

THE ROUTE OF AENEAS

Mythology, Archaeology and Tourism



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ANTANDROS
EXCAVATIONS



LAVINIUM

CAIETA

CUMAE

CASTRO

BUTHROTUM

ACTIUM

AENOS

TROIA

ANTANDROS

DREPANUM

CYCLOPUM

STROPHADES

DELOS

CARTHAGE

PERGAMUM

Vergilius (Virgil), a poet of the Augustan period, wrote a book on the adventures of Aeneas, a Trojan hero and the son of the goddess Aphrodite (Lat. Venus), in order to give a race to the Roman lineage. In accordance with the Gods' will, Aeneas escaped from Troy after the downfall of the city with a wooden horse trick, together with his father Anchises and his son Ascanius.

A new task given by the Gods to the hero was to refound the city of Troy in the lands where they would be able to maintain Trojan descendants for centuries. Aeneas, carrying his aged father on his shoulders and taking his little son by the hand, led the survivors to the coast of Antandros (ancient city situated on the northwest of modern Edremit/Altınoluk – the district of Balıkesir Province). Antandros has two harbours and two shipyards. Timber rich Mount Ida, on whose slopes also housed Antandros, which was a supplier of the timber for ships. Having built a fleet of twenty ships he set sail with his Trojan companions to seek a new land in the early spring.

He first landed on the shores of Thrace and there started establishing a city called Aenos (modern name Enez). However, he was interrupted by the shade of Polydorus, son of Priamos, who directed him to leave the cursed land immediately and to search for another climate for his intended city.

He directed his course to south and soon arrived at Delos to consult the oracle of Apollon (Lat. Apollo). The oracle lead him to seek the land of his ancestors and there he should establish a city. Aeneas' father, Anchises, interpreted this as Crete, the birthplace of their ancestor Teucer. Thereupon the Trojans, led by Aeneas, sailed from Delos to Crete where they landed and began to build a new city called Pergama. But their efforts were thwarted by pestilence and famine. In this juncture, they understand that Crete was not the land that was destined to Aeneas.

Apollon appeared to Aeneas in his dream and told him to go to Hisperia, afterwards renamed as Italy, because Dardanus, another ancestor of the Trojans, originally came from Hisperia, and therefore his true homeland was Italy. Anchises agreed this and they left for Italy with the hope of finding their homeland, leaving a few Trojans in Crete.

On their journey to west they landed on Strophades, the islands of the Harpies, where they were attacked by Harpies and they had to fight with them. Then, they sailed by the islands to west coast of Greece: Zacynthos, Dulichium, Same, Neritos and Ithaca respectively. They saw the cloudy peaks of Mount Leucata and wearily reached the temple of Apollon. They went up to the little town and they made votive offerings to Zeus (Lat. Jupiter). They blessed the shores of Actium. After having wintered here, they departed and trasversing the shores of Epirus, entered the harbour of Chaonia.

And then they came to the town of Buthrotium on the Albanian coast. Trojans were welcomed by the city which was founded by Helenus, son of the Trojan king Priamos, and Andromache. Here a priest of Apollon gave Aeneas new prophecies. Aeneas exchanged gifts with his hosts and bid them farewell.

They set sail and when day dawned, the first sight of Italy appeared (Castro). When they drew closer to the entrance of the bay they saw a temple of Athena (Lat. Minerva) which overlooked the harbour. They landed there and gave offerings to goddess Hera (Lat. Iuno).

Sailing again they passed by Tarentum and came within sight of Mount Etna; they avoided Charybdis but the waves tossed them towards the coast of the Cyclopes. The weary voyagers disturbed by the sounds of Etna and its eruptions stayed overnight on the island of the Cyclopes. On the next day, the Trojans



hurried away, not knowing in which direction they were heading, when they were watched by a crowd of vast Cyclops.

They passed by numerous places, but, when they landed at Drepanum (Sagasta) on the north-west coast of Sicily, Anchises died, and the loss of his father was a heavy blow to Aeneas.

Sailing on, Aeneas and his companions were driven ashore by a storm stirred up by the goddess Hera on the north coast of Africa, near Carthage.

Although one of their ships was lost because of this violent storm, they arrived safely to the coast where queen Dido was establishing a new city named Byrsa. Here Trojans were received with hospitality. Dido fell in love with Aeneas. But, warned by gods, Aeneas had to fulfil his destiny and leave for Italy. Upon this message, Aeneas called his men to the ships, and sailed away from Carthage. When Dido saw the fleet leaving, she could no longer bear to live and she killed herself.

The storm drove them back to Sicily (Drepanum) where Aeneas organized funeral games to honor his father. While the games were being celebrated, Hera sent Iris down from heaven in order to incite the Trojan women to burn their ships. The women were convinced that there was a new Troy that they sought and they had to burn the accursed ships which carried them hither and thither. They burnt the ships but immediately they were ashamed of their behaviour. Fortunately, the flames were quenched by a thunderstorm stripped out by Zeus because of a prayer from Aeneas, and all the ships were saved except for four.



There were old men and old women who were weary of the sea. Aeneas decided to leave them with king Acestes and let him build a new city for them and call it Acesta after his own name.

Those that were strong and brave crossed the sea to Italy with Aeneas and arrived in Italy, at Cumae. Aeneas went to consult the Sibyl at Apollon's temple. The Sibyl in her cave went into a prophetic trance and called on Aeneas to make his prayer to Apollo. Aeneas prayed and also asked to be allowed to visit his father in the underworld.

Aeneas met Anchises in Cumae. Anchises told Aeneas of the famous Romans who were waiting their turn to be born. Aeneas rejoined his fleet and sailed to north where his wet-nurse Caieta died, he buried her in Gaieta, which is named after her.

The Trojans then reached the mouth of the Tiber and landed in Latium. Aeneas sent ambassadors to king Latinus. The king welcomed and asked them the reason for their arrival, and Ilioneus answered that fate had brought them to Italy and offered gifts. Latinus had been told by the oracle that his daughter Lavinia, whom Turnus, chief



of the Rutuli, sought in marriage, was destined to marry a foreign chief whose descendants would rule not only Latium, but the world. The king hailed Aeneas as the foreign husband of whom the oracles had spoken, and promised him his daughter (Lavinia) in marriage. Aeneas then married Lavinia and founded Lavinium.

Despite this painful journey, Trojans, the legendary founders of the Roman Empire, were hereafter in their promised land.

To revive this legend and raise awareness today, a trip is being planned to go to Lavinium city, following the routes of Aeneas, on an ancient ship to be built in Antandros.



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