to host both Muslim prayers and Christian masses. Alaçatı's Hellenic beauty is still there.





*Clockwise from this picture: bar at Od Urla; restaurant there; Urla Şarapçılık vineyard; Uzbaş Arboretum; Urla street; Teruar Urla's cheese cloud dish; Murat Öktem and his wife Natalia at Before Sunset beach club; table setting, Od Urla; garden and bedroom at Teruar Urla*









From left: local in Urla; shaded seating at Before Sunset beach club; figs at Gaia Alaçatı hotel. Opposite: by the water at Before Sunset

Even better, it has become the epicentre of a new Turkish food scene. In 2013, celebrated chef Kemal Demirasal opened upmarket Alancha. The idea of fine dining in humble Alaçatı seemed daring and paradoxical at the time, but it proved to be a stroke of genius, as the stellar standard of the local seafood and produce, coupled with Demirasal's creativity, swiftly turned Alaçatı into an unexpected hot spot. Soon after, the unthinkable happened: whereas in the past, Istanbul culinary institutions would open temporary summer venues on the Aegean to please their seasonal regulars, Alancha did a switcheroo and opened a branch in Istanbul. Alancha is sadly no more, but Demirasal's success ultimately led him to London, where he opened The Counter restaurant.

Alaçatı isn't the only destination worth exploring, though. Thirty minutes down the road to Izmir, the town of Urla is having its moment in the sun. Ten years ago, Urla was a place you passed through. Its name derives from the Greek *vourla*, meaning marshlands, so not the most inviting appellation. Even further inland than Alaçatı, it was not an obvious summer destination, and had the dubious honour of being best known for its annual artichoke festival. But it did have something all those restaurants in Alaçatı required: vineyards and olive groves. Alaçatı's white-tablecloth venues needed to keep their glasses full, and Urla was happy to oblige. A centre of wine production for millennia, it has one of Turkey's best terroirs. Many vineyards had been

## AT DINNER ONE OF MY FRIENDS JOKES THAT THE SALADS ARE SO FRESH IN ALAÇATI THE CRUNCH OF THE LETTUCE BOTHERS GUESTS AT THE NEXT TABLE

Inspired by Alancha, other entrepreneurial chefs in Alaçatı have followed suit: dozens of gorgeous old Greek houses now host restaurants serving Aegean fare with flair.

On this latest trip, my days tended to start with breakfast at the lovely Bom Dia, run by İpek and Yasemin Yılmaz, two cool sisters from Istanbul who don't mind shaking up Bloody Marys and Bellinis with their fabulous all-day breakfasts. I'd drift to lunch at rustic Asma Yaprığı, serving Aegean home cooking in a huge garden, often followed by Da Franco for chocolate ice cream. I'd eat dinner at relaxed and romantic Eflatun, on a side street in town, or meet up with friends to feast on shared platters of meze at Ortaya. One of them jokes that the salad greens are so fresh in Alaçatı the crunch of the lettuce bothers guests at the next table.

converted to growing grapes for eating rather than for drinking. But just as the past 20 years have marked a renaissance for Alaçatı, so too have Turkish wines been born again.

Urla is vast – more than 270 verdant square miles, about nine times the size of Alaçatı – and requires a car for proper exploration. I started with the ebullient Can Ortabaş, known as “the father of Urla”, who whisked me on a tour of his Eden-like Uzbaş Arboretum, established in 1996. This global purveyor of palms and plants is populated by rescued blond street dogs, who clearly adore their owner. Oenophile Ortabaş dug his roots deeper into Urla in the early 2000s, founding the trailblazing Urla Şarapcılık vineyard. Others followed, and in 2016 they joined forces to create a trail: the Urla Bağ Yolu, a wine route à la Napa Valley, Bordeaux or Tuscany, raising awareness of Urla as a

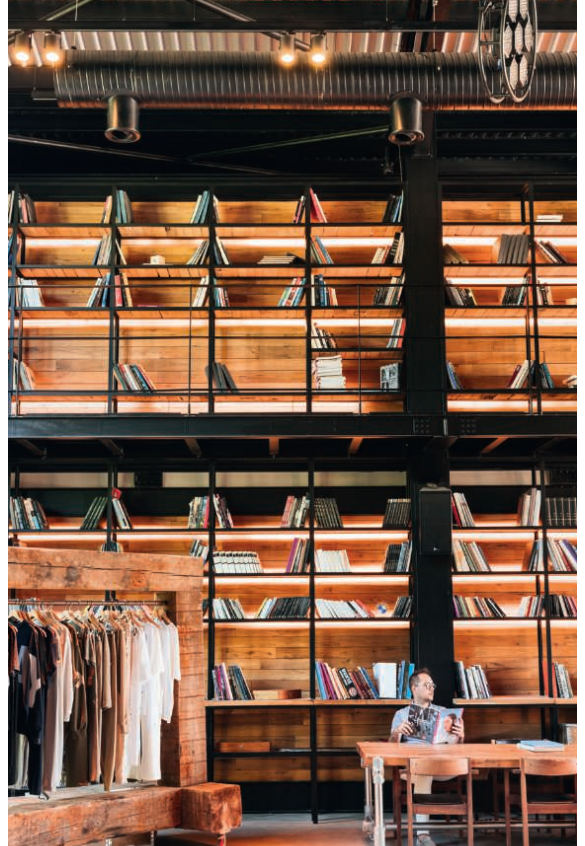








*Clockwise from this picture: fishermen having tea at Urla port; grilled asparagus with butter sauce at Od Urla; Uzbař Arboretum; architect Funda Arkas at her office; boutique at The Stay Warehouse, Alaçatı*





Turkish wine region on par with Thrace and Cappadocia. It takes in nine scattered members, who favour local grapes including Boğazkere, a strong tannin-y red, and aromatic whites Bornova Misketi and Sultaniye. Bursting with paternal pride, Ortabaş is delighted to have revived what was considered a lost local variety, the Urla Karası. Parts of the route can be covered by bicycle or on foot, with wineries doubling up as horse ranches, hotels, restaurants and guesthouses.

Two years after the wine route was inaugurated, Urla's star quality was sealed with the 2018 opening of farm-to-table restaurant Od Urla, by chef Osman Sezener. Od could only exist in Urla. In the restaurant's garden, where Sezener grows his fruit and vegetables, there are more than 300 plants, including aromatic herbs, spices and olive trees. A reservation here has become a badge of culinary honour, and people fly in just for dinner. Once a signpost on the road from Izmir to the seaside resort of Çeşme, Urla finally made it onto the Michelin map in 2023. Od Urla and nearby Vino Locale and Teruar Urla all got Michelin stars, with Od and Vino Locale also receiving green stars for their sustainability credentials.

Teruar Urla, next door to Urla Şarapçılık vineyard, is also a B&B. Its founding chef, Osman Serdaroglu, is a relative of Can Ortabaş (a common occurrence on the peninsula). Bespectacled and Italian-trained, Serdaroglu runs the restaurant in symbiotic symmetry with his chic wife, Ezgi, who's in charge of the hotel. In contrast to the fiery flair at Od Urla, their aesthetic leans towards spare plating in an elegantly

## THE COFFEEHOUSES IN URLA ARE STILL TRADITIONAL PLACES WHERE LOCAL MEN PLAY OKEY, A TURKISH TILE-BASED GAME THAT LOOKS A BIT LIKE MAHJONG

minimalist and calm pale room. Hiç Urla, a Michelin-green-star-winning restaurant in the middle of town, was founded by the majestic matriarch Duygu Özerson Elakdar, a powerhouse who advocates for nature, running a little empire of sustainable olive groves, a ceramics studio and culinary academy.

I saw the spirit of Alaçatı's past in Urla – before the arrival of influencers in third-wave cafés. The coffeehouses here are still traditional places where local men play okey, a Turkish tile-based game that looks a bit like mahjong. On Tuesdays, there is a fruit and vegetable market in the main square, and a women's market selling handmade crafts is there on Saturdays. The streets of the Malgaca Pazarı shopping district are lined with everything from hardware stores to knife sellers and bakers. Uzeyir Urla'da Profiterol, a profiterole shop that has been using the same recipe since 1944, is going strong. There's a sprinkling of more recent arrivals, small boutiques run by émigrés from Turkey's megacities. But foreign visitors are still an unusual enough sight to turn heads, and the waterfront from which the fishermen head out shows little sign of gentrification.

But Urla is on the cusp of change: Ortabaş is set to open a Relais & Châteaux hotel, Key Hotel Urla, adjacent to his vineyard. Sezener is

expanding Od Urla's B&B. During the pandemic, a trickle of folk from Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir began to up sticks and move to the Aegean, snapping up Urla's humble homes. In just three years, that trickle has become a stream. The relatives of Lucien Arkas, one of Turkey's shipping magnates, are developing a gated community here. In 2020 he opened Arkas Art Urla, showing his own eclectic collection, from Rodin sculptures to 16th- and 17th-century armoury.

Urla remains, happily, a place of labyrinthine cobbled streets, quirky local shops and charming cellar doors. And its Michelin green stars, embrace of nature and plethora of electric-car-charging stations also gave me hope that it will root its growth in sustainability; that the next generation will tread lightly. Here's softly hoping. 🌿

## Where to stay and eat

In 2022, Işinsu Kestelli – president of the Izmir Commodity Exchange, and part of a new wave of Alaçatı entrepreneurs – converted her home into the seven-room **Kestellinn** (*doubles from about £370; kestellinn.com*). It is filled with antiques and art from her private collection, and has a small restaurant. Mert Öktem's triumvirate of minimalist, nature-inspired Gaia hotels are scattered about the town and beach. **Gaia by the Sea** (*doubles from about £175; hotelsgaia.com*) has its own beach and a 500-year-old olive tree, and every room has a garden with a hot tub filled by natural thermal springs. Pioneering hotel **Alavya** (*doubles from about £340; alavya.com*) is now a treasured landmark, with 25 rooms, a lush garden, large subterranean spa and a great little shop packed with local brands. **The Stay Warehouse** (*doubles from about £430; thestay.com.tr*) has a scene – a famous Turkish actor was effortlessly lounging with her friends when I visited.

Owner Muzaffer Yıldırım will open Turkey's first glamping site, **Pastoral by The Stay**, next year. **Before Sunset** (*doubles from about £190; beforeunsetcesme.com*) started out as 14 chaises longues on a beach. Now it's a zen beach club with a café, boutiques and a restaurant, plus a 25-room organic-rustic hotel. Owner Murat Öktem is also the DJ. Family-run **Asma Yaprığı** (*asmayapraki.com.tr*) – it translates as “vine leaf” – has a huge central table covered with enamel trays heaped with Aegean starters such as rice-stuffed cabbage flowers and vine-leaf dolmas filled with tart cherries. Over in Urla, **Od Urla** (*doubles from about £150; odurla.com*) has a Michelin star and a green star for sustainability. Like his Ottoman sultan namesake, chef Osman Sezener has established an empire and runs his operation with military precision. Od means “fire” in old Turkish, and the menu, which morphs monthly, is centred on a wood-fired oven in an olive grove setting. Michelin-starred **Teruar Urla** (*doubles from about £250; teruarurla.com*) serves pared-back Mediterranean plates by Osman Serdaroglu, and has seven elegant neutral rooms. Michelin green star notable **Hiç Urla** (*hicurla.com*) leans towards the earthy, hearty and unpretentious, and runs popular cookery workshops.

Urla Şarapçılık's guesthouse, **2 Rooms** (*doubles from about £180; 2roomshotel.com*), offers just that, overlooking the vineyard, with the tasting room downstairs. **Key Hotel Urla** (*doubles from about £300; no website yet*), 2 Rooms' sister property, will open by the end of the summer with 24 villas, a spa and pool.