

egirdir turkey egirdir lake

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At the heart of the Lake District, Egirdir nestles at the base of a rocky mountain on the shore of Egirdir Lake, Turkey's fourth largest lake. Encircled by high peaks that retain their snowy blanket well into spring, the lakeshore is ringed by apple orchards and meadows watered by rushing mountain streams. It's an enchanting spot which, despite the bland domestic architecture - a sadly typical story of unimaginative concrete blocks not helped by a sprawling army base on the edge of town - is very appealing. Egirdir, with its breathtaking scenery, endless outdoor activities and excellent pensions, puts a refreshing twist on the central Taurus mountains. It is surrounded on three sides by Turkey's fourth largest lake, Egirdir Golu (540 sq. Km), a beautiful body of water whose colour shifts with the wind, rippling from hues of jade to tones of grey. The lake yields innumerable carp and bass, and in the fall, orchards fill with golden apples. All good journeys have their deviations. To the north of Antalya, in the Aegean hinterland, lies the beautiful Lakeland region, which includes to the east the religious centre of KONYA, on the fringe of Central Anatolia with its Seljuk architecture, and beyond that fascinating Cappadocia, one of the highlights of Turkey. Our path from Istanbul to Cairo has a severe kink in to take in these 'must see' places.

The pretty lake-side town was called ACROTIRI in the Byzantine area, meaning 'promontory'. This was changed to the the Turkish name Egirdir, with the unfortunate meaning of 'it's bent'. In the mid- 1980's, the residents, tired of the jokes, changed the name to Egirdir, which has the more satisfactory meaning of 'she is spinning'. The new name fits in with a local legend.

In the past, there was no lake in the mountains; the queen was spinning while the young prince was out hunting with bow and arrow. He shot at a deer, but the animal ran away and the arrow hit a large stone which shattered, releasing a torrent of water which drowned the prince. The lake was formed. The grieving king said to his wife '(Spinning! You are spinning! Your son is dead. Just what are you doing?)'; Egirdir sits on a small promontory jutting into the turquoise-blue waters of the lake, tucked under steep enormous Mount Davras. The view from Isparta road as you descend to the town is spectacular, especially in the evening. During Seljuk times Egirdir was part of the Sultanate of Rum and CAPITAL OF THE LAKE DISTRICT. When the Seljuk hegemony was broken in the mid- 13th century, Egirdir became the seat of the powerful Hamitogullari emirs, who had control of Antalya and were able to trade with Aegean Islands, Egypt and the Eastern Mediterranean. Today, Egirdir makes its living from its excellent apples and increasingly from tourism. It is a humble, almost too friendly and entirely relaxing resort where people seem absolutely delighted you've come so far to visit their town. The temperature is perfect and the evenings are cool in summer for a great night's sleep. Local nightlife consists of watching the kids playing football on the lighted pitch facing the harbour. Every Thursday there is a market crowded with local people. It would be a good idea to go there and take some nice pictures and perhaps buy some local food or fruit. The water in Egirdir Lake is sweet and full of good fish. Boat tours are offered around the harbour or arranged by pensions. It's nothing as lavish as the ones on the seacoast, just a pleasant outing around the lake in a little motorboat! Market day is Thursday when you may sample the apples and other specialities of the area such as a rose water & soap from Isparta. For the perfect souvenir, if you are lucky, the man who sells dried weasel skins will be around. One of the Hamitogullari emirs, Felakeddin Dundar, built the attractive Dundarbey Medrese, which has been restored and converted to a shopping bazaar. The magnificent stalactite gateway formerly belonged to a ruined caravanserai 3 miles from Egirdir. Other re-used stones from the caravanserai can be seen in the wall which bars the entrance to the peninsula and which connects the medrese to the earlier Hizirbey Mosque (1237).The minaret is especially unusual, in that it is not free-standing but sits on top of this wall. Below the minaret is an arch which allows passage between the religious complex and the inner town. On the lake side of the wall you can see the doors that lead to a tunnel in the wall for use in times of trouble. The mosque has an ornate door with a wooden porch. An unusual floral pattern is carved into the stone above the door. Inside are an Iznik-tiled Mihrap and forests of wooden pillars painted blue, which support the roof. A causeway built in the early 1980's joins the promontory to the small island, Yesilada (Green Island) A sizeable Greek community lived here before the exchange of populations and it is possible to see Greek buildings on

the Island and on the promontory in the town's dilapidated houses.

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