

## A functionwise analysis of the cruise ports in Turkey: The case of Kusadasi

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### Abstract

**Aim:** This research summarizes the Turkish cruise port system, focusing on the most popular port of Kusadasi, and offers recommendations for improving cruise tourism in the country.

**Methodology:** A qualitative approach was taken, and information was gathered through an extensive literature review and analysis.

**Findings:** The services provided by Turkish ports for cruise ships are inadequate, according to a study of those ports.

**Implications/novelty:** Because cruise tourism is a relatively new industry, this study provides an in-depth examination of the cruise industry in Turkey, identifying key issues and offering concrete recommendations for enhancing the fun and relaxation offered by cruises.

*Key Words:* Kusadasi, Transportation, Cruising, Geography, Operating

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### INTRODUCTION

Cruise travel has emerged as a popular vacation option in recent years. As a distinct subset of marine tourism, its economic significance has been expanding recently. It impacts local economies in tourist hotspots where marine and culture tourism are the primary draws. Rather than relying solely on transportation or transfer, cruises allow passengers to visit predetermined destinations (religious, historical, cultural, etc.) while also cruising a luxurious vacation at one of the ship's many on-site hotels and participating in a wide range of on-board activities (Kahraman 2014; Silva and Madushani 2017).

Cruising the Turkish coasts can be a profound cultural and historical experience. Turkey's rich cultural heritage is largely responsible for the country's recent boom in the cruise industry. Turkish cruising has unrealized potential, but current growth rates are below par. Underdeveloped infrastructure and organizational flaws are contributing to the sector's challenges. But in recent years, with the help of increased advertising and infrastructure spending, Turkey has risen to a respectable position. The United States, Spain, Italy, France, Greece, and Malta all generate sizable sums of money from cruise tourism, and it is believed that Turkey will be able to compete with these countries if the proper policies are implemented.

Specifically, the city of Kusadasi is the focus of this investigation; it can be found in Western Turkey, on its own gulf coast, roughly in the middle of the country. It is situated on the northeastern tip of a headland that juts into the gulf. Once an important trading post, it has since evolved into one of Turkey's top tourist destinations.

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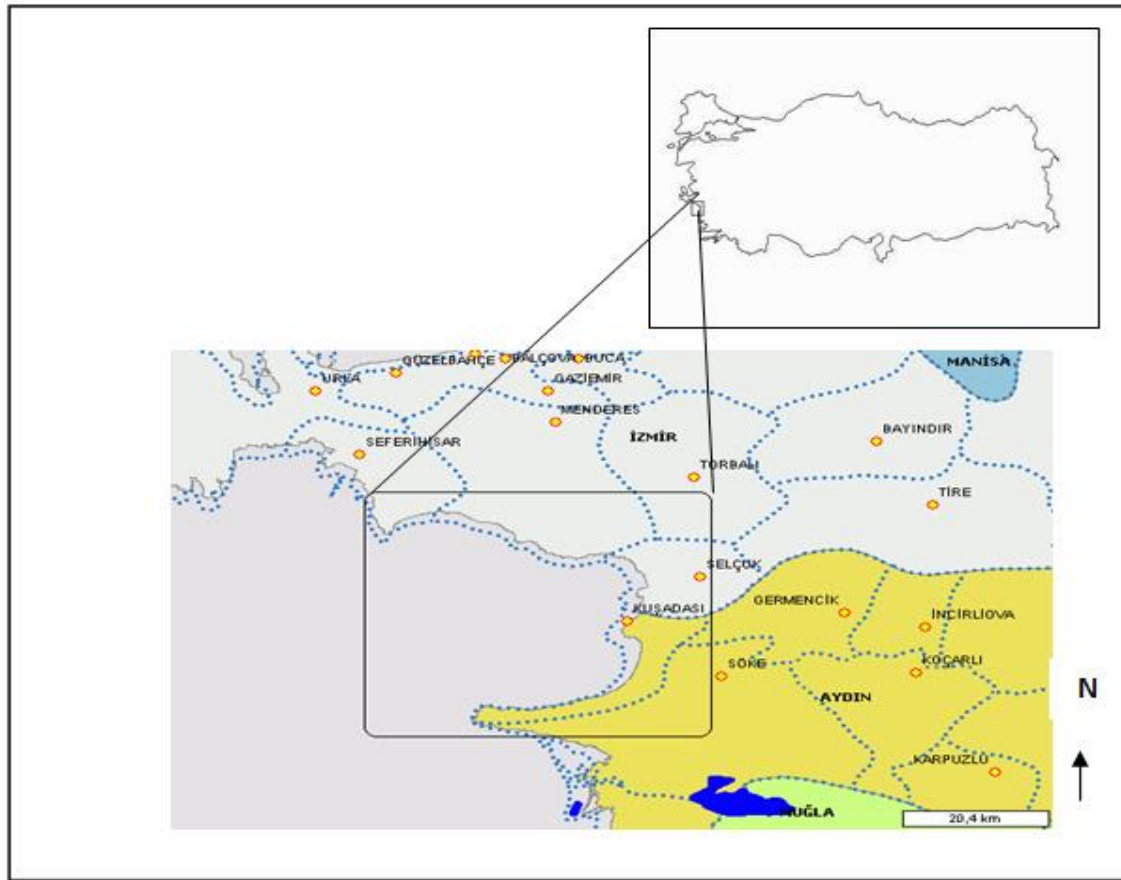


Figure 1. Geographical location of Kusadasi  
Source: General Command of Mapping (<http://www.hgk.gov.tr>)

Cruising at the cruise ports in Turkey, it's clear that Kusadasi is a popular stop for vacationers. The growing popularity of cruise vacations in the region beginning in the 1960s resulted in a new role for the Kusadasi Port, Turkey's largest cruising port. Without a doubt, this port's development was also influenced by historical and religious factors. Kusadasi Port is a popular cruiser stop due to its proximity to the ancient city of Ephesus and the House of St. Mary.

### **THE CONCEPT OF CRUISE TOURISM**

Cruise Tourism, which incorporates several recreational activities and allows passengers to do these activities at the same place, is a globally growing tourism type. Broadly speaking, cruise is intended to visit predetermined destinations rather than for transportation and transfer and to allow passengers to have a high-quality holiday. In addition to enjoying onboard activities, tourists also desire to avail themselves of shopping opportunities at the moored port and its vicinity and to visit nearby historical and cultural spots. In contrast to the other tourism types, the recreational activities of cruise tourism start soon after boarding. Therefore, extraordinary care should be exercised in terms of these activities. The participants of cruise tourism step into a comfortable vacation center, which simultaneously offers a multitude of recreational activities as they go on board (Chang et al. 2017; Kahraman 2013) Moreover, they are able to visit a great number of coastal places across the world without bothering to carry luggage, to find accommodation, and to change vehicles (Kahraman 2011; Tatiyanantakul 2017). Briefly, a cruise liner resembles a huge hotel incorporating a wide range of activities and has the same functions in terms of many characteristics (Israel and Miller 1999; Kunnu 2016).

Thanks to the aforementioned benefits of cruise tourism, the marine tourism has come to grow its share in the market. Over 20 thousand tourists a year over the world travel on these ships. The combination of such opportunities is visiting, traveling to and staying at several international destinations in a single space. Besides, this tourism type is a significant economic added value especially at sea and culture touring destinations. Roughly, cruises are taken to visit predetermined destinations, to see historical and cultural sites there, and to enjoy a large variety of vacation activities (Alkan et al. 2015). The visited ports and tourism services offered at these ports are the constituents of cruise tourism greatly invested in by host countries (Bircan 2014).

Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) (1992) defines the cruise lines as vessels have an itinerary, can sail in the open sea for two days or longer and have a capacity of at least 100 passengers. However, today it can be asserted that these ships look more like holiday resorts, which can accommodate 5000 guests at a time and offer various recreational activities.

Ritter and Schafer (1998) refer to cruise tourism as sea travels taken as a pastime activity to visit predetermined destinations by sailing for two or more days. Dowling defines cruise as comfortable marine travels with the aim of visiting predetermined places in various regions across the world instead of sailing to and from a certain place and without meaning to transport or transfer. Another definition reads as follows, cruise tourism is a travel on a ship which is paid to board, whose primary function is to host guest not to transport people, and which moors to various locations instead of sailing on a single route (Wild and Dearing 2000).

We think that although both comments hold true, cruise is an economic onboard trip taken in order to visit naturally, religiously and culturally meaningful spots on a predetermined route and to have a holiday in a facility furnished with assorted social and cultural activities.

## **THE GROWTH OF CRUISE TOURISM IN TURKEY**

Turkey has a coastline of 8333 km, which puts it among the countries with coastlines of considerable length. Turkey's coastal areas exhibit a vast economic and cultural variety thanks to its cultural heritage along with its favorable climate and topography. Because it was founded in the same geography as the Roman Empire, Byzantine Empire, and Ottoman Empire, which were the history-making empires, Turkey has valuable works passed down by these empires.

Turkey has a very rich inventory of world cultural heritages and over 150 ports that can be used as cruise ports that are located in regions with various attractions. However, very few of these ports serve cruise tourism. Among these are the Istanbul, Izmir, Cesme, Kusadasi, Bodrum, Marmaris, Alanya and Antalya Ports.

Cruise tourism started to grow in the world as of the 1960s, but in the 1990s in Turkey. The reason for this delay is the lack of interest and investments in the sector. Current cruises to Turkish ports are international businesses. Turkish coasts have an immense historical and cultural potential of cruising. Yet this potential could not be developed due to insufficient infrastructure and organizational deficiencies in Turkey, which therefore lagged behind such countries USA, Spain, Italy, France, Greece, and Malta, which have highly advanced and extracted a considerable amount of income from cruise.

The recent noticeable increase in the number of cruise tourists suggests that the sector tends to grow larger. The number of cruise liners and passengers visiting Turkey was observed to increase from 2003 to 2008. While the numbers of liners and passengers in 2003 were 887 and 581.848 respectively, the number of ships was almost doubled to rise to 1612 and of passengers rose more than three folds and amounted to 1.605.372 in 5 years by 2008. The global economic crisis, which broke out in 2008, caused the number of passengers to decrease as of that particular year. In 2009, the number of vessels and passengers amounted to 1328 and 1.484.194, respectively. As the aftermaths of the economic crisis subsided, the number of ships and passengers tended to increase in 2010. In 2011, the number of cruise liners rose to 1623, whereas that of passengers increased to 2.191.420. From then on, the numbers of vessels and passengers were calculated to be 1.685 and 2.133.420 in 2012 and 1.572 and 2.240.776 in 2013, respectively. The analysis of the passenger numbers has revealed that 10.7% of 20.9 million passengers

across the world visited the Turkish ports in 2013 (Sezer 2014). This positive recent figure makes the researcher hope that Turkey will be a game changer in cruise liner production and among the operational countries in the near future.

### **A FUNCTION-WISE ANALYSIS OF THE KUSADASI PORT**

The Kusadas Port is a hub of cruise tourism in Turkey. The Kusadasi Port, which has recently become the biggest cruising port of Turkey, has assumed a new function thanks to the developing regional tourism ever since the 1960s to come to serve cruise tourism. The port was constructed in the northern part of a headland projecting into the sea in the middle section of the gulf coastline. The post located 600 m southwest of the Güvercin Ada is like a door opened from the sea.

The history of Kusadasi and its vicinity in the Aegean history have played remarkable roles in the emergence of todays Western world. The foundation of such important centers as Ephesus, Magnesia, Priene, Miletos, Didyma, Euromos and Heraklion in the Aegean coastline and their benefits to the humanity underlie Kusadasis historical importance. An analysis of the Mediterranean history would reveal that Kusadasi and its vicinity accommodate a large inventory of legacies from both antiquity and the period of the emergence of Christianity (Tolay 2001).

Kusadasi was taken over by Lydians in 560 BC and was under constant attack because of the administrative laxity in the Ionian cities. Then, the Persians dominated the region in 546 BC. Although the Persian rule around Kusadasi was not persistent, its administrative influence continued until the Persians were defeated by Alexander the Great in 334 BC. Taken over by the Roman Empire in 133 BC, Kusadasi and its vicinity were annexed to the East Roman Empire after the division of the Roman Empire in 395. Then Kusadasi was known as Anaea. Later on, the city, which was chronically ruled by the Anatolian Seljuk Empire and the Ottoman Empire, was rescued from the Greek invasion in September 1922 and became one of the tourism cities in Turkey thanks to its favorable topographical conditions and climate after the 1950s in the Republic period. The antique Ephesus, the House of St. Mary and the tomb of St. Jean, an apostle of Jesus Christ, helped the development of religious tourism in the area. The religious mission of the region has greatly contributed to the growth of a large-scale cruise tourism today.



Figure 2. Cruise liners moored to the Kusadasi port

The Kusadasi Port is the marine basin located within the area between 27 14 00 E and the line lying westward between Akburun at 37 52 30 N, 27 152 42 E and the Narderesi outlet at 37 48 54 K, 27 16 12 E.

Table 1: Basic facts about the Kusadasi Port

Docks Total	Length	Average Depth (m)	Handling Capacity (Ton/Year)	Ship Reception Capacity (Piece/Year)	Storage Capacity (Ton/Year)
1346	10	-	-	2400	-



Figure 3. Floating concrete wharfs constructed to increase the Kusadasi ports capacity (2011)

As seen in the table above, the total length of the dock is 1346 m. The average depth is 10 m. Lately floating concrete wharfs have been built at the Kusadasi Port, which already has 7 docks-the longest and the shortest docks are 262 m and 158 m respectively. The port covers an area of 19.500.500 m<sup>2</sup> and has a main station and other attachments built on an area of 600 m<sup>2</sup>.

Table 2: Lengths of the docks at the Kusadasi Port

Dock Number and Name	Length	Depth
Number 1	262	9
Number 2	225	9
Number 4	158	10
Number 5	235	10
Number 6	258	12
Number 7	208	12

Source: (<http://www.globalports.com>)

The port, which is operated by Ege Liman Isletmeleri A.S. (Ege Port), has all the equipment necessary for cruise tourism. The moored ships are provided with such services utility water, fuel, waste discharge, health care, tugging, and pilotage. Further, although understaffed, it offers quick customs services even when a large population of passengers arrives. The port, which holds an ISO 9001 certificate, has a mall named Scala Nova. This mall accommodates souvenir shops, cafes and restaurants serving guests of the moored cruise liners. The numbers of ships and tourists who visited the Kusadasi Port over the last ten years are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: The number of cruise liners and daily visitors to the Kusadasi Port by year

Year	Number of Visiting Vessels	Number of Daily Visitors
2000	679	393412
2001	662	419333
2002	312	164304
2003	333	247838
2004	338	227230
2005	444	303998
2006	494	377357
2007	622	475152
2008	637	550171
2009	609	571962
2010	530	494977
2011	568	662456
2012	475	567182
2013	428	577685
2014	415	518700
2015	405	495632

Source: (<http://www.kuto.org.tr>)

It is clear from the table that the average number of vessels over a decade is 496. In 2010, the number of vessels amounted to 530. The highest number of vessels arrived in 2000. The number of ships decreased by half in 2001. The numbers in 2002, 2004 and 2004 were 312, 333, and 338, respectively. The major cause of the decrease is the 9/11 terror attack in 2001. The USA at the top of the list of countries preferring cruises most greatly suffered from this attack, which also adversely affected the Kusadasi Port as in the entire world and decreased the number of tourists coming to the port. In the following years, the number of passengers and vessels started to go back to normal. The number of passengers changed in parallel to the number of the ships. In 2010, 494.977 cruise passengers visited Kusadasi and its vicinity. In 2011, the number of vessels and passengers decreased due to the global economic crisis. In 15 years, the number of cruise passengers is 7.047.389.

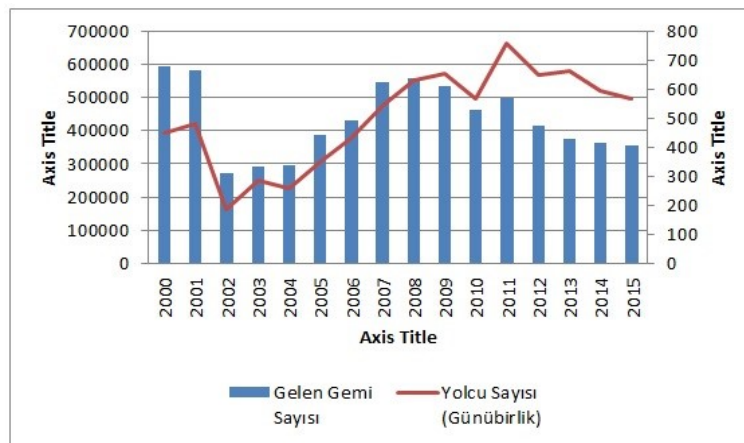


Figure 4. The number of cruise liners and daily visitors to the Kusadasi Port

In the tourism season, 2 ships and 6.000 guests on average visited the Kusadasi Port. The ships remained moored for about 12 hours. Besides Kusadasi itself, guests can also visit historical and religious places in Ephesus, St. Mary, St. Jean, Miletus, and Priene by daily tours from the port. As stated above, the presence of the House of St. Mary in the region has boosted religious tourism along with cruise tourism.

If cruise tourism potential of Kusadasi could be realized properly, the number of visiting ships and tourist would increase, which would, in turn, have positive effects on local tourism sector. To this end, the capacity of the port should be increased to allow large vessels to moor to the port by constructing new wharfs. Construction of the floating concrete wharfs observed in July 2001 ruined the landscape around Güvercinada and posed a grave danger for leaving and approaching ships. Thus, it is thought that new wharfs should be built to stay stationary on the northeastern side of the port. Another matter of concern is the high toll levied at the port. Many cruising companies consider a toll of 10 dollars too high in comparison with other toll amounts across the world and look for alternative ports. For cruise tourism to be able to achieve the desired levels, this charge should be abolished. The interviews with the local authorities and tourism agencies showed that the most serious problems are an inadequate number of parking lots and an unsatisfactory number of transportation means to take cruise tourists to the ruins around Kusadasi. Construction of new parking lots near the port and inclusion of transportation in the services provided by the port are expected to ameliorate the situation.

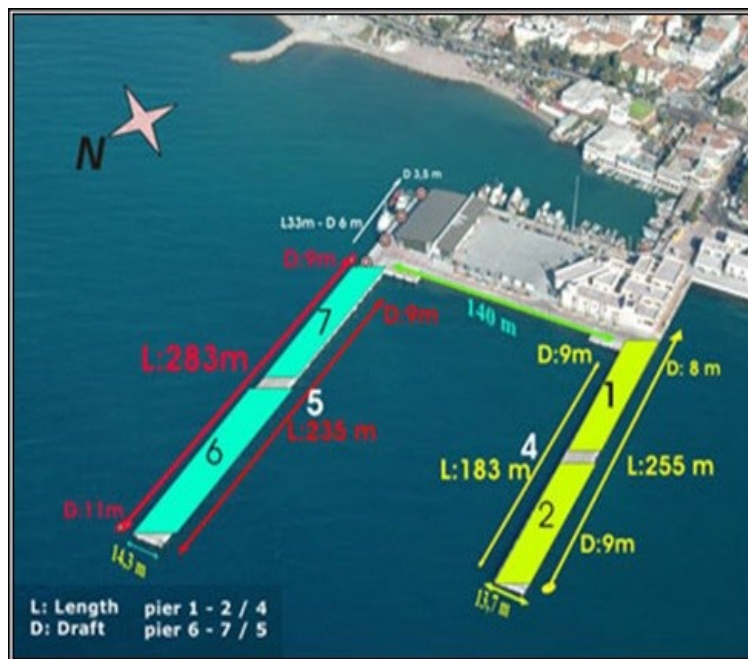


Figure 5. Plan of the Kusadasi port  
Source: (<http://www.egeports.com>)

## CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Cruise tourism is gaining more ground in the international tourism sector and attracting more attention. New destinations are being included in tourism itineraries over the world. The Turkish geography having hosted magnificent civilizations ever since the antiquity has a wide range of cultural heritages. Exploiting this potential for tourism purposes would contribute to the national economy. The recent proliferation of cruise tourism is dependent on investments to improve infrastructure and promotion of the aforementioned cultural legacy. Relatedly, its proximity to the antique Ephesus and the presence of the House of St. Mary, The Basilisk of St. Jean and the Cave of the Seven Sleepers allow the development of religious tourism in the area. Besides, Kusadasi, one of the prominent sea tourism centers of Turkey, has a great many natural and cultural assets.

It is exhilarating to see that these tourism spots are visited by cruise tourists. However, the Kusadasi Port as other ports does suffer from some issues, which should be eliminated. These issues are as follows:

1. A considerable portion of the cruise tourists who visit the Ephesus ruins cannot visit the museum due to long distance and insufficient time. The new museum building proposed by the researcher to be close to the Ephesus ruins would increase the number of visitors to the Selcuk Museum.

2. The port tax and tolls considered to be higher than the charges of other ports across the world should be reduced or abolished. It is thought that improving commercial and tourism relationships with the Samos Island, located very close to Kusadasi, would offer benefits to both countries, Turkey and Greece.

3. The floating concrete wharfs still under construction ruin the landscape and pose threats to approaching and leaving vessels. Construction of new stationary jetties on the northeastern side of the port would eliminate this problem.

4. The non-homogeneous distribution of the visitors across the city causes traffic and transportation problems at times. Transportation of the cruise tourist on the route of Kusadasi-Selcuk-Meryemana (St.Mary) is conducted by tour agencies. In the event that a large population of tourists arrives at the port, the lack of an appropriate parking lot results in accumulation of vehicles and traffic congestion in front of the port. Therefore, construction of a large parking lot near the port is a must. The construction of a light railway system starting in the north of Kusadasi and lying across the delta of Küçük Menderes River to arrive in Selçuk should be included in the future plans to facilitate the transfer of cruise visitors between Kusadasi and Selcuk.

5. Cruise tourists stay in the city for 12 hours on average, which is a very short period of time. Because the visitors will not be able to thoroughly get to know Turkey, activities to promote Turkey should be held at the arrival and departure of the visitors.

6. It is presumed that the Kusadasi Port will not be able to meet the future demand with its seven landing wharfs. Therefore, new wharfs should be built to be able to hold large vessels and the ports capacity should be expanded to serve at least four cruise liners at a time.

7. In addition, the inclusion of shopping areas in the new port complex, festivals intended for the incoming tourists and other visual activities along with the promotion of Bodrum would play a decisive role in the tourism economy.

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