

# Top 10 Attractions in Antalya

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Antalya sounds like the name of a fairyland tucked away amidst blue waters and shimmering skies. This city is the eighth most populous city in Turkey and fortunately very accessible for tourists! It was founded as 'Attaleia' and named after its founder Attalos II, king of Pergamon who laid its foundations in 150 BC. It is the largest Turkish city cozily lying on Mediterranean coast and is home to over one million people in its metropolitan area. April is one of the best times to hit this city, courtesy its pleasant weather. It can be reached via planes from Istanbul. Many travellers also arrive from Rhodes by boat and bus.

## 1. Kursunlu Waterfalls

Waterfalls in any place can tempt a tourist to put it at the top of their visit list. Set amid pine forests, these waterfalls might not be as impressive or majestic as Duden Waterfalls on the beach but its secluded and remote location gives it a unique charm. Located 20 minutes away from Central Antalya, there are plenty of sauntering opportunities, especially alongside Aksu River.

Kurşunlu Waterfall Nature Park is about 19 km away from Antalya, Turkey. The waterfall stems from one of the tributaries of the Aksu River, where the tributary slips from Antalya's plateau to the coastal plain. Alongside river, you would find plenty of spots for picnicking. The park is shaded and complete with walkways, steps, and bridges, accompanying the spectacular view of waterfalls. The greenery is soothing to the eyes. You would be delighted to find lush green vegetation and lime green ponds with clear water. This calm and remote place is almost like a secret getaway.

Down by the river, you can see kingfisher, frogs, and lizards. Explorers would be delighted to visit the nearby caves that curve around the back and sides of the falls. During summer, the water level drops. So plan the visit accordingly. If you take a Line 600 bus from Antalya, it would cost you about \$8- \$10 and take about 29 minutes. Taxi would take around 21 minutes and cost around \$12- \$14. Entrance fee for adults is around \$2.

## 2. Perge

Perge or Perge was once the capital of Pamphylia Secunda and currently lies in Antalya province. It houses well preserved ancient ruins from the period of ancient Rome and has been a home to Hittites in around 1500 BC. The city is about 18 km east of Turkey and has remains of what was known to the world as the most prosperous city of its times. Once you enter from the arch of the Roman Gate, you are greeted by the Hellenistic Gate as well as remains of the city wall.

The Romans arrived in Perge in around 188 BC and most of the historic sites are the courtesy of the Romans. The 15,000 seat theatre, gymnasium, bath, agora and necropolis make for interesting sights and are a reminder of the Roman era and later became a Byzantine center. The great theatre and the stadium of Perge are very much intact but it's actually Hellenistic-Roman gate-towers that garner most attention because of its peculiarity. It is the only pre-Roman structure with walls. This gate consists of two towers with a horse-shoe shaped court behind them. These two towers guard the southern entrance to Perge.

You can also visit colonnaded main streets, which are quite close to Antalya. Many of the findings from this site are now stored at Antalya Museum. You can watch, go up close, and even touch the ruins! The site has an entrance fee of 20 lira and can be reached via AC03 bus from Antalya city center to Aksu province.

## 3. Kekova Island

Kekova, also known as Caravola, is a small Turkish island near Demre. The island has an area of 4.5 sq km and is not inhabited. The name 'Kekova' means 'Plain of Thyme'. The northern side of the island has partly sunken ruins of Dolchiste/Dolikisthe. This is an ancient town that suffered damage at the hands of an earthquake during the 2nd century. It was rebuilt during the Byzantine period. The Kekova region was a specially declared area in 1990 and was off-limits for swimming and diving activities but the prohibition was lifted off from all areas except the sunken city part.

The Kekova Island can be visited by car by turning off the main Kas-Finike highway and driving 19 km in the direction of Üçağiz. In Üçağiz, you may hire a boat or join a boat tour. Featuring a lot of seafood restaurants, Üçağiz itself is a good place to be. It has many old whitewashed buildings steeped in flowers and bougainvillea. Kekova can also be reached directly by boat from Kas.

A private boat tour from Kas to Kekova, inclusive of BBQ can cost you around \$92. Although it takes a lot of time but you will be left mesmerized by the breathtaking view of ancient sunken walls and buildings seen from the glass bottomed double decker boats.

There are several seafront cafes where you can grab chilled beverage and take in the finest of nature. From seeing dolphins and turtles in the sea, to hiking up to the castle on the top of the island to diving and snorkeling, there are quite a few activities to do here. At some spots, you can also go swimming in the crystal clear, bluest blue waters.

#### **4. Hadrian's Gate**

Hadrian's Gate is the Greek name given to The Arch of Hadrian. A monumental gateway, it resembles a Roman triumphal arch. It is just off Ataturk Boulevard and has three double arches, which were erected to celebrate the visit of Emperor Hadrian. Located 325 m southeast of the Acropolis, this arch has inscriptions which state Hadrian and Theseus as its two founders.

The entire gate is made of Pentelic marble, which was also used in the construction of Parthenon and many other structures in Athens. However, it is of a lower quality than what is used in the best constructed Athenian buildings. The building is symmetrical from side to side and from front to back.

The Hadrian gate also has a glass pathway which separates the old Kaleici (historic city center of Antalya) from the city. There are park benches outside the gate offering for a quiet retreat, while allowing you the time to observe locals and surroundings. The gate is situated amidst shops so once you get free from your walk in the bazaar, you can visit the place to go back to old times and see the old architecture. It is one of the few spots with well-preserved history and as one tourist aptly puts it across, the gate is a good reminder of times gone by and the people who have passed through it.

The gate is standing with its grandeur of coffered ceilings in arches and decorative marble columns. The deep grooves in the stone pavement bears testament to the thousands of carts that have passed through this gate over centuries.

#### **5. Antalya Marina**

Opened in 1991, Antalya Marina is a commercial harbor that is located 30 km away from Antalya International Airport at a distance of only 10 km from Antalya City Centre. Safe and peaceful, it has everything that a city can offer to its visitors and there is no fee for visiting. Steep stone steps connect Antalya Marina to Kaleici. The place welcomes you in its small cozy world where you will see splendid yachts and fishing boats side by side. Fishermen can be seen flaunting and selling their catch of the day.

You can even grab a cuppa of steaming tea or coffee from the surrounding small cafes and sip in taking in the beautiful scenery.

The marina offers a short challenging hike as it is a steep hill down and not to mention the way back up! That said, you can hitch back a ride uphill with a taxi. The marina is a short walk from the old city and has an array of restaurants and cafes. The area has alleyways so you get a feel of the Turkish Mediterranean atmosphere as you pop in and out of small streets and shops, lining the area. You can go on boat trips from Antalya Marina as well as a private beach near the harbor, where you can go swimming.

After a long tour round the city, it is a good idea to sit in one of the small cafes, biting into Turkish delights and looking over at the harbor and ocean. So happening and yet such a good place to relax—that is the Antalya Marina.

## 6. Konyaalti Beach

Konyaalti Beach is one of the two main beaches in Antalya, located about 3 km west of Kalekapısı. Stretching over 7 km from Beydağları Mountains to the cliffs, it is a long strip of pebbles and rough sand with a park at the back. Close to the beach there are many hotels and residential areas. Take the Nostalji tram westward from Kalekapısı at the center of Antalya to the end of the tramway line near the Antalya Museum to reach this beach. By walk it is around 15 minutes' away from the old town.

The Antalya Beach Park has trees, snack stands, cafes, showers as well as sun umbrellas. In some areas on the beach there are many facilities and on the other areas, the amenities are quite far. The largest water park in Antalya—Aqualand lies just behind the beach park. Even better is the private part of the beach that has quite and serene atmosphere and free sun beds for everyone. If you are a water lover, you can swim and jet ski at the beach or just sit with your feet in the water and relax as the waves pass you back and forth on the shore.

## 7. Myra Ruins

Myra is a beautiful town of Lycia region where small town of Kale is situated in Antalya province. Located on River Myros, this place lies in between Alaca Dağ village, Massikytos range, and Aegean Sea. The site ruins are mostly covered by alluvial silts. Some of the sites, such as Acropolis, situated on the Demre-plateau, Roman baths (eski hamam), and Roman theatre have been partly excavated.

As the history of this place goes, Myra was a leading city of the Lycian Union and has even surpassed Xanthos in Byzantine era to become the capital of Lycia. There has been literary mention of the city before 1st century BC but the defensive city wall is said to date back to 5th century BC.

Some tourist attractions include amphitheater, rock-cut tombs, and church of St. Nicholas. This Greco-Roman theater is the largest one in Lycia. With its double-vaulted corridors, rows and rows of seats, and grand façade decorated with theatrical masks, the place is well-preserved. The rock-cut tombs can be divided into two groups, one above the theatre and the other on a place called river necropolis. As you

go westward from here, you will see steep cliff with a number of rock-cut tombs in asymmetric pattern. Built one above the other in cliffs, they are a strange sight. Although the tombs that we see today are plain, it was reported by Charles Fellows that when he discovered them in 1840, they were in bright hues of blue, yellow, and red. The ruins can be visited from Demre which is 90 miles from Antalya. You can catch a bus, which will run along the coast from Antalya. The visiting hours for ruins are from 9 am to 7 pm daily.

## 8. Manavgat Waterfalls

All of the streams in the Antalya region finally slip in the Mediterranean, falling down from the slopes of Tauros, but not before treating tourists with a spectacular sight. There are more than twenty waterfalls and one of the most amazing waterfalls is Manavgat Waterfall. Manavgat city lies in between two cities—Antalya and Alanya—on the banks of the Manavgat River. Manavgat waterfalls are situated about 80 km away from Antalya.

To get to Manavgat city, you can board one of the many buses running between Manavgat and Antalya. You can also reach the city via highway D400. Manavgat Waterfall is just 3 km north of the city and is also a short distance away from the city Side. Although the waterfall is only a few meters high, the river is pretty wide and the flow strong enough to form white foamy thunderous waterfall! The water flows powerfully over rocks.

There are also shady gardens near the waterfalls so that you can have a pleasant resting place. Refreshingly cool water is easily accessible in an enclosed pond. In the riverside café enjoy freshly grilled trout under pine trees, and create amazing memories! The waterfall can also be visited in night since it is well-lit. The fee for visiting the waterfall is 3.5 Turkish Lira and it is free after 8 pm. Tourists can also opt for Manavgat River cruise, taking tourists for a 3-hour cruise, for around \$28.

## 9. Hierapolis & Pamukkale

These ancient cities located in southwestern Anatolia have many hot springs. You would be surprised to know that the hot springs have been used as spa since 2nd century BC. Pamukkale houses an archeological museum, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Hierapolis was founded as a thermal spa and later became a healing center where patients would come for cure. Today, the site is a tourist attraction mainly because of the main street and gates and their majestic structure.

You can also visit a theatre, Plutonium, Nymphaeum (monumental fountain), Necropolis, baths, and Martyrium. The ruins of Hierapolis lie adjacent to Pamukkale, which is a natural work of wonder in Denizli Province. The whole city is an interesting territory of hot springs and travertines. Travertines are terraces of carbonate minerals deposited by flowing water.

The calcite-laden water has created a surreal landscape of mineral forests, waterfalls as well as terraces and the area lovingly gets a nickname of 'Cotton Palace'. In all there are 17 hot water springs in the area. Some hotels were built in 1960 but were later demolished as they used to draw all the hot water in their

pools and thus damaging these carbonate terraces. Also, these terraces are off-limits but tourists can follow the main pathway. Both the sites together make for a spectacular tourist spot. For under 30 TL, you can board a bus provided by Pamukkale, from anywhere on the coast. You can also catch a 90-minute flight from Denizli Çardak Airport. With all these fascinating spots scattered around Antalya, perhaps the trickiest part is to decide which one to visit first, no?

## 10. Side

An ancient Greek city on the southern Mediterranean coast of Turkey, Side is a resort town. It is just 4 km away along the road separating from Antalya-Alanya highway. The city was initially founded on a plain peninsula, which extended into the Mediterranean. Historians say that the city's foundation was laid by Greek settlers from Cyme in Aeolis, most likely in around 7th century BC.

Arrian, a historian and philosopher in Roman period states an interesting fact that when the settlers from Cyme came in, they could not understand the local dialect but after some time the indigenous tongue had so strong an influence on them that they forgot their native Greek and started conversing in the language of the Side!

The city was also occupied by Alexander the Great in 333 BC. Side has many tourist attractions, some of which are Greek Amphitheatre, Side Museum, Monumental Fountain (Nymphaeum), Aspendos Bridge and Aqueduct. Formed by a semi-circular courtyard and two towers, the gate has two sections opening inside and outside of the city.

You would also get to see the much raved about columned streets and quarters in Side. Starting from Main gate, these columned streets have the seamless underground drainage system. The town has a rich history with Greek, Roman, and Byzantine ruins and pillars all over the town. One of the most famous ruins in Side is the amphitheater. Amidst all these ruins, runs a road on which you can drive your car and see all the ruins without leaving your car!