

= Dilek Peninsula @-@ Büyük Menderes Delta National Park =

Dilek Peninsula @-@ Büyük Menderes Delta National Park (Turkish : Dilek Yarımadası @-@ Büyük Menderes Deltası Millî Parkı) , established on May 19 , 1966 , is a national park in western Turkey . It contains within its borders the entirety of the Dilek Peninsula as well as the large delta of the Büyük Menderes River . It is located in the Kuşadası district of Aydın Province , and as such it is also within the bounds of Turkey 's Aegean Region . Directly west of the national park is the small coastal town of Güzelçamlı , where several shuttle buses and ferries operate to and from the district 's center of Kuşadası , approximately 30 km (19 mi) from the park .

The park is among the most biologically diverse of Turkey 's national parks . It is the native and migratory habitat of hundreds of species of birds , mammals , plants , and marine life , some of which are entirely endemic to the park and cannot be observed anywhere else in the world . For these reasons , it is protected by numerous wildlife and wetland conventions , and is of great national and international importance in these areas .

It is separated from the Greek island of Samos (Greek : Σάμος) by a very narrow strait , known as the Mycale Strait (Greek : Μυκάλη Στενό) . The strait is named after Mount Mycale , the highest and most prominent mountain of the peninsula , and is one of the narrowest straits in the Aegean Sea .

= = History = =

For most of the area 's existence , the lands from the Dilek Peninsula southwards to the end of the Büyük Menderes River 's large delta were uninhabited by people or very sparsely settled , and were otherwise untouched by human influence . As a result of this isolation , the area was considerably populated with numerous species of plants and wildlife , most of which still remain within the park today . Eventually , under Ancient Greek and especially Ionian influence , several settlements near Mount Mycale and the Büyük Menderes Delta were built , such as Priene and Miletus . Nearby , Panionium was erected as the meeting place of the Ionian League . During modern times , and despite a significant increase in population and density in areas near the port town of Kuşadası , it was not until May 19 , 1966 that the Turkish Ministry of Forest and Water Management declared Dilek Peninsula a government @-@ protected national park . Several decades later , in 1994 , the Büyük Menderes river delta adjacent to the peninsula in the south was also promoted to national park status .

= = = Events = = =

In early 2005 , a severely wounded Mediterranean monk seal (*Monachus monachus*) was found within the Büyük Menderes Delta . It was treated immediately , but due to complications died shortly afterwards . The Mediterranean monk seal is critically endangered , with only about 600 remaining in the world , and over 100 of which are within the maritime borders of Turkey .

Controversy surrounded the park in April 2010 after the chairman of the Aydın Beekeepers Association , Kadir Kılıç , claimed that beekeepers would be dispatched at the national park , which had been banned since its establishment in 1966 . Debate continued for a short period of time , but the dispute was soon settled , as a representative of the Governor 's Office of Aydın publicly asserted the provincial government 's position on the matter . They denied the claims and confirmed that beekeepers would not be introduced to the park . Beekeepers are currently not allowed as a means of conserving the abundant flora of the park , many of which rely on bees for pollination .

= = Geography = =

The national park is 27 @,@ 598 ha (68 @,@ 200 acres) in total land area , with the peninsula itself having an area of about 110 km² (42 sq mi) , with a width of around 6 km (3 @.@ 7 mi) from north to south and a length of 20 km (20 @,@ 000 m) east to west . It is located approximately 8

km (5 @. @ 0 mi) from Davutlar , about 26 km (16 mi) from the district 's seat of Kuşadası (estimates range from 23 @- @ 30 kilometres) , and is directly adjacent to the town of Güzelçamlı . Other nearby cities in Aydın Province have access roads to the park , including Aydın , Söke and , to a lesser extent , Didim .

The Mycale Strait separates the peninsula from the nearby island of Samos . Named after Mount Mycale , the strait is only about 1 @. @ 6 km (0 @. @ 99 mi) long at its narrowest point , making it one of the smallest straits within the region of the Aegean Sea .

= = = Popular features = = =

The mountainous terrain of the peninsula and its numerous caverns , canyons , and valleys result in the area being of high interest to both visitors and researchers . There are several coves along the shore that have been named in order to identify them easily . Upon entering the park from the east , the first and easternmost beach available to the public is known as Çırmırcılar Cove (Turkish : Çırmırcılar Koyu) . This cove 's waters are shallower than any other in the park , and its beaches are sandy , unlike some of the coves farther out . Therefore , it appears to be more popular amongst tourists than most of the remaining beaches and parts of Kuşadası that are visible along the horizon from it . Aydınlıç Cove is situated about 5 km (3 @. @ 1 mi) further to the west , and has pebbly shores and deeper waters . It marks the transition point where the waters of the peninsula 's beaches become more challenging . As a result , these beaches tend to attract more experienced swimmers and locals rather than tourists . After passing the jandarma (public safety patrol) checkpoint , a turn onto a road leads to a nearby canyon , immediately to the left . From this point on , there are several trails through the forests of the peninsula . One of them leads to the village of Doğanbey , and if followed further , leads to the nearby ancient Hellenistic port city of Karine . However , this path 's final 9 km (5 @. @ 6 mi) are limited in access , and a permit or an accompanying tour guide is required to proceed . The third cove along the peninsula , Kavaklı Burun Cove , and the final , westernmost cove accessible to the public , Karasu Cove , both provide close views of the island of Samos , and are significantly less visited than the former coves of the peninsula . At the very end of the peninsula appears its tallest mountain , Mycale (Turkish : Dilek Dağı) , which looms over Samos and the strait of its namesake .

= = = Cave of Zeus = = =

Immediately upon entry into the national park , a fork in the main path begins a trail running through the inner peninsula leading to a local cavern known as the Cave of Zeus (Turkish : Zeus Mağarası) . The entrance is dense in vegetation , covering parts of it . There is also a wishing tree to which people usually tie objects and belongings , hoping for their wishes to be granted . The Cave of Zeus is filled with clear subterranean spring water , making it another common tourist attraction near the national park . Visits to the cave typically increase as the waters of the nearby beaches become rougher , thereby making them less inviting . The cave 's name invokes the many legends that concern the cave and its origins , including one holding that Zeus bathed in the cave .

= = = Büyük Menderes Delta = = =

The wide mouth of the Büyük Menderes River (English : Great Meander) empties at the Aegean Sea , with an area of 16 @, @ 613 ha (41 @, @ 050 acres) ; larger than the entire Dilek Peninsula directly to the north , at only 10 @, @ 985 ha (27 @, @ 140 acres) . The Büyük Menderes Delta is one of the most diverse wetlands in Turkey in terms of both vegetation and marine life , and is protected by several wetland agreements such as the Ramsar Convention . Its biodiversity is derived in part from the fertile lands and fresh waters of the delta , attracting numerous species to the area , including several migratory birds . The nearby mountains of the peninsula cause a marked temperature difference between the northern and southern faces of the peninsula , producing a corollary variance in the types of species found in the delta region . The area features a trail for

visitors and options for canoeing and picnicking .

== Climate ==

Dilek Peninsula @-@ Büyük Menderes Delta National Park has a Mediterranean climate (Köppen climate classification Csa) , and as such , it is dry and mild throughout most of the year , except during the winters , when most of the yearly precipitation occurs . The average temperature year @-@ round is about 18 ° C (64 ° F) , ranging from average lows of 8 ° C (46 ° F) in the winter to highs of around 27 ° C (81 ° F) in the summer . However , on the mountaintops , as altitude increases , temperatures are usually much lower , with the annual mean temperature usually being no higher than 13 ° C (55 ° F) . There are additional precipitation differences depending on elevation , and also between the north and south sides of the peninsula . Such precipitation amounts range from 900 ? 1 @, @ 500 mm (35 ? 59 in) annually . Therefore , different species of foliage and plants live at higher altitudes than those at ground level , and the same is true when comparing the southern face of the peninsula and areas of the river delta with those to the north .

== Geology ==

The terrain of the peninsula has much to do with the geology of the Aegean Region in general . The peninsula was shaped into its current form over several geological eras with the tectonic merging of Paleozoic schist formations , Mesozoic limestone and marble deposits , and finally the accretion of large clays and other sediments during the Neogene period . This is partly because of Turkey 's unstable fault block terrain , and because of the close proximity of the Anatolian @-@ Aegean plate boundary , which generates massifs of mountains all across western Turkey . This includes the peninsula and the mountains surrounding the Büyük Menderes River , known collectively as the Menderes Massif .

The peninsula is highly mountainous , with most of its mountains having elevations close to 1 @, @ 200 m (3 @, @ 900 ft) above mean sea level . Its highest mountain , Mount Mycale , is approximately 1 @, @ 237 metres (4 @, @ 058 ft) high .

== Biology ==

The national park is quite diverse in its wildlife and vegetation , hosting approximately 804 distinct species of plants , 256 bird species , and an otherwise considerable variety of mammals , reptiles , and marine life . The entirety of the national park , including both Dilek Peninsula National Park and Büyük Menderes Delta National Park , is currently protected under the Ramsar Convention , the Berne Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats , the Rio Convention on Biological Diversity , and the Barcelona Convention .

== Flora ==

The park has a large diversity of vegetation . Due to the temperature and climate differences between different areas and elevations of the park , not only is the typical Aegean flora present , but also many specimens normally only found in separate coastal areas of Turkey , such as in the Mediterranean , Marmara , and Black Sea regions .

Out of the 804 species of flora distributed throughout the park , six are endemic , completely exclusive to the park area , and cannot be observed anywhere else on earth , while another 30 are indigenous . The most common and widely distributed plant species throughout the national park are Mediterranean maquis shrubs such as the Phoenician juniper (*Juniperus phoenicea*) . Other common vegetative species within the area include the oleaster @-@ leafed pear (*Pyrus elaeagnifolia*) , Turkish pine (*Pinus brutia*) , and elm @-@ leaved sumach (*Rhus coriaria*) .

== Fauna ==

In total , 28 species of mammals , 42 species of reptiles , and 45 fish species have been documented within the park . Several wild boars (*Sus scrofa*) are native to the park . They are often found near the beaches where they feed on scraps and trash dropped by visitors . Further within the forests of the peninsula , other mammals can be spotted , such as golden jackals (*Canis aureus*) , Eurasian lynx (*Lynx lynx*) , and even several striped hyenas (*Hyaena hyaena*) and caracals (*Caracal caracal*) , among many others usually not native to such areas .

Along the southern shores of the peninsula , and within the river delta , exist a range of bird and marine life . Many of these species are endangered , which was one of the primary factors considered when placing the delta under national protection . Some of the more common bird species observed here include pygmy cormorants (*Microcarbo pygmeus*) , little egrets (*Egretta garzetta*) , lesser kestrels (*Falco naumanni*) , Kentish plovers (*Charadrius alexandrinus*) , white @-@ tailed eagles (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) , and the Dalmatian pelicans (*Pelecanus crispus*) , for which the park is a key nesting place . Marine life consists of species typical of the Aegean Sea , as well as some species usually found elsewhere .

The biodiversity of local oceanic fauna is not well understood . Sea turtles and mammals , including monk seals , fin whales (only 1 sighting and 5 strandings have been documented in Turkish waters) , and dolphins are considered to reside in the park area , although regularity of occurrences are unclear .

= = Activities = =

Nature photography is a common activity in the park due to the large variety of flora and fauna , as well as landscape photography due to the mountainous terrain and views . There are several forest trails and high @-@ elevation ventures used by hikers and mountaineers respectively . There are numerous other activities available for visitors , as well as some prohibited activities . For example , although recreational fishing is allowed , there are severe consequences for anyone found hunting within the jurisdiction of the park .

= = = Tourism = = =

The park is the most visited during the spring and summer months , when it is open between 8 : 00 and 19 : 00 (7 : 00 pm) local time . In autumn and winter , it closes at 17 : 00 (5 : 00 pm) , two hours earlier disregarding the time difference . Admission at the entrance must be paid . Camping , lighting fires , or setting up overnight shelters are strictly forbidden within the limits of the national park in order to protect the surrounding ecosystem . The park can be reached from the city center of Kuşadası via several dolmuş (share taxis) that regularly shuttle the route to the closest town of Güzelçamlı . Recently , there have also been ferry boat services operating back and forth between Kuşadası and Güzelçamlı , in turn providing easier access to the park for visitors . Each year , around 700 @, @ 000 foreign and domestic tourists visit the park .