

Travel Talk tours will take you on a pilgrimage of culture, history, adventure, fun and relaxation. You will visit sites of antiquity, explore the treasures of Greece, discover the breathtaking Cyclades Islands, partake numerous activities and experience sun-kissed days on pristine beaches...

Before you leave for your adventure, it is important that you read this pre-departure information to ensure that your trip begins, and proceeds, as smoothly as possible. While we appreciate that you are embarking on an "adventure holiday" that will produce its own share of surprises, it is also true that forewarned is forearmed. This information is not written with the intention of being anything other than general information that we hope will help you come more prepared for your holiday. The philosophy of Travel Talk is simple: to provide excellent value for money for budget-conscious and adventurous travellers without compromising their experiences, and providing quality transportation, accommodation, sight seeing and information services. We hope that our philosophy will exceed your expectations and the following information will help you enjoy a memorable journey in Greece.

## INTRODUCTION

### FACTFILE

Area : 131.944 sq km  
(51.458 sq mi)  
Population : 10.3 million  
Capital City : Athens  
Language : Greek  
Religion : Orthodox  
Government : Republic  
GDP : US\$ 143 billion  
GDP per head : US\$ 14,000  
Annual growth : 3.5 %  
Inflation : 2.6 %



### VISAS & CUSTOMS

Visa requirements change periodically, therefore you need to check the requirements before travelling.

EU members, as well as citizens of the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand are all automatically granted leave for a three-month stay in Greece. South Africans need a visa. Citizens of Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, the UK and the US need valid passports to enter Greece and to re-enter their own countries. The members of the EU countries can enter Greece with an ID card, but we recommend carrying a valid passport in any case.

It is your responsibility to ensure you have the relevant documents/visas and Travel Talk will accept no responsibility for being refused entry through incorrect documentation.

The duty and tax free allowances on certain categories of goods - tobacco,

alcohol, spirits and table wine, perfume and toilet water, and other goods - vary depending on whether the goods were obtained duty paid within the EU, as opposed to duty free, or outside the EU. Goods and gifts purchased at duty-free shops abroad are not exempt from duty or sales tax at your point of return and must be declared; duty-free means that you need not pay a tax in the country of purchase.

### DOCUMENTS

Please make sure that you have all the necessary travel documents ready before you leave your country.

#### PASSPORT

In many countries you'll be required to have a passport valid for 6 months starting from the entry date. If you are holding a passport with less than 6 months' validity or a few pages remaining, we suggest you to apply for a new one before you depart.

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It's vital to take a photocopy of the important pages of your passport (pages of personal data, passport number, visas etc) and keep these copies separate from your passport.

**TOUR VOUCHER**

When you book a trip, you'll be provided with a tour voucher showing the details of your tour. You'll need to hand over this voucher to your tour leader to join the tour. The tour leader reserves the right to refuse serving any passenger failing to provide the tour voucher. If you have booked extra services like pre- and post tour accommodation and transfer, please make sure that these services are also shown on your tour voucher.

**FLIGHT TICKET / CONFIRMATION**

Do not forget to check your name, surname and other necessary information placed on your confirmation voucher at least 3 days before you leave your country.

**BEFORE YOU GO**

While it's your own choice and responsibility regarding what type of clothing, belongings, luggage, bags and other items to take with you, we try to share our experiences with you to help you have a comfortable journey in Greece.

**ESSENTIALS**

Before you leave your country, we recommend you to make sure you have the followings with you :

- ✓ Passport
- ✓ Airline or transportation ticket
- ✓ Tour voucher
- ✓ Insurance policy
- ✓ Visas (if necessary)
- ✓ Label on your travel bag
- ✓ Pre-departure information
- ✓ Money (cash and/or travellers cheques)
- ✓ Credit card

**PACKING**

Please remember that the airline baggage allowance is 20 kilos and you should not pack more than you can comfortably carry.

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When packing, the golden rule is : decide how many clothes you want to take, halve the amount and that's how much you'll need.

We recommend you to have a smaller day pack and a money belt.

What about the souvenirs ? Make sure that you leave some space for souvenirs in your luggage. There are a wide range of fantastic things to buy in the Mediterranean countries, not only for your mates, also for yourself !

We have also compiled a list of things that you might need on the tour:

**Clothing :** Depending on the season; a warm jacket or wool sweater, a rain jacket, hiking boots, thick socks, flip-flops or waterproof sandals, shorts, light slacks (men), loose-fitting pants or long skirts (women), short sleeves, t-shirts, underwear and socks.

**Useful equipment :** Water bottle with strap, international adapter, mp3 player.

**Toiletries :** Towels, soap, toothbrushes, talcum powder, deodorant, tampons, sunscreens, contact lenses (bring enough extra pairs and solution), glasses (and a copy of your prescription in case you need emergency replacements), a roll of toilet paper.

**First-aid kit :** Bandages, pain reliever, antibiotic cream, moleskin, decongestant, insect repellent, burn ointment, personal medicine.

**Others :** Converters and adapters, camera, films, flash, batteries, money belt and additional belongings that you think will be useful during your journey.

## ARRIVAL

### EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Please also note that you can call the following numbers in case of **emergency** : 0090 542 779 04 34 or 0090 544 522 54 74

### MEETING POINT

Mykonos New Port. (Troulos) The boat names are Nicholas A. and Viking Star The tour leader will meet you with a "Travel Talk" sign at Mykonos New Port. (Troulos) Embarkation/check-in time is from 12:00pm to 02:30pm.

### TOUR LEADER'S MEETING

Please note that your guide will brief you about the next days of your tour at the boat at 02:30pm.

### LEFT OR LOST LUGGAGE

If you discover upon arrival that your luggage is missing, or has arrived incomplete, you should report this immediately to the information desk in the baggage hall. The staff will be able to tell you what the procedures are for reclaiming your luggage and advise you on any forms that may need to be filled in and stamped. The airport staff should also be able to explain what will happen next and when you should expect your luggage.

Please remember that lost luggage is a matter between you and the airline /airport authority and the recovery of your luggage is your own responsibility and at your own expense.

## ABOUT THE TOUR

"Sail Greece" tour is a mixture of independent travel and a structured trip. While providing you with the necessary arrangements like sailing and accommodation and sight seeing, it allows you loads of free time to do your own thing and to plan your own day.

Please remember that the tour price covers specific services offered during your trip, not your entire travel cost, therefore your expenses will vary depending on your interests and budget.

### THE TOUR PRICE THE LOCAL PAYMENT

We know that it's not easy to get your cash together to cover the entire travel cost, especially when you book your flight ticket and the tour at once. We ease your cash needs by dividing the tour cost into two payments : tour price and local fund. You just need to pay the tour price to purchase your travel. The compulsory local payment will be done when you join the trip. The local payment is a part of the tour cost (a tool to ease your cash need on booking date) and it does **not** cover any extra costs like dinners, entry fees, drinks, fuel supplement, tips, personal expenses or other type of travel costs.

### SERVICES INCLUDED

The following services are included in your tour price :

- ✓Sailing & Accommodation in A category private boat.
- ✓All breakfasts
- ✓Snorkelling equipment
- ✓Captain's Dinner
- ✓Sightseeing

**SERVICES NOT INCLUDED**

The tour price does not cover the following :

Any flights, insurance, airport transfers, meals not stated in the itinerary ,drinks items of a personal nature, tips, visa fees, entrance fees to the sights and museums, other services not stated in the "services included" section, optional activities and excursions.

**OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES**

Though history and culture abound, there are plenty of things to see and do in Greece.

Below are some of the tours available on the Greece Island hopping tours :

**Mykonos**

Tour of the island(3 hours):Euro20

Tour of Delos, the sacred island of the ancient Greeks with its unique archaeological monuments:Euro45 (incl. entrance fee)

One day cruise of the island including lunch : Euro 52

**Santorini**

Akrotiri & Caldera & Oia : Tour visits Fira Museum, Akrotiri, Athinios Port, Thirassia, includes climb to the volcano, swimming in the hot springs,

and sunset break in Oia. Euro 47 per person

Akrotiri & Caldera : Tour visits Akrotiri, Athinios Port, Thirassia, includes climb to the volcano, swimming in the hot springs and sail along Oia. Euro 42 per person.

Caldera & Oia : Visit Athinios Port, climb the volcano, swim in the hot springs, discover Thirassia, enjoy the sunset in Oia. Euro 40.-

Caldera Full Day : Visit Akrotiri and Athinios Port, climb the volcano, swim in the hot springs, discover Thirassia. Euro 30.-

\* All costs above subject to change.

**HEALTH AND SAFETY**

It is recommended to all passengers travelling on Travel Talk tours to have personal insurance to cover all medical and repatriation costs. While there are no mandatory vaccinations for travellers to Greece it is advisable to ensure tetanus inoculations are up to date. Some travellers feel more confident with hepatitis and meningitis inoculations as well. Please consult a medical practitioner for advice.

Bottled water is readily available throughout your tour and we recommend that you purchase this rather than drink the local tap water. While the local water is usually heavily chlorinated and safe, many people get upset stomachs after drinking it.

It is often difficult to find the precise medication that is available in one's home country, so we recommend that you carry all necessary medication with you.

Greece is one of the safest countries in Europe and offers European security standards, but you should always take the normal travel precautions. It is wise not to accept gifts of food or drink from any strangers for the risk of possibly being a victim of theft by drugging.

Be cautious with your passport, credit cards and money - a money belt to fit beneath your clothes is highly recommended.

## MONEY

The Greek currency is the Euro (£1 is about € 1.10). It is cheaper to convert money in Greece than at home.

Most towns and islands in Greece have ATMs that are linked into major international networks.

Credit cards (Visa and MasterCard are the most recognised) are accepted in most tourist areas, but if you are travelling off the beaten path, be prepared to use other forms of payment.

It is difficult to specify the money that you can spend per day, however as a general rule €25 to €30 or GB £23 to £28 per day can provide you with additional meals and optional entrances.

Should you wish to purchase souvenirs, of which there is a diverse range, you will have to budget for these.

Please do not bring Scottish banknotes as they are not changable abroad.

## EATING & DRINKING

Greek food is delicious !

Start your day with a tasty "Greek breakfast": toast with marmalade and an omelette filled up with tomato, mushrooms and cheese. Lunch, a hearty and leisurely meal, can begin as early as noon, but is more likely eaten sometime between 2 and 5 p.m. Dinner is a drawn-out, relaxed affair served late (between 9 pm to midnight).

A Greek restaurant is called a "taverna", a grill is a "pistaria". Fish, lamb, chicken or beef "souvlak" are popular Greek menu items.

Vegetarians have lots of choices: "Tzatziki" (a garlicky cucumber yoghurt dip) with bread is a good way to start off a meal. You can also try the fetapiled "horiatiki (Greek salad), savoury pastries like "tiropita" and "spanakopita", and the fresh fruits and vegetables found at markets and vendor stands in most cities.

Greek coffee, iced coffee (frappes) and ouzo are favourite drinks in Greece.

A basic lunch and dinner (main meal + salad) in a local restaurant will cost you between £6 and £12 (€ 11 and € 17), a soft drink about £ 1.00 (€ 1.10).

The beer prices differ depending on the town. A bottle of beer will cost you around £1.50 (€1.65) in a backpacker pub and bar.

## SHOPPING

Each region or island has its own souvenirs , such as honey and herbs from Mount Pelion, carpets from Metsovo, carvings from Vitina, silver jewellery from Ioannina, icons from Meteora, wine from Patras, leather wallets and pottery from Crete, and Mastika liqueur from Chios. Other items to take home are worry beads, ceramics, lace, embroidered clothes, carved and turned wood and marble and onix carvings.

## OPENING HOURS

The opening hours are not regulated in Greece, but banks and main post offices generally open from 8:30 am to 1:00 pm Monday to Friday. Shops are generally open from around 8:30 am to 2:00 pm, then 5:00pm to 8:00pm. They are closed on Sunday

## TIPPING

In principle prices are net, but it is usual to round up (taxis, restaurants, bars) and to give a few Euros to waiters and porters.

## TEMPERATURES

	January		April		July		October	
Region	C	F	C	F	C	F	C	F
Central	5	41	12	54	23	73	16	61
Athens	10	50	16	61	28	82	19	67
Islands	12	54	16	61	28	82	20	68
Pelopon.	10	50	12	54	28	82	19	67

Central : Delphi, Meteora  
Islands: Mykonos, Naxos, Ios, Paros, Santorini  
Peloponnese: Corinth, Mycenae, Epidaurus

## WEATHER

Greece has a wide range of climate types, ranging from the semi-arid, semi-desert climate of south-eastern Crete to the cold, humid continental climate of Rhodope.

The dominant condition of Greece's climate is the alternation between hot, dry summers and cold, damp winters typical of the Mediterranean. Considerable local variation results from elevation and distance from the sea.

Generally, continental influences are felt farther north and in the centre of the mainland. The main climatic regions of Greece are the mainland mountains, Attica (the south-easternmost part of the mainland) and the Aegean, the west including the Ionian Islands, and the continental north-east.

## DISTANCES

The following information will give you a better idea of the distances between points to help you plan your day:

Athens-Piraeus : 12 km,  
 Piraeus-Mykonos : 95 mi,  
 Mykonos-Santorini : 72 mi,  
 Mykonos-Paros : 26 mi,  
 Paros-Naxos : 19 mi,  
 Naxos-Ios : 28 mi,  
 Ios-Santorini : 23 mi,  
 Santorini-Piraeus : 130 miles,

## LANGUAGE

The Greek alphabet is different from the Roman, has 24 letters, and hard is to pronounce.

Below you will find some

important phrases in Greek

Hello, goodbye: Yah-sas (polite); Yah-soo (familiar)

Good morning: Kah-lee-meh-rah

Good evening: Kah-lee-spe-rah

Good night: Kah-lee-nee-khtah

Yes: Neh

No: Oh-hee

Maybe: Toh-skep-to-meh

Please: Pah-rah-kah-lou

Thank you: Ef-khah-ree-sto

Pardon me: Sig-no-mee

Who: Pyos

When: Poh-teh

Today: See-mer-a

Yesterday: Kthes

Tomorrow: Av-ree-o

Help: Vo-ee-thee-ah

How much: Po-so kah-nee

Do you speak English:

Mee-lahs ahn-gee-kah

I don't speak Greek:

Dhen mee-laho el-leenee-kah

I don't understand:

Dhen-kah-tah-lah-veh-no

Bill, please: Lo-gahr-yah-smo

Doctor: yah-tros

Police: As-tee-no-mee-a

Open: Ah-nee-kto

Closed: Klee-sto

Good: Kah-lo

Cheap: Ftee-no

Expensive: Ah-kree-vo

## ELECTRICITY

All appliances require a double round pin type plug for 220 volts AC, 50-hertz.

## BRIEF INFO ABOUT THE SIGHTS

Before you explore the fantastic islands of this unique country, we hope that the below information will give you a basic idea about the places you can visit.

### Athens

Athens is a curious blend of east and west; its raucous street vendors and colourful markets are reminiscent of oriental bazaars, while crumbling neoclassical mansions hark back to the city's brief heyday as the 'Paris of the Mediterranean'.

The Acropolis, crowned by the Parthenon, stands sentinel over Athens and is visible from almost everywhere in the city. Pericles set about transforming the Acropolis into a city of temples after being informed by the Delphic oracle in 510 BC that it should become a province of the gods. The city was a showcase of colossal buildings, lavishly coloured and gilded, and of gargantuan statues, some of bronze, others of marble plated with gold and encrusted with precious stones. Now in ruins, the cool grandeur of the bare marble is still breathtaking. Beside the Parthenon, which is unsurpassed in its grace and harmony, is the Erechtheion, immediately recognisable for its much-photographed Caryatids, the six maidens who take the place of columns. The Ancient Theatre of Dionysos, where every Athenian citizen took their turn in the chorus of Greek tragedies, is on the southern slope of the Acropolis.

Nestled into the northeastern slope of the Acropolis is the old village of Plaka, virtually all that existed of Athens before it was declared the capital of independent Greece. Its narrow labyrinthine streets retain much of their charm despite gross commercialism. Fenced off on the verge of Plaka is the ancient Agora (marketplace) which formed the centre of social and civic life in ancient Athens. Other attractions include the National Archaeological Museum, which houses magnificent gold artefacts from Mycenae and spectacular Minoan frescoes from Santorini (Thira), and the Goulandris Museum of Cycladic & Ancient Greek Art, with a collection of the elegant marble figurines that inspired the likes of Modigliani, Brancusi and Picasso.

### Mykonos

Mykonos is one of the most popular holiday resorts both in Greece and in the world, famous for its chalk-white beauty and its vibrant night life. The capital, HORA, with its colourful harbour in which little fishing boats nestle happily side by side with luxury yachts, presents quite a different picture from the majority of Aegean island towns. While it is usual for island villages to be built on naturally amphitheatrical sites, Mykonos is spread out over a flat area and conveys an impression of lid aesthetic cohesion. The town of Mykonos, one of the best examples of Cycladic architecture, is a maze of streets and alleys, so that you never know where you will end up.

The windmill constitute one of the symbols of the island while the mascot of the island is "Petros" the pelican that lives at the port of "Hora". In Mykonos, there are three interesting museums to visit.

The Archaeological Museum, housed in a neo-classical building of 1901, in the northeast side of "Hora". It contains exhibits from the nearby island of Rhenea, sculptures, pots and statuettes and even a big vase of clay from the Trojan War.

The Folk Art Museum contains collections of furniture, ceramics, traditional costumes and traditional musical instruments. Among the exhibits you will see the first "Petros" the pelican, stuffed.

The Nautical Museum, where you can see ships from the early Minoan period to the 19th c, maps and documents and exhibits from the naval tradition of the island.

The Greek "LITTLE VENICE" is one of the most charming districts of Hora and one of the prettiest places in the Cyclades. Its picturesque two - and three - storey houses built right on the sea, with colorful balconies, windows and doors, form a unique picture. "Little Venice" is the perfect spot from which to view the sunset.

On a once-fortified spit of land stands Panagia Paraportiani, probably the most photographed church in Greece, along with the trademark quartet of windmills on the hillside above. The harbour area is split between the fishing quay, with its small boats beached on the sand, and the main port where the ferries pull in. Most traffic is banned from the waterfront, so the only way to explore is on foot, getting lost in the maze of streets.

The large peninsula to the south-west of Mykonos town is noted for the many attractive bays along its coastline.

"MEGALI AMMOS" is the nearest beach to Mykonos town and often referred to as the town beach

"AGIOS IONASSIS" is thought by many to be one of the most picturesque places on the island. It is well known for location shots during the filming of the movie Shirley Valentine. There is only a tiny strip of sand and stone but the setting in the beautiful bay is dramatic with views across to the island of Delos, and a small white chapel to add a postcard picture flourish. There is a tiny beach at "KAPARI" for those who prefer solitude.

The south coast hosts the island's main beach strip and a succession of popular sandy strips are linked by a long coastal path. PLATIS GIALOS is the main calling point for small boats taking visitors to the other south coast beaches and to the surrounding islands.

Next door is SUPER PARADISE, where the heart of night life beats.

AGIA ANNA is a quieter shingle beach with a taverna to escape the crowds and a pleasant area to stay.

Far wilder than the soft south, the northern coastline of Mykonos is for those who prefer a little wild adventure with their holidays. Visitors can enjoy wild windswept scenery and numerous small coves and tiny bays approached by bike.

Interesting for the visitor is also ANO MERA. Here you can really find traditional Greek village life. It has a main square with a kafenion and a taverna and there is also a 16th century red-roofed monastery which has a fine collection of Cretan icons. Just north of the village is a 12th century monastery in a magnificent oasis setting on the barren hill.

For those interested in Greek mythology there are trips to the uninhabited island of Delos and the extensive ruins there. The most sacred of the Greek islands, at the very geographical center of the Cyclades, Delos was once the religious, cultural, and commercial focal point of ancient Greece. It was the jewel of the ancient world, a thriving commercial hub, and the "summer home" of the rich and famous of the time.

Said to be the birthplace of Apollo, the Delian games were held there. The ruins of the city are quite extensive and are definitely worth a visit. Among them the most important are the three temples dedicated to Apollo, the Altar

of Dionysos, the remains of a huge phallic monument, the Lion Terrace, the famous lions of Delos, the sacred lake, the place where Apollo was born, Cleopatra's House and the theatre, built in 2nd century BC.

There is also Rhinia, a haunting, mysterious island four times the size of Delos and separated from it by a small strait. By Greek law, no one is allowed to live on Rhinia or build a permanent home there and since not many tourists are interested in it, it is ideal for a quiet walk away from busy Mykonos.

## Ios

Planted in the heart of the Cyclades, small, tree-less, but a true beauty, Ios is a popular party island with a bright nightlife. Supposed burial place of Homer, at one time place of exile, fortress for the pirates and then for rock fans, it made its come back mainly in the 80s and is now more than ever top in the preferences of travellers with the cheapest alcohol in Europe! Ios is an island with vivid nightlife entertainment, many bars and crazy happenings. At Ormos's port and in the beautiful "Hora", with its picturesque and narrow cobbled streets, are most of the island's bars, that play music for every taste and also offer good quality drinks and a crazy disposition, as well as many discos for those who want to dance all night long. There are also some cafe-bars open all day that serve breakfast and coffee in the morning or drinks with the accompaniment of loud music.

HORA, the island's capital, lies on its western side. It is a picturesque town of typical Cycladic architecture with white-washed houses, quaint chapels, narrow alleyways, mills, and stone staircases. The town embraces the hill on top of which stand a Venetian castle, the lovely chapel of Agios Nicholas, and the ruins of an ancient city. The whole beautiful image is rounded off with the bulk of the medieval castle and the row of windmills which top the town. The market of Ios is full of pure, local products of excellent quality, such

as fresh honey and cheese, one of them being the famous local cheese "xinotiri". The folk art shops sell beautiful ceramics, leather objects and souvenirs.

In the interior of the town, there is the Church of Agia Ekaterini. It is believed to have been built on the site of an ancient town where a temple of Pythian Apollo also stood. It is a quaint white church gleaming in the sunlight with an austere, elegant interior.

The quaint little church of Agios Ioannis Prodromos also stands in Hora. It is a classical representative of Cycladic architecture with its well-kept precinct and gleaming white colour.

The Cathedral of Ios overlooks the centre of Hora. It is an imposing church of large dimensions which impresses the visitor. In its interior are beautiful icons and a wonderful decor.

Despite the touristic development of recent years, the island has not lost its traditional colour due to its proclamation as a preservable settlement.

The sites of Ios include a Hellenistic tower and the remains of an ancient aqueduct at Agia Theodoti, traces of an ancient temple at Psathi, a ruinous Venetian castle at the spot known as Paleokastro, and the Hellenistic tower at Plakotos. The Archaeological and Folkloric Museum in Hora and the Museum of Modern Art are also worth a visit. The town's small Archaeological Collection includes early-Cycladic and Roman bas-reliefs and ceramics.

Walk from Ios town to the little church on the Chora hill: Very short, but fun. You will have a nice overview of the town and much of the island. The path to the summit runs from the front yard of a church to the east of the top. It is well worth the climb, and most people go up here to admire the sunset. The hill of SKARKOS is also quite interesting. The finds of the archeological excavation there prove that the island has been inhabited since the early Cycladic period.

## Paros

The coastline of this predominantly mountainous island with its countless chapels, its olive trees, its vineyards and its limpid air, is adorned with small, attractive coves. Those features combine with the crystalclear sea, the superb sandy beaches and the good range of amenities to make Ios a magnet for tourists.

Lovers of the sea will be enraptured by the superb beaches of Ios. The most popular among them is MILOPOTAS, near Hora. Situated at a distance of 3 km south of Hora, Milipotias is the most touristically developed settlement for holidays on Ios. It is a small, picturesque, seaside settlement with a few houses built in front of a wonderful long three kilometre crescent of wide, golden sandy beach that is said to rival any in the Mediterranean.

The other beaches are equally attractive but quieter, like AGIA THEODOTI, a small settlement for holidays at a distance of 10 km north-west of Hora. Its few houses are built next to its marvellous sandy beach and the inhabitants live first on fishing and second on tourism, which has developed lately. The sheltered, sandy coves of MANGANARI is another good option.

At the touristically developed beaches of Ios, such as Ormos and Milopotias, there is a wind-surfing school, and, just as at Manganari beach, one can rent all the necessary equipment for water sports. The quiet shores of the island are also ideal for fans of submarine fishing and sea-diving, who are charmed by the sea's wealth.

There are many traditional feasts in the island that offer the visitor an insight of Greek culture and religion. Most of them take place in August, such as the feast of Agios Ioannis, celebrated by the locals at the port of Agios Ioannis Kalamos in a traditional way. The church offers guest-rooms, while people are offered meat from animals - offering to the saint, the night before the feast.

Locals have gone to a lot of trouble to ensure tourists aren't wandering around with a map, phrase book and lost expression on their faces. The brown and white signs are everywhere and point to just about every place of archaeological or historical note. Fields of barley sweep up the hillsides adding a warm ochre to the dense green olive and fruit groves of this rich agricultural landscape. There is a peaceful maturity about the place and a sparkling light that you won't find elsewhere in the Greek islands. And even though one of the most popular holiday destinations, Paros remains stubbornly Greek.

The great long waterfront at PAROIKIA, the island's capital, consists the main attraction for visitors with its cafes, bars and restaurants. But as you walk away from the waterfront you find yourself exploring a much quieter part of the island. Following the signs to the Traditional Settlement brings you to a wide square with a small triangular park and the remarkable restored cathedral of Ekatontachoni, the Archaeological Museum and then a labyrinth of alleys jam packed with an interesting mix of shops, galleries, cafes and whitewashed houses. At its heart are the walls of the Venetian kastro marked on the seaward side by terraces of stone draped with foliage and flowers and inland by a 13th century Venetian castle and surrounded by dozens of picturesque churches stuffed with treasures. To one side of the central square in Paroikia behind an imposing marble wall stands one of the most beautiful buildings in the whole of Greece. Dubbed the finest church in the Aegean the Cathedral of Ekatontapiliani (the Church of One Hundred Doors) was founded in 327 AD, destroyed and rebuilt many times since then. What you see today is considered to be essentially the church as it was in all its 6th century glory. And what a glory it is. The lovely courtyard is full of flowers, ancient marble slabs and the church bells hanging from a majestic old cypress. This is still a house of worship despite thousands of visitors trooping around each year and daily services are still held as they have been for 1,500 years.

If you wander outside of the touristy town of Paroikia you'll find charming villages with vineyards and olive grovers, with the village of NAOUSSA standing out.

Naoussa, with also an interesting night life, is touted as one of the prettiest fishing ports in Greece and its picturesque reputation attracts many. The remains of a castle built in the 14th century lie half submerged in the sea forming a great backdrop for photos. In the middle of the bay is a small island with a dainty chapel.

In August the villagers celebrate a battle with the pirate Barbarossa with a torchlit boat procession.

High in the hills, the traditional village of LEFKES spills down into the head of a narrow valley. Marble paved streets and whitewashed houses are dominated by a white marble church dating from 1830. When Paros was regularly raided by pirates this was the island capital and, as a result, there are many fine houses on the steep slopes which drop into a mesmerising warren of stepped alleyways. Of interest in Lefkes is the magnificent Agias Trias Cathedral, the Museum of Popular Aegean Civilization, an amphitheatre and an interesting library. The visitors will find there good local handicrafts, paintings and pottery. From Lefkes you can walk to the Profitis Ilias mountain which offers splendid views, or take the well preserved Byzantine path which takes you to the pretty village of PRODRAMOS and its attractive beach.

Paros has its own BUTTERFLY VALLEY. The luxuriant, leafy valley is actually a private garden but tourists are warmly welcome by a small cafe with a fountain and well marked paths. The dappled shade and running water can make for a pleasant break from the summer heat.

Paros is essentially a summer destination and, as the Windsurfing capital of Greece, it has some of the best beaches and most charming villages to be found anywhere in the Greek islands. The most popular among them is POUNDA beach, which attracts hundreds of young tourists, with its pool bar and night club next to the sandy beach.

There is also MONASTIRI, a small sandy bay with plenty of water sports facilities is ideal for the more fun-loving visitors .

CHRISSEI AKTH (Golden Beach), described by many as Paros' premiere beach is very long and sandy and a Mecca for windsurfers. It has been hosting the Professional Windsurfers' World Cup each August since 1993 and comes with a guarantee of plenty of wind in the sails. The main beach is a good 700 metres of soft sand backed by a few tavernas, small hotels and studios.

Around the bay west of Naoussa is the beach of KOLIMPITHRES, where wind and sea has sculpted the granite into smooth but bizarre shapes. Between the rocky outcrops is a succession of small, sandy coves of shallow, lucid blue water.

Only 30 minutes by ferry, Antiparos is definitely worth a visit. Famous for the gigantic Cave of Antiparos with its stalactites and stalagmites, it also has beautiful beaches with water sports facilities and a diving school.

AGIOS GEORGIOS, a tiny village with pretty surroundings and great calm is also good for a relaxed stroll away from touristic Paros.

## Naxos

Naxos is the largest and the greenest of the Cyclades. Heading east from the capital HORA you end up high in the TRAGEA BASIN, the centre of the island, to find a stunning theatre of lush olive and citrus groves surrounded by majestic mountains. North takes you along a twisting, mountain coast road to the wild STAVROS promontory while south east leads to SANGRI, an area rich in archaeological sites and the LIVADI plain with farms, bell towers and Venetian mansions.

The capital town of NAXOS is the gateway to the Cyclades and has the doorway to prove it. The gigantic marble frame is all that remains of what was meant to be a colossal 6th century BC temple.

To the north of the causeway is the GROTTA AREA- once the site of the original town now sunk beneath the waves.

To the south is Naxos itself - whitewashed streets, alleyways that wind up to the Venetian kastro on top of the hill and no less than 45 Byzantine churches.

The waterfront is a promenaders' paradise. What strikes you is the liveliness of the place. A fun fair can be in town or a street festival under way - this place is never dull. Tiny alleys lead off the front and up the hill through cobbled whitewashed alleys to the 13th century kastro. One can enjoy getting lost in this marble paved warren with its arched porticoes, crumbling mansions, gorgeous flowerpot gardens and street tavernas. The kastro has a catholic cathedral and a good archeological museum. Exhibits include some early Cycladic goddesses as well as some stunning views of the town from the balcony .

APEIRANTHOS is one of the most attractive and interesting villages on the island. Wandering around the narrow marble streets, under archways, up whitewashed stone steps is a great delight. Small piazzas crop up unexpectedly, sometimes housing a small taverna or street cafe. The chimneys are eye-catching too and the village roofs are called "the garden of strange flowers".

Local handicraft is on sale and much of its fine local varieties of cheese. A women's co-operative sells gorgeous handwoven textiles and there are many museums to visit. The archaeology museum has Cycladic figurines and slate drawings while the museum of popular art has exquisite locally made artifacts.

On the route to the popular Apeiranthos, HALKI has developed a reputation for its handsome Byzantine church, with its 12th century murals, and a few fine Venetian pyrgi or tower houses. Nearby churches are well worth a visit.

Panagia Drossiani, one of the oldest and most important churches in the Balkans, is found on the right on the steep hill as you head towards the mountain village of MONI. Built between the 6th and 10th centuries BC it has rare wall paintings from the 9th century and has stunning views over the Tragea valley.

FILOTI is mostly known for the wonderful views down into the Tragea valley with its olive and fruit trees, and of MOUNT ZA, the highest mountain on the island and the birthplace of god Zeus. The tiny church of Agios Iannis can be seen perched on the mountain opposite and there is a path up to the Za summit. There is also the village of APOLLONAS with a 10 metres high stone statue of kouros from the 6th century BC standing on the hillside.

The huge LIVADI plain runs down from the Sangri plateau to the sea and hosts many Byzantine chapels most of them from the 13th century. There are important archaeological sites all over this area as well as the restored 6th century Temple of Demeter located to the south.

With miles of white sand beaches, the beaches of Naxos are considered to be the best in the Cyclades and of the best in the Mediterranean.

In the beach of ALIKI you will find the breathtaking scene of narrow golden beaches tucked between wild rocky outcrops and beneath vertical cliffs covered with deep green scrub pine.

AGIASSOS bay is idyllic with small rocks in the shallows each side of the bay. The flat plain behind is dotted with sugar cube studios and leads to the Sangri area inland.

ABRAM, like all beaches to the north west get the full force of the meltemi and tend to look windswept. This is a lovely shingle beach overlooked by a huge head carved into the rock.

AMITI is another lovely beach and an idyllic spot with fine, soft sand that offers the best bathing on this part of the coast.

## Santorini

Santorini, also known as Thira, is widely considered to be Greece's most spectacular island. The island is actually three islands that remained from a cataclysmic volcanic eruption that occurred around 1640 BC. The island was shattered and its remaining fragments constituted the three islands of THIRA, THIRASIA and ASPRONISI. One side of the island is the crater with the villages of Thira, Imerovigli, Firastefani and Oia perched so far above the sea that it may as well be a painting.

During the earthquakes of 1956 a considerable part of the town was destroyed. Nevertheless many of the typical 18th century houses still survive. The town is typically Cycladic and resembles very much the old town.

From the landing-place, SKALA, you can climb up to FIRA, the capital, on foot or on donkey-back. Fira is situated right on the edge of the caldera and is very attractive, with winding narrow streets, arcades and a quarter where the Catholic nobility once dwelt. Cycladic domed churches, sun-bathed terraces, stepped alleys and in the background the deep blue sea and the threatening volcano comprise a unique picture. 600 steps will lead you down the caldera to the harbor of Fira. There is a superb view out from Fira to the KAMENES, the two islets of black stone created by the volcano.

There is a most important Prehistoric Museum in Fira, with prehistoric finds, a large collection of Archaic and Classical pieces, Hellenistic and Roman sculptures and portraits.

The night life also begins here. Restaurants, bars, discos and tavernas, most of them with a view of the volcano will satisfy any need.

The village IMEROVIGLI stands right above Fira, only ten minutes away from the night life. It was totally destroyed by the eruptions and, since many of its houses have not yet been rebuilt it gives a relief picture of the destructiveness of the last earthquakes. From here you can have a fantastic view of the sunset.

The northernmost village of OIA is built high on the rim of the caldera. It is obviously the most picturesque of Santorini's villages and till recently also the commercial center of the island. The rich people of Santorini used to live here.

Oia is famous all over the world for the view of the sunset, during which you can hear hundreds of clicks. There is a set of steps leading down from Oia to AMMOUDI (the beach of Oia) and down the caldera.

You can visit ancient Fira and also the remains of AKROTIRI, the Minoan city preserved in ash from the explosion, which is an active dig site. Ancient Thira is a site of great archaeological interest which was occupied by Phoenicians, Dorians, Romans and Byzantines. The buildings include groups of houses, market places, baths, theatres, sanctuaries, tombs of the Archaic and Classical periods and Early Christian remains. On the surrounding rocks the names of the god Apollo and of men and boys are inscribed in the ancient alphabet of Thira.

A trip will take you to the volcanic islets of NEA and PALEA KAMENH to see the volcano crater. A longer day-trip takes you from the port to ASPRONISSI and THIRASSIA, both once part of the original island.

A walk away from the capital reveals more attractions of the island. The village of PYRGOS is a typical example of a fortified Cycladic village. The streets follow the contours of the hill and encircle the village like belts. The outer row of houses also constitutes the fortification of the settlement. Pyrgos is one of the largest villages on Santorini, and being built on a hill it offers an open view towards all points of the island.

A visit to the monastery of PROFOTIS ILIAS might be interesting. Situated at the top of the sole mountain on the island, the monastery was founded at the beginning of the 18th century and is a very nice place to visit and enjoy the panoramic view.

EPISCOPI AT GONIA is probably the only Byzantine monument preserved today on the island. It is located south and is dedicated to the Dormition of the Virgin. Built with several ancient architectural members, it was founded on the spot where an Early Christian basilica had existed. The Byzantine marble templon of the church is a rare example of marble - carving.

The steep coastline of the west is countered by the vast beaches of the east side, some of them sandy and others with pebbles. The most popular are KAMARI or ARMENI, PERISSA and KOKINI PARALIA.

In Perissa and in Kamari there is a black sand beach. The dark blue sea which deepens suddenly and the impressive and inaccessible rock compose an enchanting landscape.

There are also four hot metallic springs on the island. One in MEGALOCHORI known as Thermi. Another one in PLAKA. The third one is located in KOKINA NERA. Finally you can find the Anavritos spring in EMPORIO village..

Santorini's weather and soil are special, and so is its wine. The wine-lovers can visit some of the numerous vineries on the island and enjoy free wine tasting with view of the volcano.

### ENJOY YOUR ADVENTURE !

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