

Kayaköy

Kayaköy, anciently known as Lebessos and Lebessus (Ancient Greek: Λεβέσσος) and later pronounced as **Livissi** (Greek: Λειβισσι) is a village 8 km south of Fethiye in southwestern Turkey. In Roman ancient times it was a Greek-speaking city in the Lycia province. Anatolian Greeks continued to inhabit the city until approximately 1922 when they either perished or fled to Greece. The townspeople were subsequently barred from returning by the 1923 Population exchange between Greece and Turkey. The ghost town, now preserved as a museum village, consists of hundreds of rundown but still mostly standing Greek-style houses and churches which cover a small mountainside and serve as a stopping place for tourists visiting Fethiye and nearby Ölüdeniz.

Its population in 1900 was about 2,000, almost all Greek Orthodox Christians; however, it is now empty except for tour groups and roadside vendors selling handmade goods. However, there is a selection of houses which have been restored, and are currently occupied.

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History

Livissi was built probably in the 18th century on the site of the ancient city of Lebessus, a town of ancient Lycia. Lycian tombs can be found in the village and at Gokceburun, north of the village.

Kayaköy



Abandoned house at Kayaköy



Shown within Turkey

Alternate name	Lebessos, Livissi
Location	Muğla Province, Turkey
Region	Lycia
Coordinates	36°34′29.94″N 29°5′27.94″E﻿ / ﻿
Type	Settlement
Site notes	
Condition	In ruins

Lebessus is mentioned as a Christian bishopric in the *Notitia Episcopatum* of Pseudo-Epiphanius composed under the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius in about 640, and in the similar early 10th-century document attributed to Emperor Leo VI the Wise, as a suffragan of the metropolitan see of Myra, the capital of the Roman province of Lycia, to which Lebessus belonged.^[1] Since it is no longer a residential bishopric, Lebessus is listed by the Catholic Church as a titular see.^[2]

Livissi is probably the place where the inhabitants of Byzantine Gemiler Island fled to protect themselves from pirates. It experienced a renewal after nearby Fethiye (known as Makri) was devastated by an earthquake in 1856 and a major fire in 1885. More than 20 churches and chapels were built in the village and the plain (Taxiarhes - the 'Upper' church - and 'Panayia Pyrgiotissa' - the 'lower' church - St. Anna, St. George, etc.). Most of them are still standing in ruinous or semi-ruinous condition. The village population was over 6.000 people, according to Greek and Ottoman sources.

At the ending of the Greco-Turkish War (1919–1922), Kayaköy was already completely abandoned. The persecutions of Livissi inhabitants as well as Greeks of nearby Makri (Fethiye) was a result of the expansion of Greek territory into Ottoman ruled lands. The persecutions in the area started in 1914 in Makri. In 1916, a letter in Greek addressed to Sir Alfred Biliotti, the Consul General of Great Britain at Rhodes, explained the murders and persecution of Livissi and Macri Greeks who asked him for intervention. Unfortunately, the letter was intercepted at Livissi by Turkish authorities. Later that same year, many families of Livissi were deported and driven on foot to Denizli, around 220 km away. There, they suffered various extreme atrocities and tortures, facing even death.^[3]

Two more exile phases followed in 1917 and 1918.^[4] In 1917, families were sent in villages near Denizli, such as Acıpayam, through forced march of fifteen days, consisting mainly of the elderly, women and children, who had remained in the area. During that death march, the roads were strewn with bodies of dead children and the elderly who succumbed to hunger and fatigue. The exiles of the next year were no less harsh. In September 1922, the few remaining Greeks of Livissi and Makri abandoned their homes and embarked on ships to Greece. Some of them founded Nea Makri (New Makri) in Attica.

Many of the abandoned buildings were damaged in the 1957 Fethiye earthquake.

Kayaköy today

Today Kayaköy village serves as a museum and is a historical monument. Around 500 houses remain as ruins and are under the protection of the Turkish government, including two Greek Orthodox Churches, which remain the most important sites of the ghost town.^{[5][6]} There is a private museum on the history of the town. In the middle of the village stands a fountain that dates from the seventeenth century. Kayaköy was adopted by the UNESCO as a World Friendship and Peace Village.^[7]

On 9 September 2014, the Turkish government announced plans to develop the village. It plans to offer a 49-year lease that will "partially open Kayaköy's archeological site to construction" and anticipated "construction of a hotel, as well as tourist facilities that will encompass one-third of the village."^[8]



Livissi/ Kayaköy village



An abandoned church

Economy

Villagers were mostly professional craftsmen. Currently the most important economic factor of the place is tourism. It is envisaged that the village will be partially restored.

Inspiration

Kayaköy is presumed to be the inspiration behind "Eskibahçe", the imaginary village chosen by Louis de Bernières as the setting of his 2004 novel *Birds Without Wings*.

In 2014, Kayaköy also took centre stage in the closing scenes of Russell Crowe's film *The Water Diviner*.

References

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- Kayaköy panoramic image December, 2012 (<http://www.zmetro.com/?p=5019>)



Kayaköy, the fictional Eskibahçe

External links

-  [Kayaköy](#) travel guide from Wikivoyage
 - [The Persecution of the Greeks of Livissi and Macri \(http://greek-genocide.net/index.php/overview/documentation/211-the-genocide-of-the-greeks-of-livissi-and-macri\)](http://greek-genocide.net/index.php/overview/documentation/211-the-genocide-of-the-greeks-of-livissi-and-macri)
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This page was last edited on 3 October 2017, at 17:44.

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