

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

Strait & narrow



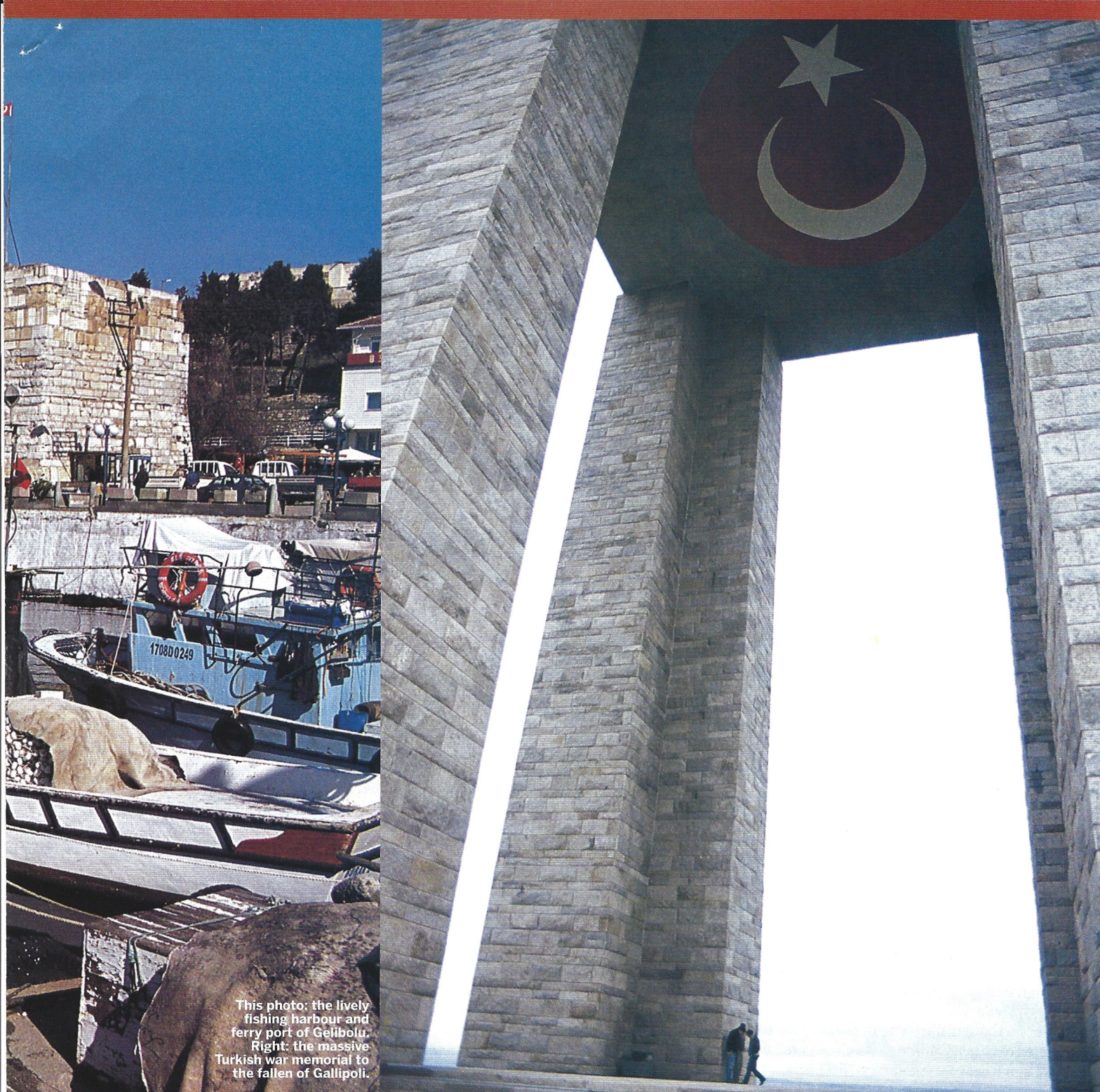
If you're cruising the eastern Med, the Dardanelles are a worthwhile destination. You'll find some beautiful

Minaret moment:
the waterfront
mosque at Eceabat.



Early morning at
the fortress town
of Çanakkale.





This photo: the lively fishing harbour and ferry port of Gelibolu. Right: the massive Turkish war memorial to the fallen of Gallipoli.

ports-of-call, a warm welcome and some sobering reminders of the past TEXT AND PHOTOS ALAN HARPER

The Dardanelles are many things: Çanakkale Bogazi to the Turks, a 35-mile strait connecting the Aegean to the Sea of Marmara, named after the fishing harbour, ferry port and fortress town that commands its narrowest point. For the masters of the many commercial ships that pass through, the Dardanelles are a necessary evil: busy, confined, and strictly controlled. To the visiting Mediterranean sailor, they present a different kind of challenge, their steady southbound current made stronger by prevailing northerly winds.

For classicists, this narrow waterway is the mythic Hellespont of Jason's Argonauts, of

Hero, Leander and Xerxes, on whose Asian shore the Greeks beached their ships while they besieged nearby Troy. And for historians, the Dardanelles are a place of modern mythology. Ninety years ago, this place saw one of the bloodiest and most futile campaigns of a long and bloody war. It cost the opposing armies over 130,000 lives, the Royal Navy several expensive capital ships, and the First Sea Lord Jackie Fisher and the First Lord of the Admiralty – one Winston Churchill – their jobs.

Yet to explore this historic cruising ground by boat is hardly an epic undertaking. A mere 32 miles from the Greek island of Limnos, 50 from Lesbos and just 120 miles from Istanbul, the

area sports three sheltered harbours that can each provide a good base for visiting boats, as well as several excellent summer anchorages.

The best place to establish yourself is in the marina at Çanakkale (pronounced Chan-ak-allay), which is a port of entry. It's also a ferry port and university town with 10,000 students, and boasts a historic Ottoman fortress as well as excellent naval and archeological museums. There are plenty of restaurants and bars, and a relaxed, liberal atmosphere that is often missing in less well-connected Turkish towns.

Gelibolu itself, after which the peninsula is named, is a lively market town and fishing port with a small harbour that quickly gets full in the

Eating out

You can eat extremely well in Turkey, and very cheaply. Menus sometimes have rudimentary English translations, but just in case here's a basic glutton's glossary to get you started. *Ezogelin* is lentil soup, utterly delicious, served with moist, gritty black pepper and chunks of lemon to squeeze into it. Alongside you might be served a plate of *pide*, fantastic flat bread that may have been baked in the restaurant's own wood-burning oven.

Another great starter is *içli kofte*, a strange-looking ball of firm pastry with minced mutton, onion and walnuts inside – excellent. As a main course you may opt for *ozel lahmacun*, a mutton pizza, served folded with a side salad. Open it up, plonk the salad inside and fold it again into a manageable size and shape. Stupendous.

If you're feeling more adventurous try *cig jofte*, raw and heavily spiced patties of minced lamb. You could opt for a *kebab*: usually served with salad, rice and chilli, and often huge. *Tavuk* is chicken, *sis* ('shish') is mutton, and *acili* means spicy. For lunch on the move it doesn't get better than *gozleme*, a flat, oily bread baked with minced lamb or mutton inside, sliced up and served in paper, fish'n'chip style.

After all that you'll want a glass of *çay* ('chy'), Turkish-grown tea. It's served with sugar on the side, but you might find it perfectly palatable unsweetened. If it's the hard stuff you're after, the local firewater is *raqi*. The Turks call it 'lion's milk', and say that all it takes is two glasses for you to be fluent in Turkish.

Aegean Sea

Anafartalar Koyu (Suvla Bay)

Ari Burun (Bee Point)

Anzak Koyu (Anzac Cove)

Sunk battleships

- 1 "Bouvet" (March 18)
- 2 "Irresistible" (March 18)
- 3 "Ocean" (March 18)
- 4 "Goliath" (May 12)
- 5 "Triumph" (May 25)
- 6 "Majestic" (May 27)

Mehmetçik Burun (Cape Helles)

Seddulbahir (Sedd el Bahr)

Anit Limani (Morto Bay)

Gelibolu Yarımadası (Gallipoli Peninsula)

Çimen Tepe (Hill 971)

Conkbayırı (Chunuk Bair)

Kabatepe (Gaba Tepe)

Eceabat (Maidos)

Kilitbahir (Kilid Bahr)

Çanakkale (Chanak Kale)

Nara Geçidi (The Narrows)

0 1 2 3 4 5
nautical miles

The Allied invasion of the Gallipoli peninsula in April 1915 was intended to seize control of the Dardanelles

season. A better option might be on the inside of the commercial pier just to the west of the entrance. Or you could look for a berth in the fishing harbour of Kabatepe, on the west side of the peninsula. Compared with Çanakkale or Gelibolu, though, it may seem rather quiet and isolated over here, although it's close to Anzac Cove and handy for many battlefield sites.

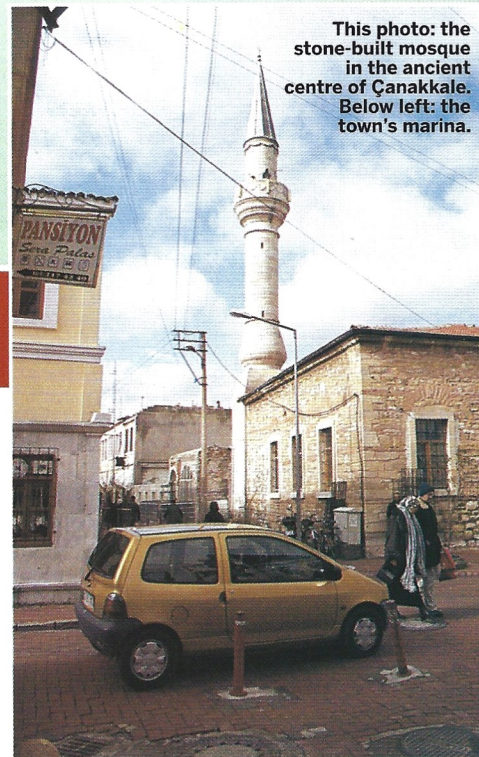
As for anchorages, the best and most atmospheric is at the southern tip of the peninsula, in the north-east corner of Anit Limani, which the Allied invaders knew as Morto Bay. Here you lie virtually in the shadow of the gigantic Turkish war memorial, and are within a short walk of the French and British memorials. There are seven military cemeteries nearby, and plenty of other traces of 1915, notably the remnants of the big gun emplacements on the shore near Seddulbahir.

Further north in the Anzac sector, you can anchor, if you like, in Anzac Cove itself, but as it's little more than a scrape in the shoreline, you might feel better off just around the headland to the north, or in the deep, semi-circular Anafartalar Koyu.

Touring the battlefields

The Allied invasion of the Gallipoli peninsula in April 1915 was intended to seize control of the well-defended Dardanelles and open the way to an advance on Istanbul. This, it was hoped, would force Turkey out of the war and relieve pressure on Russia. Naval bombardments had been tried and had failed: March 18 was a major victory for the Turks when mines sank one French and two British battleships. This

This photo: the stone-built mosque in the ancient centre of Çanakkale. Below left: the town's marina.



persuaded the Royal Navy to abandon plans to force the Narrows using ships alone, and the Army was called in to help.

Poor planning and amateurish execution marked the invasion itself. The British landed in force at a selection of beaches on the southern tip of the peninsula, while a French force carried out a diversionary attack on the Asian side at Kumkale. The Australian and New Zealand Corps (Anzacs), chosen because they happened to be in Egypt, were landed a mile to the north of their intended beach, at what is now known as Anzac Cove.

The objectives in both sectors were the areas of commanding high ground inland, but they

Charts and pilots

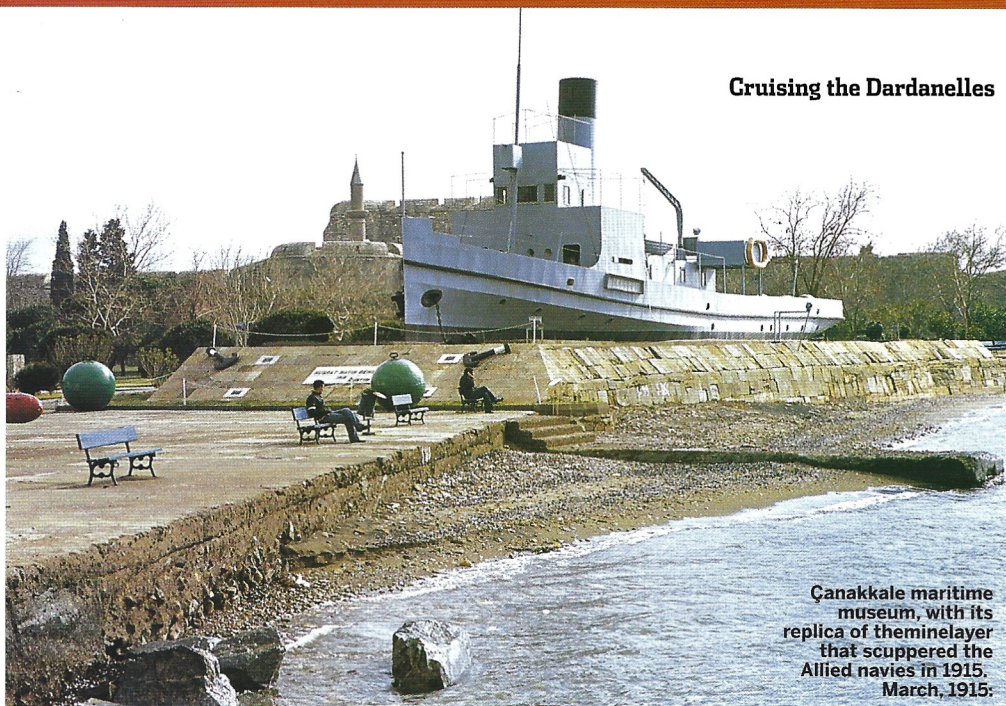
Turkish chart 3750/212, Çanakkale Bogazi. Admiralty chart 2429, The Dardanelles.

Turkish Waters & Cyprus Pilot by Rod Heikell. Imray, 6th edition (2001), £32.50. The essential work, in Heikell's usual exhaustive detail.

A Military Atlas of the First World War by Arthur Banks, published Leo Cooper (2001) at £14.95. A fantastic book of remarkably useful and informative maps.

Gallipoli, by Alan Moorehead. The classic standard text from the 1950s, reprinted by Perennial Classics at \$14.95 (approx £8.00). Or try second-hand on Amazon.

Gallipoli, by Mustafa Askin. The best of the tourist guides, written by a professional guide in excellent English. Available locally or via the author on email: thetroyguide@hotmail.com.



Çanakkale maritime museum, with its replica of the minesweeper that scuppered the Allied navies in 1915. March, 1915.

were never reached. By June, the British and French had managed to advance about three miles from Cape Helles, while the Anzacs remained bogged down on the steep slopes above their Cove, under the Turkish guns. Another British landing in August, just to the north at Suvla Bay, managed to link up with the Anzacs, but it too was soon stalemated.

The area is studded with sad memorials from both sides. The unspoilt peninsula is now a national park, and if you plan to tour the battlefields you have a number of options. You could anchor as close in as possible, around Anzak Koyu or Anit Limani, with a view to making a short tour on foot or by bike. You could also set off independently from Kabatepe, although by the time you're halfway up the heights of Çimen Tepe and Conkbayırı you may wish you had hired a taxi.

For a detailed exploration, plan on spending a few days in the marina at Çanakkale (known to the invading forces in 1915 as Chanak Kale). At the tourist office (tel: +90 286 217 1187) you can pick up information and maps, and find out about hiring an official guide. Alternatively, you can take a taxi and explore the area yourself.

The best plan by taxi from Çanakkale is an anti-clockwise circular trip starting at the Eceabat ferry pier and finishing at the Kilitbahir ferry. Ascend the ridge at Conkbayırı, with its excellent view of Anafartalar Koyu and the western coast. Here you'll find a statue of Atatürk labelled with the story of his pocket watch, which saved him from a shrapnel wound during the ferocious assault here. There are also a number of Turkish trenches, some reconstructed and others, hidden in the bushes all around, untouched.

Facing Çanakkale across the Narrows is this fine Ottoman fortress at Kilitbahir.



Looking down the hill towards the southwest, you see the Australians' Lone Pine cemetery, one of the largest, and the Turkish cemetery and monument to the 57th regiment, which includes a prayer platform aligned towards Mecca. From here, carry on southwards, via the museum a short way inland from Kabatepe, towards the British, French and Turkish cemeteries and memorials of Cape Helles. Here you can also see the impressive remnants of some of the coastal batteries, which were the whole reason for the campaign. None is more impressive, though, than those at Kilitbahir, in the shadow of the magnificent Ottoman castle. With its companion fortress just eight cables across the Narrows at Çanakkale, this imposing relic of the 15th Century underlines just how strategically vital the Dardanelles have always been. **MBY**

Kemal Atatürk

Mustafa Kemal was one of the greatest statesmen who ever lived, in any era and any culture. An unknown army officer at the beginning of the Gallipoli campaign, by the time the defeated Allies slipped silently back into their boats in December 1915 and January 1916, he was a national hero.

After the war, which sealed the fate of the old Ottoman empire, he saw off the Greeks and thwarted the imperial ambitions of Britain, France and Italy as they gathered to pick over the carcass. He became the first president of the new Republic of Turkey in October 1923. He then set about inventing a modern, secular state, abolishing the veil, the sultanate and the harem, and outlawing polygamy. He replaced Arabic with the Roman alphabet and brought in the Gregorian calendar. In 1934 he decreed that all Turks should register a surname, in the Western tradition. The one he chose for himself, Atatürk, means 'father of the Turks'. That year he made a speech inviting reconciliation, which can still bring a lump to the throat: "You, the mothers who sent their sons from far away countries, wipe away your tears. Your sons are now lying in our bosom and are in peace. After having lost their lives on this land they have become our sons as well."