

# Altinkum

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## ABOUT ALTINKUM TURKEY

Altinkum is a busy resort which has been receptive to the demands of the British holiday-maker. This resort has grown directly behind the beach and Altinkum refers to the beach area, Didim is the name of the actual town. Most of the locals working here speak English and the centre of the resort is full of restaurants and bars to satisfy the British palate. The main beach in Altinkum (often referred to as First Beach) is a large bay of golden sand with incredibly shallow waters and therefore it is very popular. There are a couple of other sandy bays, the one to the left-hand side is broken by a headland but can be accessed by the beachfront promenade. Water sports are plentiful here so there is always something to watch or participate in. Altinkum receives a high number of repeat guests as well as being a sought after destination by Turkish holidaymakers. Dolphin Square no longer exists but the Tea Garden still remains and is a great place to sit whilst familiarizing yourself with the resort and watching the world go by. Supermarket chains such as Migros, Tansas and Gima are located along the main Didyma to Altinkum road making it easy to self-cater and buy provisions.

The Saturday Bazaar is also at the top end of the town plus the old town of Didim and the ruins of Branchidae at Didyma, the site of an ancient temple which has been excavated since 1873, with wonderfully preserved inscriptions including the head of Medusa. Altinkum has developed into a lively destination with plenty to do night and day which is why we have chosen accommodation to suit all tastes, both close to the centre and a little further back. The sights of Ephesus, Pamukkale, and Bodrum are additional attractions easily accessible from Altinkum and shouldn't be missed.

### History

In antiquity a Sacred Way connected Miletus to the port of Didyma and its famous temple. The last stretch of road was flanked by statues of sphinxes and reclining lions, now to be seen in the British Museum in London, This important street dating back at least to the 6th century B.C. confirms the hypothesis of the existence here of a small archaic temple, far earlier than the foundation of the colossal place of worship dedicated to Apollo. Traces of this original building have in fact been identified inside the large temple.

Evidence of the popularity of the sanctuary goes back to the archaic period, in particular from the 6th century B.C. on, when mention is made of gifts offered by the powerful and by kings, comparable to those offered to the famous oracle of Delphi. In line with what Pausanias affirms, it is highly likely that at Didyma, as in many other centers of Asia Minor, the Greeks replaced all forms of local cult with their own forms of worship. It seems to have been ascertained that the sacred place dedicated to Apollo existed before the first Ionic colonies settled here. Even the statue of Apollo capturing a stag found in the temple can be related to religious motifs of obvious Hittite and Anatolian extraction. Further evidence that a cult of Apollo existed prior to Greek colonization is to be found in Homer's Iliad.

The history of archaeology regarding this temple is relatively recent, and dates back only to the 1960s. Excavations undertaken by German archaeologists led first to the identification of the foundations of a perimetral wall of the sanctuary, thought to have been built in the 8th or 7th century B.C. The subsequent discovery of a colonnade dating to the end of the 7th century B.C. leads to the supposition that the original nucleus was at the time enlarged. The first temple was burned by the Persians at the beginning of the 5th century B.C., but when Alexander the Great conquered the Anatolian regions, a much larger and more stenographic place of worship was built on the same site. The Temple of Apollo Didyma is one of the largest of the Hellenistic classical period, preceded solely by the Artemision of Ephesus and the Temple of Hera in Samos. Still today an idea of the ancient splendor of the building with its impressive number of Ionic columns still transpires from these imposing magnificent ruins. Even though work on the temple complex continued from the 3rd century B.C. up to Roman times, it was never finished. The shrine itself was surrounded by a portico with

two rows of columns. Some of these architectural elements have withstood the ravages of time and the earthquakes and still stand in their solemn beauty, often complete with capitals and architraves. The shrine where prophecies were revealed in the name of Apollo was faced in marble brought from the Aegean islands. Of particular note among the numerous decorations found in the temple are various busts of divinities such as Apollo, Jupiter, Artemis and Latona, as well as capitals ornamented with heads of griffins and bulls, which, together with a head of Medusa that was part of a frieze on an architrave, are examples of 2nd century A.D. sculpture.

Not far from the temple, a Stadium surrounded by seven rows of seats has been identified. Apparently this installation was used for the sacred competitions, which accompanied the religious rites held in the temple. Some of the tiers of seats are incised with names that belong to the late Hellenistic period. Didyma is located near the village of Yenihisar (Yoran) near the town of Söke in the province of Aydın in the Aegean region. Here one finds an important sanctuary that housed one of the oracles of Apollo. It was connected to Miletus by sea, and those arriving by ship would land at the harbor of Panormus and thence follow the sacred way to Didyma. Until its destruction by the Persians in 494 B.C. it was administered by the family of the Branchidae, the descendants of Bronchos, a youth beloved of Apollo. For the last two kilometers the Sacred Way was lined with seated statues of the male and female members of the Branchidae family. After his capture of Miletus in 334 B. C. Alexander the Great placed the administration of the oracle in the hands of the city of Miletus. In 331 B.C. the oracle proclaimed Alexander "the son of Zeus". In 300 B.C. the Milesians embarked on the construction of the largest temple in the Greek world. Although work continued until the middle of the 2nd century A.D. the temple was never finished. Later, a church and other buildings were constructed, while the Byzantines built a barracks in which troops were garrisoned. The buildings were damaged by fire and in the 15th century further damage was caused by a great earthquake. The Temple of Apollo (Didymaion) was the largest and wealthiest Ionic temple in Anatolia and was renowned for its holy relics, its treasury, its sacred spring and sacred laurel grove. Investigations in the Temple of Apollo were first undertaken in 1834 by the French travelers Charles Texier and the English archaeologist Charles T. Newton, who had conducted the excavations at Halicarnassus.

The first excavations were begun in 1904 by Theodor Wiegand under the auspices of the Berlin Museum and continued until 1913. Since 1962 excavations have been conducted by Klaus Tucheld on behalf of the German Archaeological Institute.

The first Temple of Apollo was built in the archaic period and the Hellenistic temple which succeeded this was built on the foundations of the earlier building, materials from which were used in the construction. The temple we see today is an Ionic structure measuring 60 x 118 m, with a dipteral arrangement of two rows of columns with 21 on each side and 10 at each end. The columns are of various styles with pedestals adorned with reliefs. These columns support an architrave surmounted by a frieze decorated with acanthus leaves and Gorgon (Medusa)

Heads. The high pronaos at the top of a monumental flight of steps leads into a naos with two columns, which gives access to the sacred area or cella in the form of an open courtyard surrounded by high walls with columns and containing a small Ionic temple which housed the statue of the god. Didyma was never a large city and its fame was closely connected with the existence of a sacred spring and the temple founded over it. The ancient Greeks merely took over the already existing sanctuary and reorganized it.

Didyma was connected to Miletus by the Sacred Way, the latter part of which was lined with sarcophagi and statues of lions and sphinxes. The Branchidae family was responsible for the maintenance of the Sacred Way.

The remains of the earliest temple, which lie within the later building, have been dated to the 8th and 7th centuries B.C. These consist of a sacred wall measuring approximately 24 x 10 m, an open-air sanctuary, a portico 16 m in length, a sacred well and a votive altar.

Suppliants to the temple

After traversing the entire length of the Sacred Way, all suppliants to the temple would assemble in front of the building and purify themselves with the water from the sacred well. They were then obliged to pay a certain tax proportionate to the seriousness of their request. For a private affair one had to pay eleven times the standard tax. It was then necessary to sacrifice an animal, frequently a goat, in order to learn whether or not the god was willing to receive the suppliant's request.

Before the sacrifice, cold water was thrown over the animal. If the animal showed no reaction the whole process had to be repeated. The suppliant then entered the naos and addressed his question to the priest. If there were a large number of suppliants the next to be received was chosen by lot. The priests then entered the inner temple and communicated the question to the priestess of Apollo who had prepared herself by fasting for several days and purifying herself with water from the holy well. The priestess in the inner sanctuary would drink the water from the sacred well, chew bay leaves and inhale the gases rising from the well.

She would then begin to utter apparently meaningless words and sounds, which would be interpreted by the priests, the oracle being written in understandable language in the chresmographeion, or oracle office, a building located immediately adjacent to the pronaos. All the words uttered by the priestess were subsequently communicated to the suppliant by a priest or priests.

Legend has it that it was in this way that Alexander the Great learned of his coming victory over the Persians. The pronaos, or forecourt, to which access is given by thirteen steps, contains twelve columns. The ceiling decorations were of great magnificence, and the columns of quite exceptional height. It was here that the suppliants waited for the oracle of Apollo.

Oracular divination was the art of foretelling the future through the power of the god mediated by the observation of natural events or objects. Divination in some form or another has been known in all countries in all ages and spread throughout the Western world in the form of astrology. It is popularly known as "fortune-telling". Oracular divination rests on conclusions drawn on the basis of observation and interpretation. In the case of divination based on observation, recourse is had to the examination of accidental phenomena interpreted by intuition. The soothsayer who examines the intestines of the sacrificial animal, its shoulder-blade or its footprints in ashes was obliged to take special measures to ensure the truth of the oracular pronouncement. The signs chosen for observation by the ancient Greek and Roman soothsayers included lightning, thunder, the night and call of birds and sacred fowls, as well as accidental phenomena such as the spilling of salt, sneezing or stumbling.

The term "oracle", which is derived from the Latin "orare", to speak, was used both for the relation between the soothsayer and the god, and the place where the divination was performed. One of the oldest oracles was that of Apollo at Delphi on the skirts of Mt Parnassus at the top of the Gulf of Corinth. At first the oracle belonged to Gaia, the goddess of the earth.

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