

2 FIVE-STAR VILLA ON THE MED

Holidaying in a luxury Mediterranean house can be a stretch, unless you swap the Côte d'Azur for the equally photogenic Turkey, says Lindsay Frankel

I've always fancied my own private holiday house. In my fantasy, it has sweeping sea views, an infinity pool and a terrace on which my friends and I gather for evening cocktails. It also tends to be in the south of France. Needless to say, that holiday has never happened. But now I know that the dream can become a reality, if I switch locations to Turkey.

Kalkan is a beautiful spot on the Lycian coast in the south west of the country, and a fantastic, chichi alternative to the more obvious Mediterranean resorts. Our house, Villa Ayse, was far enough from the centre of town to be tranquil, but near enough to walk when the designated driver (ie, me) had had enough of negotiating tight parking spots in the enormous rental jeep. Midway up a hill, the villa was all about the sea views – from the huge patio windows and balcony of the master bedroom to the outdoor dining area. And it was enormous. No matter how much we love our friends, most of us need a moment of me time in a full villa. Fortunately, you could pack two doubles and one twin at Villa Ayse twice over, and still have room to swing a cat.

And did I mention the three-tier garden set with sofas and loungers, infinity pool (pictured) and – the absolute highlight – a private decking platform from which



Amazing views from Villa Ayse. BELOW: Kalkan is chic, charming – and quieter off-season

to launch oneself into the sea (the water is warm enough to swim off-season)? Local hairdressers offer bargain-price massages, and the more energetic can try one of myriad water sports available, or take off on a walk through ancient history.

The villa came with oodles of five-star touches. A welcome hamper included olives, feta cheese and a bottle of organic olive oil, while every morning, a still-warm loaf of freshly baked bread was left in a basket outside. A complimentary hammam, breakfast and evening meal at the nearby hotel, Villa Mahal, notched up the wow factor yet further. And by buying freshly caught sea bass and bream from the fish market in Kalkan and barbecuing it at the villa, we conjured up several very tasty lunches on the cheap.



Seven nights at Villa Ayse in Kalkan, from £1,200pp for the first two people, then £550pp for each additional guest (so £766pp for six) with Exclusive Escapes (020 8605 3500, exclusiveescapes.co.uk), including flights, transfers and car hire.

Dine under the stars at Kwandwe Private Game Reserve



3 GO ON AN AFRICAN SAFARI

A luxury bush and beach safari doesn't have to bankrupt you, if you choose a country with a favourable exchange rate and drive yourself. In South Africa, Nicola Shepherd of African Explorations recommends the malaria-free Eastern Cape, with four nights' full-board (including two daily game drives and house wines) at

Kwandwe Private Game Reserve near Port Elizabeth ('the best wildlife on the Garden Route'), then three nights' b&b at Laird's Lodge, near Plettenberg Bay ('an intimate Dutch homestead with superb food'). Beach-wise, you can sunbathe in spring and autumn, but you'll need a wetsuit to swim. Seven nights in South Africa, from £2,299pp off-season (try November, April and May), with African Explorations (0844 504 1907, africanexplorations.com). Includes flights and car hire. See andbeyondafrica.com and lairdslodge.co.za.

