

# PATARA, XANTHOS AND LETOON



**PATARA** is one of the oldest and most important ancient cities of Lycia, as it was already known by the Hittites as Patar. Patara was the birthplace of Apollo: her mother Leto, fleeing from the island of Delos and Hera, the jealous wife of Zeus, the father of the twins Artemis and Apollo, said that in fact she would have given birth in Patara. The city was famous for the Oracle of Apollo only kept open in winter (in summer the oracle was held in Delos). Patara was the main Lycian port (today a swamp) and it was saved from destruction by opening its gates to Alexander the Great. During the Hellenistic period, it was a naval base used in turn by Antigonos in 315 BC, the Ptolemies (under their rule and for a short while Patara was renamed Arsinoe after Ptolemaios II's wife), and Antiochus III in 190 BC. The saying "Caput Gentis" or "the Ancestor's Capital" uttered by Roman admiral Livius to describe Patara, shows that it outshined all the other cities. Patara had a three – vote right in the Lycian League. It became the juridical seat of the Roman governors who turned it into a port from where the Roman fleet maintained contacts with the eastern provinces. Also crops were stored here and kept for shipment to Rome. During this period, Patara became the capital of both Lycian and Pamphylian provinces. From here, St Paul sailed for Phoenicia. Patara, where St Nicholas was born, became

a Christian centre. About this period, the harbour of Patara was totally silted up and the city progressively lost its importance. Since then the place has been gradually covered with sand dunes. Turkish prof. Fahri Işık and his team from Akdeniz University have been trying to dig the city out from under the sand.

Among the most significant vestiges there are:

**The Necropolis** with Lycian sarcophagi and Roman tombs.

**The Harbour Church** whose remains emerge from the water.

**The Arch of Triumph**, or monumental gate which was the entrance to the city, was built in 100 AD by Roman governor Mettius Modestus. At the same time this arch was used as a part of the aqueduct that brought water to Patara.

**The Roman Date Baths**, whose name was due to the date trees nearby, had a floor decorated with mosaics.

**The Road Sign**, showing the distances between the Lycian cities, was ordered by Emperor Claudius. It is the world's oldest and most comprehensive road sign.

**The Vespasian Baths** are located behind a church and next to the Tomb of Marcianus.

**The Main Avenue**, 12.5 m / 41 ft wide, was the widest avenue in Anatolian ancient cities. Today it is partly flooded.

**The Central Baths** are located at the eastern end of the avenue.

**The Walls of the Byzantine Fortress** and a Corinthian Temple outside.

**The Theatre**, built in 147 AD, still shows traces of sand under which it was half buried.

**The Ecclesterium** was Anatolia largest administration building.





sports such as surfing on sand

**The Cistern**, located at the top of the hill behind the theatre, has been carved into the rock. Nearby is a part of the walls of the harbour lighthouse.

**Hadrian's Granary** (granarium) can be seen in a swamp next to the harbour.

**The Temple Tomb** and other monument tombs of various size.

A large bust of Apollo, discovered on the hill beyond the City Gate, indicates the existence of an Apollo Temple which has not been yet localized.

Patara, which is an ideal place to spend a vacation away from the crowd, has a superb fine sand beach stretching on 22 kilometres / 14 miles which allows the practice of



## XANTHOS



The ancient Lycian city is located near the village of **Kınık** on a hillside in a gorgeous natural site overlooking the **Eşen** river. Xanthos long remained independent until it was taken by the Persians: according to Herodotus, the warriors of Xanthos showed an extreme bravery killing their wives, children and slaves entrenched in the burning citadel. They themselves fought to death . Only a few families that were away, survived. The city was completely burnt down between 475 and 450 BC. During excavations this was confirmed by a thick layer of ash covering the site. Rebuilt and repopulated, Xanthos, along with Pinara, Patara and other cities, surrendered to Alexander the Great. The city, which came to the hands of Antigonos, was claimed by Ptolemy I who took it from him by force in 309 BC.

In 197 BC, **Antiochus III** , who wanted to take Lycia from the Ptolemies, made an agreement with the Xanthians, declaring the city free and dedicating it to Leto, Apollo and Artemis. After Antiochus' defeat at Magnesia of Sypile, and because of their support to her, Rome gave Xanthos to the Rhodians. Complaining that they were treated like slaves, the Xanthians revolted many times so that Rome finally put an end to the Rhodian domination in 167 BC. During the Roman civil wars of the 1st century BC, the Lycians sided with Caesar against Pompeius.

Both Xanthos and Letôon have been declared by **UNESCO** to be one of the **Eminent Heritage of the World**.

## LETÔON

Located 4 km / 2,5miles away from Xanthos, Letôon was the religious centre of the Lycian League where **three temples**, placed side by side, were erected. The first of these, constructed at the end

of the 5 C BC in Ionic order, was dedicated to Leto, the mother of the twins Apollo and Artemis. The second temple was dedicated to Artemis whose cult is considered a continuation of the Cybele cult under

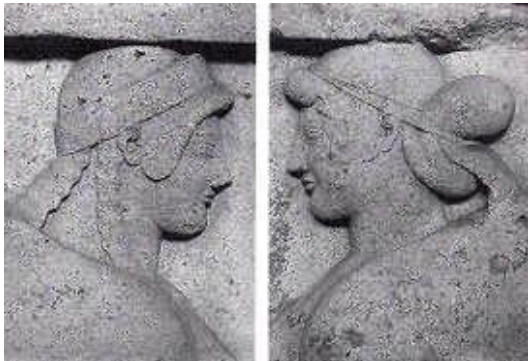




a new name (her mother Leto merged with Anatolian mother-goddess Cybele). The third temple, constructed in Doric order, was dedicated to **Apollo**. To the south and west of the main temple is a large **nymphaeum** connected to the sacred spring. A rectangular building, dating from the time of Hadrian (117 – 130 AD), is bordered by a large semicircular paved pool flanked on the north by two semicircular exedras. Most of it is now permanently flooded. Part of the nymphaeum was later overlaid by a church. There is also a stoa and a Hellenistic theatre.

Fragments of architecture from the temples and the nymphaeum, as well as a **trilingual stele** bearing inscriptions in Greek, Lycian and Aramaic are displayed in the Fethiye museum. This inscription dates back to 358 BC and refers to a decree made by Pixodares, the satrap of Caria and Lycia.

This site illustrates the union of Lycian traditions and Hellenic influence, especially in the representation of funerary art. The epigraphic inscriptions are crucial in the understanding of the Indo-European language and the history of the Lycian people.



But Caesar was assassinated in Rome by Brutus and Cassius who came to Asia Minor to collect money and recruit soldiers. As the Lycians were reluctant to make any contributions, Brutus attacked Xanthos where the Lycian League's soldiers were gathered. He demolished the Acropolis and slaughtered the inhabitants. For the second time in their history, in the year 42 BC, the Xanthians underwent mass suicide for their freedom. Marc Antony, hoping to heal the scars left by Brutus, rebuilt their city. In Byzantine times, the city walls were renovated and a monastery was added. The city was deserted, ruined by Arab raids in the 8th century.

Xanthos was discovered in 1838 by Sir Charles Fellows who had all the reliefs and finds of any significance transported to London, on a warship that anchored in Patara.

The Hellenistic walls and gates of the city, the Lycian buildings and monuments, the necropolis with typical Lycian tombs and sarcophagi, the funerary pillars, the Roman theatre, the agora, the Byzantine church with mosaics, the Byzantine monastery,....are among the main vestiges of the archaeological site.

**The Monument of the Harpies:** this sarcophagus, which dates back to 480 - 470 BC, consists of a huge piece of hewn rock 8.87 m / 29 ft high and a small burial chamber decorated on all four sides by reliefs, and closed by a stone lid. The monument's reliefs seen today are plaster copies. The originals, as well as sculpted sarcophagi and the Nereids Monument (a temple with 12 Nereid statues between the columns) were taken by Charles Fellows to the British Museum in 1842

