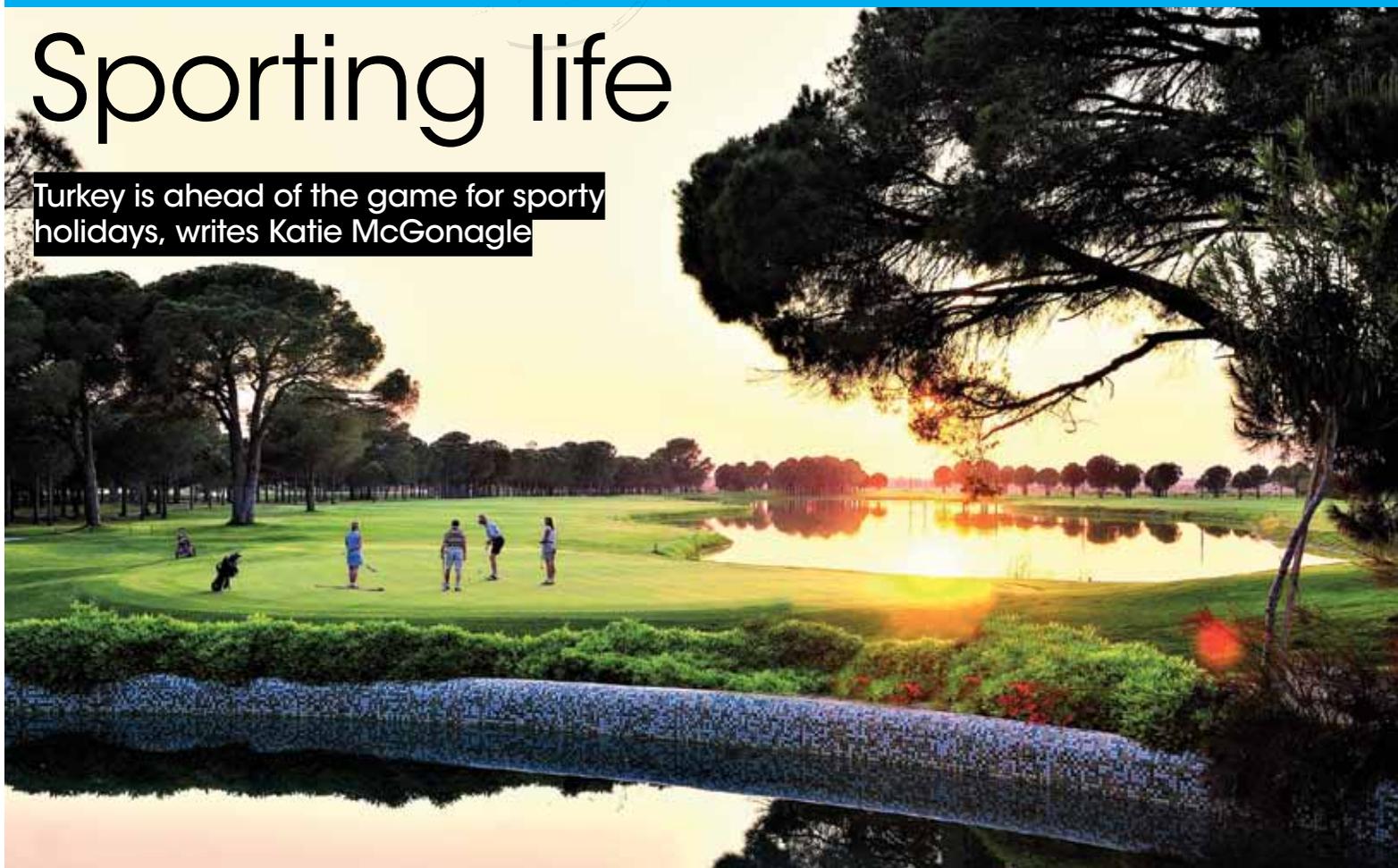




# Sporting life

Turkey is ahead of the game for sporty holidays, writes Katie McGonagle



**I**t's that time of year again, when Lycra becomes acceptable outerwear and you can barely move for runners pounding the pavements in a sweaty, red-faced blur: the London Marathon is back next weekend.

There's nothing like watching thousands of amateurs run a gruelling 26.2 miles – preferably dressed in a daft costume – to inspire armchair athletes up and down the country to dig out their trainers and get moving.

But why let them sweat it out in the gym or run circles round the local park when they could work some sport into their summer break? Whether they want to get fitter, learn a skill or perfect an existing technique, Turkey's sporty resorts are the ideal playground.

## ● GOLF

It's hard to believe Belek welcomed its first golf course less than 25

years ago. Since then, it has grown into one of the world's premier golfing destinations, hosting European Tour events and top-level players such as Rory McIlroy.

Olympic Holidays commercial director Photis Lambrianides says: "Golf in Turkey is year-round, with winter in Belek averaging six hours' sunshine a day – perfect for an out-of-season break. The country's golf product has made great strides in recent years and, with considerable investment, Turkey is now regarded as a serious golf destination."

Lambrianides

recommends the five-star Letoonia Golf Resort, with its group lessons, driving range and putting area part of the all-inclusive package, while the choice of two world-class courses within

300 metres of Sueno Hotels Deluxe Belek make it popular with Cosmos Holidays clients.

Golf is also Thomas Cook's best-selling sport in Turkey. It has a portfolio of properties where amateurs can play on the same fairways as their heroes: think teeing off on Turkey's largest course at Gloria Golf Resort, or a round on the gomerie designed by Colin Montgomerie at Maxx Royal Belek before the pros arrive for the Turkish Airlines Open in October.

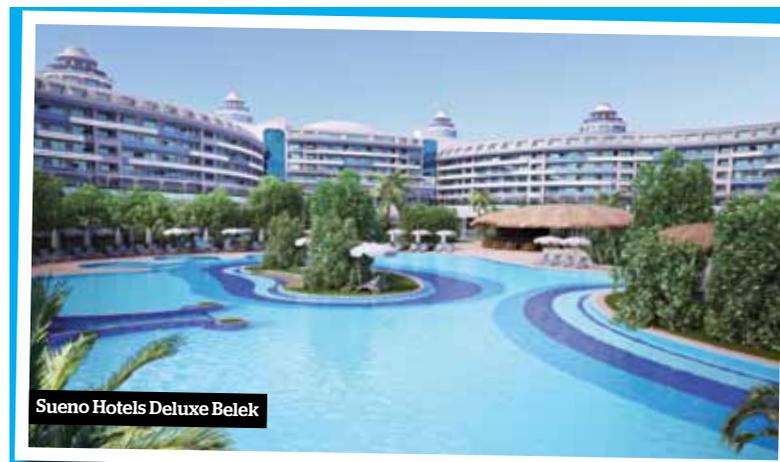
## ● TENNIS

It might not yet boast its own Wimbledon, but tennis is another

growing obsession here. Golf widows at Letoonia can brush up on their backhand with group lessons, part of the all-inclusive package, while all-round sports resorts such as Club Med and Neilson Beachclubs include tennis among their many academies.

Andriake Beachclub is Neilson's flagship tennis resort, with six clay and AstroTurf courts plus a team of professional coaches. The property's newly refurbished health club – complete with spa, sauna and hammam – offers ▶

**TOP TIP**  
Thomas Cook customers can pre-book their tee times at [tx247.co.uk/thomascook](http://tx247.co.uk/thomascook)



Sueno Hotels Deluxe Belek

PICTURE: MARK BADER


**Andriake Beachclub**

**Mark Warner Sea Garden Resort, Bodrum**

players somewhere to unwind.

Tennis fans at Club Med Bodrum Palmiye are similarly well served, with group lessons six days a week and 12 courts – 11 synthetic grass, one hard court and a practice wall – to play on. Mini Club Med sessions are available for children aged six and above.

● **FOOTBALL**

The beautiful game is popular, unsurprisingly, with British

youngsters, but their choice of resort depends on how seriously they take it. Many properties include football in kids' clubs, but the First Choice Holiday Village in Sarigerme takes it a step further, with FA and Uefa-qualified coaches offering lessons for five to 16-year-olds (at extra cost).

The Regnum Carya Golf & Spa Resort in Belek takes things a step further this month with the opening of a Chelsea FC Soccer School.

Trainers from the London club will run weekly sessions throughout the summer on the hotel's three Fifa-standard football fields. Classic Collection expects this to be a big seller with families, given demand for similar academies at Forte Village in Sardinia and Sani Resort in Greece – just don't try selling it to a Tottenham fan.

A five-day course with two hours' tuition in the morning and afternoon costs €300.

● **SAILING**

Learning to skipper a boat is far more fun in the warm waters of Turkey and, with free tuition at many beach resorts, it's easy to combine with a family holiday. Mark Warner's all-inclusive Sea Garden Resort near Bodrum – home of next month's Advantage Conference – offers free group sailing lessons and clinics with Royal Yachting Association instructors, plus paid-for

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**Hillside Beach Club, Fethiye**

PICTURE: IRJULIEN AKSOY

courses for those who want to hone their skills (from £50 for children or £70 for adults). With a sheltered bay suited to beginners and good wind conditions for the more advanced, it's open to all levels of experience.

Those who want to put their new-found skills into practice straight away should try the Stay

& Sail breaks at Neilson's Adakoy Beachclub, where guests spend a week in-resort on a Royal Yacht Association-accredited course, then a week chartering a yacht along the region's Dorian coast.

● **WATERSPORTS**

You'd be hard pushed to find a beach resort that doesn't offer

watersports, but some really let guests indulge their inner water-baby. Take Hillside Beach Club in Fethiye, which drafts in professionals to teach waterskiing, wakeboarding, mono-skiing, knee-boarding, canoeing and windsurfing. This year's pros are yet to be confirmed, but in 2014, champion wakeboarder Jimmy LaRiche and waterskier Clementine Lucine offered the benefit of their experience. Pro sessions cost £50 – the same as standard tuition.

Those who prefer their fun under the water can make the most of the scuba diving at Mark Warner's Sea Garden Resort, with beach dives starting at £27, plus equipment rental. If guests need a refresher course first, they can be arranged for £50.

● **PARAGLIDING**

Looking for more of a rush? Olu Deniz is one of the best paragliding spots in Europe for thrill-seekers willing to launch themselves from the top of Babadag Mountain. Akin Koc, managing director of Anatolian Sky Holidays, says: "The mountain itself is a geological marvel and it contributes to ideal thermals and conditions for paragliding, either solo or tandem, launching from the hillside under an inflated canopy and soaring through the air to the beach below. The flight can last up to 45 minutes and offers amazing views over the mountains, beach and lagoon."

Anatolian Sky can arrange paragliding excursions for about £70. **TW**

**TOP TIP**  
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