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GETTING THE MOST OUT OF LONELY PLANET MAPS

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Plan Your Trip

Lapped by brilliant blue water and sprinkled with sun-bleached ruins, a visit to the Greek islands will fill your imagination with mythical tales, your belly with local flavours and your soul with true relaxation.

Escape

Before you even arrive, the Greek islands flirt with your imagination, promising the ultimate sun-soaked getaway. You'll soon discover that this archipelago of over 1400 islands and islets doesn't disappoint. The days melt from one to the next, filled with big blue skies and endless miles of aquamarine coastline blessed with some of Europe's cleanest beaches. Soak up the majestic beauty of Santorini or dive headfirst into the pulsing nightlife of Mykonos. Take in the ancient sights like Knossos that you've read about all your life, or the exhilarating possibilities of the islands' mountainous interiors. Wander through lush wildflowers in spring or laze on isolated sandy coves in summer with the warm sea lapping at your feet. You'll quickly become acquainted to the melancholy throb of *rembetika* (blues songs) and the tang of home-made tzatziki. Many travellers simply settle down and never go home.

Tempt Your Appetite

Head to an island harbour to watch the fishermen's daily catch tumble from their nets; seafood takes pride of place in many Greek kitchens and nowhere is it fresher than on the islands. Greeks pride themselves on their cuisine and will go out of their way to ensure you are well fed. Basic ingredients like feta and olive oil are at home in kitchens across the country, but it's the regional dishes and styles of cooking that make travelling around the country such a culinary joy. Turkish and Italian legacies are woven through many dishes and you'll discover islands or towns known for distinct ingredients. Cheeses, herbs and mountain greens you might never have heard of compliment local seafood, meat and vegie dishes. The secret of Greek cooking is often found in the back garden where many of the ingredients are freshly gathered and produced. These days, a renaissance in traditional cooking means that chefs are increasingly taking time-honoured dishes to new gourmet heights.

Stretch Yourself

It's easy to understand how so many myths of gods and giants originated in this vast and varied landscape, with wide open skies and a sea speckled with islands. The islands offer endless activities and are like floating magnets for anyone who enjoys the great outdoors. Wander along cobbled, Byzantine footpaths, hike into volcanoes, kayak with dolphins, watch for sea turtles and cycle through lush forests. Greece is also an excellent place to try new pursuits, with some of the world's top kitesurfing, diving and rock climbing locations. Be brave. Be passionate. Be Greek.

Slowing Down

1 Visit some of Greece's quieter or slightly more remote shores and island life will urge you to slow right down. Join locals as they contemplate life from the coffee houses or unwind on sandy stretches of isolated beach. Try Leros () with its colourful harbour and trendy bars and cafes; visit tiny Psara () for its pristine beaches; or head to the far-flung jungle island of Samothraki (). Time seems to stand still in these places – or at least moves very, very slowly.

Chic Capital

2 Life in Athens () is a magnificent mash-up of the ancient and the contemporary. Beneath the majestic facades of venerable landmarks, the city teems with life and creativity – and Athenians love to get out and enjoy it all. Galleries and clubs hold the exhibitions, performances and installations of the city’s booming arts scene. Trendy restaurants and humble tavernas rustle up fine, fine fare. Ubiquitous cafes fill with stylin’ locals and moods run from punk rock to haute couture. Discos and bars abound...and swing deep into the night.



Santorini Sunsets

3 There's more to Santorini () than sunsets, but this remarkable island, shaped by the nuclear fire of prehistoric eruptions, has made the celebratory sunset its own. On summer evenings the cliff-top towns of Fira () and Oia () are packed with visitors awed by the vast blood-red canvas of the western sky as the sun struts its stuff. You can catch the sunset without the crowds from almost anywhere along the cliff edge. And if you miss it, you can always face east at first light for some fairly stunning sunrises too...



Rhodes Old Town

4 Getting lost in the Old Town () is a must. Meander down twisting, turning, cobbled alleyways with archways above and squares opening ahead of you. The beauty of the Old Town lies in these hidden corners. Explore the ancient Knights' Quarter, the old Jewish Quarter or the Turkish neighbourhood. Hear traditional music in tiny tavernas or dine on fresh seafood at atmospheric outdoor restaurants. Wander along the top of the city's walls, with the sea on one side and a bird's-eye view into this living museum.



WAYNE
WALTON
/
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PLANET
IMAGES
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Preveli Beach

5 Preveli Beach () comprises one of Greece's most instantly recognisable stretches of sand. Bisected by a freshwater river and flanked by cliffs concealing sea caves, Preveli is lapped by the Libyan Sea, with clear pools of water along its palm-lined riverbank that are perfect for cool dips. The beach lies under the sacred gaze of a magnificent monastery perched high above. Once the centre of anti-Ottoman resistance and later a shelter for Allied soldiers, this tranquil building offers magnificent views.



Easter Festivities

6 The Greek calendar is chock-full of festivals, but by far the biggest event of the Greek Orthodox Church is Easter. Villages, towns and cities come to life with fireworks, dancing in the street, huge outdoor lamb roasts and plenty of ouzo shots. Begin with the moving, candlelit processions of flower-filled biers that mark the start of the celebration on Good Friday and by Saturday night you'll be shouting *Hristos Anesti* (Christ is risen) and cracking vibrant red-dyed eggs. The best spot to join in the festivities is Patmos () in the Dodecanese.

Island Hopping

7 From islands filled with spirited nightlife to celebrity hideaways and tiny, far-flung specks with isolated sandy coasts, jumping from island to island is a Greek experience not to be missed (). Peppered with ancient ruins, mystical castles, lush scenery and rare wildlife, the islands are spread like Greek jewels across the sea. Pinpoint the ones that take your fancy and join the dots by speeding over the Aegean on catamarans and swaying on old-fashioned ferry boats. You won't regret a single saltwater-splashed second of it.



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Samaria Gorge

8 The gaping gorge of Samaria (), starting at Omalos and running down through an ancient riverbed to the Libyan Sea, is the most-trod canyon in Crete – and with good reason. The magnificent gorge is home to varied wildlife, soaring birds of prey and a dazzling array of wildflowers in spring. It's a full-day's work (about six hours down), and you'll have to start early, but it certainly builds character. To get more solitude, try lesser-known gorges such as Aradena (), which runs roughly parallel to Samaria.



Cuisine

9 You don't have to be a fan of octopus and ouzo to enjoy Greek cuisine (and).

The Greek kitchen is inspired by local produce alongside Turkish and Italian influences. Traditional Greek bakeries will leave your mouth watering with honey-drenched pastries. Village restaurants will satisfy you with home-cooked roasts, fresh-off-the-boat fish and salads from the back garden. Contemporary chefs will wow you with tantalising fusion dishes, mixing traditional recipes with creative flavours – as if locally pressed olive oil, freshly made feta and strong coffee isn't enough to tempt you.



Hydra

10 Everyone approaches Hydra () by sea. There is no airport, there are no cars.

As you sail in, you find, simply, a stunningly preserved stone village, white-gold houses filling a natural cove and hugging the edges of surrounding mountains. Then you join the ballet of port life. Boats – sailboats, caïques and mega-yachts – fill Hydra's quays and a people-watching potpourri fills its ubiquitous harbourside cafes. Here, a mere hour and a half from Athens, you'll find a great cappuccino, rich naval and architectural history and the raw seacoast beckoning you for a swim.



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Corfu Town

11

The story of Corfu Town () is written across the handsome facades of its buildings. This is a place that crams into its small compass a remarkable lexicon of international architecture. A stroll through this engaging Greek town takes you from decaying Byzantine fortresses to the neoclassical palaces of the 19th-century British Protectorate, to Parisian-style arcades, Orthodox church towers and the narrow, sun-dappled streets of the Venetian Old Town; all of it the legacy of the Mediterranean's tumultuous history.



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Hania

12 Explore the former Venetian port town of Hania (), Crete's most beautiful and historic town. The pastel-hued buildings along the harbour seem to almost shimmer with the reflection of the sea. Behind them is a web of evocative, winding stone lanes filled with restored Venetian and Turkish architecture. Shop for the excellent local handicrafts, sightsee, or dine in a roofless historic building. But above all relax; Hania is the perfect setting to kick back and enjoy all these pursuits.



National Marine Park of Alonnisos

13 The Aegean is home to one of the Mediterranean's few national marine parks.

Alonnisos () rises from the sea in a mountain of greenery. Its crystal blue waters – considered the most pristine in Greece – offer sanctuary to the shy, endangered Mediterranean monk seal and are home to striped and bottlenose dolphins. Small excursion boats explore the marine park, dropping anchor at several inviting harbours around Alonnisos as well as at stunning islets to the northeast.



Lesvos

14 Massive Lesvos (Mytilini;) is tremendously varied. Rolling olive groves and cool pine forests in the hilly east and centre become arid plains in the west, where you'll find one of the world's few petrified forests outside the USA (see). The coast is ringed by beaches – many hardly touched by tourism. Lesvos' capital, lively Mytilini Town (), is energised by a large student population, with busy cafes and bars. Fine local ouzo and wine, magisterial Byzantine churches, and the odd medieval castle town seal the deal.



Skyros

15

Skyros () has a fascinating history filled with mythological heroes, Byzantine exiles and modern-day expats. It's home to a vibrant artistic community and island ceramics are among the most handsome in Greece, dating back to the days when passing pirates traded pottery and other pilfered treasures for local goods. The arrangement caught on and eventually Skyrians began their own pottery tradition. Skyros Town, Magazia, and Atsitsa have open studios where visitors can check out this legacy of larceny.

Knossos

16 Rub shoulders with the ghosts of the Minoans, a Bronze Age people who attained an astonishingly high level of civilisation and ruled large parts of the Aegean from their capital in Knossos () some 4000 years ago. Until the site's excavation in the early 20th century, an extraordinary wealth of frescoes, sculptures, jewellery, seals and other remnants lay buried under the Cretan soil. Despite a controversial partial reconstruction, Knossos remains one of the most important archaeological sites in the Mediterranean and Crete's most visited tourist attraction.



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CURRENCY

» Euro (€)

LANGUAGE

» Greek

MONEY

» ATMS widely available. Credit cards accepted in larger establishments and destinations. Cash necessary in villages and on smaller islands.

VISAS

» Generally not required for stays of up to 90 days, however travellers from some nations may require a visa; double-check with the Greek embassy.

MOBILE PHONES (CELL PHONES)

» Local SIM cards can be used in European and Australian phones. US and Canadian cells must use a dual or tri-band system.

DRIVING

» Drive on the right, steering wheel is on the left side of the car.

When to Go

HIGH SEASON (MAY–AUG)

- » Accommodation sometimes twice as much
- » Crowds and temperatures soar
- » Also applies to Easter

SHOULDER (APR & SEP)

- » Accommodation prices can drop by 20%
- » Temperatures milder
- » Internal flights and ferries have reduced schedule
- » Few crowds

LOW SEASON (OCT–MAR)

- » Many places shut, especially on the smaller islands
- » Accommodation up to 50% less than during high season
- » Ferry times skeletal
- » Temperatures drop significantly; Crete can see snow

Your Daily Budget

BUDGET LESS THAN €60

- » Dorm beds €10-20, domatia (Greek B&B) from €25
- » Markets and street stalls offer good prices
- » Travel in the shoulder season to stretch your €s

MIDRANGE €60-100

- » Double rooms in midrange hotels €35-60
- » Plenty of local tavernas with hearty midrange fare
- » Majority of sights have reasonable entrance fees

TOP END OVER €150

- » Double rooms in top hotels from €90
- » Excellent, atmospheric dining
- » Activities like diving and sailing available
- » Nightlife and cocktail bars abound

Websites

- » **EOT** (Greek National Tourist Organisation;) Concise tourist information.
- » **Greece Online** () Interactive map enabling you to pinpoint beaches, museums, ski resorts etc.
- » **Greek Travel Pages** () Access to ferry schedules and accommodation.
- » **Lonely Planet** () Destination information, hotel bookings, traveller forum and more.
- » **Ministry of Culture** () For cultural events and sights.

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	€0.75
Canada	C\$1	€0.72
Japan	¥100	€0.95
New Zealand	NZ\$1	€0.58
UK	£1	€1.15
US	US\$1	€0.72

For current exchange rates see.

Important Numbers

In Greece, the area code must always be dialled, meaning you always dial the full 10-digit telephone number.

Country Code	30
International access code	00
Ambulance	166
Highway rescue (ELPA)	104
Police	100
Tourist police	171

Arriving in Greece

» Athens' Eleftherios Venizelos International Airport

Bus – 24 hour express buses between airport, city centre and Piraeus

Train – Half hourly metro trains to city centre 5.30am to 11.30pm.

Taxis – around €30 to city centre

» Iraklio's Nikos Kazantzakis Airport

Bus 1 – to the city centre every 15 minutes 6am to 1am.

Taxis – to the city centre cost €12.

» Rhode's Diagoras Airport

Buses – to Rhodes Town 6.30am to 11.15pm (11.45am Sunday)

Taxis – around €22

Safety in Greece

Greece is generally a very safe place to visit and the majority of risks are similar to other destinations, with pickpockets in the major cities and taxi drivers willing to charge you extortionate rates from the airports to the city centres.

Other less common dangers include dodgy drinking water on many of the islands, the possibility of spiked drinks at international party resorts, and heatstroke on unshaded, sun-drenched beaches. If you board a private boat, always ensure there are adequate life jackets and be vigilant about your belongings when lounging on busy, popular beaches, leaving passports behind in hotel safes. Potentially risky activities aren't limited to diving and mountain climbing; getting behind the wheel of a car in Greece also requires extra defensiveness and caution.

For this new edition of Greek Islands, our authors have hunted down the fresh, the transformed, the hot and the happening. These are some of our favourites. For up-to-the-minute recommendations, see.

SPONGE DIVING TOUR, KALYMNOS

1 Sponge diving was Kalymnos' main industry from the days of Plato to the mid-'80s and remains integral to the island's identity. There's no formal training – divers learn from father to son. And now you can hop on a boat for a fascinating day at sea, learning about this dangerous occupation from one of the original sponge-diving families (). It's part of the growing trend towards sustainable tourism on many of the islands.

TEMPLE OF ATHENA, ATHENS

2 After a decade of work, the scaffolding has finally been removed from the Acropolis' 5th-century Temple of Athena Nike (). Slender and visually arresting, it's well worth a return visit.

SELENE, SANTORINI

3 Selene () worked hard to achieve its fame in the gourmet circle for inspirational, creative cuisine. Now the location matches the fabled menu with a move to the hill-top village of Pyrgos.

POSEIDONION GRAND HOTEL, SPETSES

4 We'd all get a makeover if we knew we'd end up looking this good. A five-year restoration has laced total luxury into the waterfront hotel's original glamour ().

MUSEUM OF MARBLE CRAFTS, TINOS

5 Artisans and historians alike will be impressed with these excellent exhibits that take you through the background, techniques and uses of the area's gorgeous marble ().

EN PLO, CRETE

6 Set in the beautiful Venetian harbour of Rethymno, this fantastic restaurant () livens up traditional Cretan dishes with unexpected flavours and ingredients.

ONASSIS CULTURAL CENTRE, ATHENS

7 One of a number of new art venues () in the capital, this one offers everything from dance to spoken word, pop bands and paintings.

JACKIE O', MYKONOS

8 The well-partied trail to this infamous gay bar has turned into a bit of a wild goose chase. Jackie O' () has packed its bags and moved to a brand-new waterfront location where it's just as hot as ever.

ACROPOLIS OF AGIOS ANDREAS, SIFNOS

9 Fabulous hilltop views and an intriguing Mycenaean structure make this newly excavated, 13th-century BC ruin () well worth exploring.

BOSCHETTO HOTEL, LEFKADA

10 Stay in this brand-new, boutique, family-run hotel () for ultimate luxury in a restored early 1900s building. Balconies reach out over the sea.

Everyone needs a helping hand when they visit a country for the first time. There are phrases to learn, customs to get used to and etiquette to understand. The following section will help demystify the Greek islands so your first trip goes as smoothly as your fifth.

Language

Tourism is big business in Greece and being good business people, many Greeks have learned the tools of the trade – English. In cities and popular towns, you can get by with less than a smattering of Greek; in smaller villages or out-of-the-way islands and destinations, a few phrases in Greek will go a long way. Wherever you are, Greeks will hugely appreciate your efforts to speak their language.

Booking Ahead

Reserving your accommodation, especially for the first night or two, can make your arrival in Greece that much easier. Out of season it's important, as in some locations hotels close for months on end. In high season hotels can be fully booked well in advance.

Hello. Γειά σας. *ya ·sas*

I would like to book... Θα ήθελα να κλείσω... *tha i ·the·la na kli ·so ...*

a single room ένα μονόκλινο δωμάτιο *e ·na mo· no ·kli·no dho· ma ·ti·o*

a double room ένα δίκλινο δωμάτιο *e ·na dhi ·kli·no dho· ma ·ti·o*

from... to... (date) Από... μέχρι... *a ·po... me ·khri...*

My name is... Με λένε... *me le ·ne...*

How much is it...? Πόσο κάνει ...; *po ·so ka ·ni ...*

per night τη βραδυά *ti·vra· dhya*

per person το άτομο *to a ·to·mo*

Thank you (very much). Ευχαριστώ (πολύ). *ef·ha·ri· sto (po· li)*

What to Wear

Dressing to fit in will depend largely on the season and the destination. In Athens and in other metropolises like Rhodes, Corfu Town and Iraklio, you can get away with shorts and T-shirts in summer or jeans and trousers and casual tops in winter. Going to bars, clubs or fashionable restaurants requires slightly more effort. Think tops rather than T-shirts and skirts and trousers rather than cut-offs. In out-of-the-way locations and islands, you can wear very casual clothing almost all the time. In summer, the heat will make you want to run naked; bring quick-drying linen, tank-tops and summer dresses. Sturdy walking shoes are a must for the country's cobbled roads.

What to Pack

- » Passport
- » Waterproof money belt
- » Credit and debit cards
- » Driver's licence
- » Phrasebook
- » Diving qualifications
- » Mobile phone charger
- » Power adaptor
- » Lock/padlock
- » Lightweight raincoat
- » Seasickness remedies
- » Sunscreen
- » Sunhat and sunglasses

- » Mosquito repellent
- » Swimwear
- » Snorkel and fins
- » Clothes pegs and laundry line
- » Earplugs

Checklist

- » Check the validity of your passport
- » Make any necessary bookings for accommodation and travel
- » Check airline baggage restrictions, including regional flights
- » Inform your credit/debit card company of your travel plans
- » Organise travel insurance (see)
- » Check if you'll be able to use your mobile (see)

Etiquette

- » **Eating & Dining** Meals are commonly laid in the middle of the table and shared. Always accept an offer of a coffee or drink as it's a show of goodwill and don't insist on paying if invited out, it insults your hosts. In restaurants, the pace of service might feel slow but dining is a drawn-out experience in Greece and it's impolite to try to rush wait staff.
- » **Photography** In churches, avoid using a flash or photographing the main altar, which is considered taboo. At archaeological sites, you'll be stopped from using a tripod which marks you as a professional and thereby requires special permission.
- » **Places of Worship** If you plan to visit churches, carry a shawl or long sleeves and a long skirt or trousers to cover up in a show of respect.
- » **Body Language** If you feel you're not getting a straight answer you might need literacy in Greek body language. 'Yes' is a swing of the head and 'no' is a curt raising of the head or eyebrows, often accompanied by a 'ts' click-of-the-tongue sound.

Tipping

- » **Restaurants** When a service charge is included in the bill, a small tip is appreciated. Where's there no service charge, leave 10-20%.
- » **Taxis** Taxi drivers generally expect you to round up the fare – a couple of euro is sufficient. There is a small fee for handling bags; this is an official charge, not a tip.
- » **Bellhops** Bellhops in hotels or stewards on ferries normally expect a small gratuity of €1-3.

Money

In the cities, popular tourist destinations and in larger hotels, restaurants and shops, you can almost always use debit and credit cards. Visa and MasterCard are both widely accepted in Greece. American Express and Diners Club are accepted in larger tourist areas but unheard of elsewhere. In smaller, family-run places, particularly in out-of-the-way locations, cards won't be accepted and you'll need to have cash. While most towns have ATMs, these can often go down and be out-of-order for days at a time. It's therefore wise (and necessary) to always carry some extra cash in a safe place like a moneybelt. Card companies often put an automatic block on cards after the first withdrawal abroad as an antifraud mechanism. To avoid this happening, inform your bank of your travel plans.

Art

Greece and art are good friends. For the oldest artistic expressions, visit the countless archaeological museums to see ancient sculptures and bronze statues, often dredged up from deep below the Aegean. Local cultural museums often contain crafts and textiles while the capital's top museums rival galleries anywhere in Europe.

National Art Gallery The obvious contender for artistic bliss is this rich collection () spanning Greece's creative history; the offering is so plentiful, it has spilled out into the National Sculpture Gallery

Byzantine Iconography You don't have to head to church – this art is alive and thriving in galleries around the country where artists create exquisite, gold-hued creations; check out galleries on Patmos () and in Rhodes Old Town ()

Modern Art The National Museum of Contemporary Art () is a good starting point, but witness the capital's flourishing modern-art scene at events and galleries throughout the city ()

Walking

Whether it's a stroll along the ancient promenade in Athens, a trek along a windswept donkey trail or a wander along an ancient footpath beneath olive and cypress trees, Greece is an outdoor lover's dream. Trails crisscross the majority of the islands and offer great views and, at the right times of year, wildflowers and wildlife too.

Crete's Gorges Trekkers flock to the spectacular Samaria Gorge () however it's nearby cousin, the Aradena Gorge (), is equally breathtaking, leading through lush terrain to the Libyan Sea

Tilos Ancient footpaths lead to hidden coves and unusual wildlife on this tiny, oft-forgotten island ()

Paxi Wander from pretty, Venetian-style harbour towns to villages enclosed deep within ancient olive groves or follow mule trails to plunging limestone cliffs ()

Samos Immerse yourself in lush old-growth forest, wade through rivers and refresh yourself under waterfalls in the island's interior ()

Life At Sea

Greece does seaside living so well, from long stretches of sand to colourful harbourside towns. Whether you like to get your feet wet or would rather just enjoy the view, the shimmering blue water will beckon to you.

Activities Gliding over the water in a kayak or diving down into the colourful depths to explore ancient wrecks are both easily achieved ()

Beaches Stretch out on the black sand of Santorini's view-filled beaches (), the pristine sand secreted away on Crete's south coast (), the forgotten coves of Lesbos (), or amid the chilled scene on Kos () – the choices are endless

Loutra Edipsou A spa town () with magnificent beaches, where therapeutic thermal waters pour into the crystal-clear sea for an enriched dip

Cruising Whether you charter your own yacht or sign up for a three-day cruise, living at sea is the ultimate ocean adventure ()

Great Food

From rich *mousakas* to grilled *souvlaki* and honey-laced *baklava*, Greek cuisine has a homemade authenticity. The freshest produce, pressed olive oil and fragrant herbs create stand-out flavours as a local renaissance of traditional dishes floods restaurant kitchens. You'll also find gourmet chefs adding their own flare. Dining in Greece has never been so tasty.

Italian Influence The Italians left the streets strewn with pasta that the Greeks added to their own dishes; try *makarounes* (homemade pasta cooked with cheese and

onions) to appreciate the results in Rhodes Town () or Corfu ()

Seafood Harbourside dining is a must, with kitchens landing everything from mackerel to cuttlefish, squid and sea urchins; have yours grilled, fried, baked or stuffed with cheese and herbs ()

Greek Salad Not only are the feta and olives utterly fresh but you'll find surprises like *horta* (wild mountain greens), peppers or capers ()

Cooking Classes Learn how to create contemporary Greek cuisine from the gourmet chef of Santorini's famed Selene restaurant ()

Live Music

There's nothing shy or subdued about the Greek music scene. This is where the passionate national character is expressed fully. Clubs throughout the country continue to host traditional *rembetika* bands, playing evocative Greek blues music, while contemporary Greek musicians make their way across the charts. Live music is most often accompanied by dining or ouzo, making it a well-rounded experience.

Cafe Chantant It's difficult to get more authentic than this atmospheric club () in Rhodes Old Town where musicians whip up energetic tunes and locals sway and shoot ouzo from long wooden tables

Rockwave Festival Big name bands and massive crowds gather outside in a park; it's every rockers dream ()

August Moon Festival Imagine taking in live music at the Acropolis or ancient Roman Agora as the full moon rises above you. That's what this festival () is all about

Stoa Athanaton This *rembetika* club () is hidden away over the capital's central meat market but there's no question – it's legendary and is *the* place to hear this traditional art form

Shopping

If you enjoy shopping, or even if you usually don't, Greece will surprise you with its diverse offerings. In addition to the chic shops in the cities that get fashionistas' wallets thumping, Athens has overflowing markets that make shopping a cultural delight – in fact, you'll find local markets in almost every destination that will tempt your curiosity.

Leather Strappy sandals, handbags, belts, Cretan boots – Greek leather goods are high quality, support the local economy and look great ()

Market Stalls Hats, olives, art, jewellery, clothing and postcards – Greek markets are like giant jumble sales, with the food markets in particular being a cultural eye-opener and tummy-pleaser ()

Crafts Local artists craft beautiful jewellery, paintings, pottery and a plethora of other one-of-a-kind objects. Particularly worthwhile galleries are found on Patmos ()

Local Produce Locally produced spices, herbs, pistachios and honey make great souvenirs ()

Top Events

Easter , April

Hellenic Festival , June to August

Carnival , February

August Moon Festival , August

Wine & Cultural Festival , July & August

January

While many of the islands are snoozing during the winter months, the capital is awake and welcomes visitors. Experience festivals in Athens and on the more popular islands that aren't geared to tourists and offer some local insight. Expect warmth from hospitality – not the sun.

FEAST OF AGIOS VASILIOS (ST BASIL)

The first day of January sees a busy church ceremony followed by gifts, singing, dancing and feasting. The *vasilopita* (golden glazed cake for New Year's Eve) is cut; if you're fortunate enough to get the slice containing a coin, you'll supposedly have a lucky year.

EPIPHANY (BLESSING OF THE WATERS)

The day of Christ's baptism by St John is celebrated throughout Greece on 6 January. Seas, lakes and rivers are all blessed, with the largest ceremony held at Piraeus ().

February

While February is an unlikely time to head to Greece, if you like a party and can time your visit with Carnival, it's well worth it.

CARNIVAL SEASON

Carnival season kicks off three weeks prior to the fasting of Lent, from mid-January to late February or early March. A host of minor events leads up to a wild weekend of costume parades, colourful floats, feasting and traditional dancing. Celebrations see distinct regional variations – the most bizarre is on Skyros ().

CLEAN MONDAY (SHROVE MONDAY)

On the first day of Lent (a day referred to as Kathara Deftera), people take to the hills in the islands' interiors to enjoy picnicking and kite-flying.

March

The islands are still sleepy but the weather is warming up, making March a quiet, relaxed time to visit. Although the national calendar is quiet, there are countless religious festivals that towns and entire islands celebrate with great gusto. Ask locally, and check the destination chapters.

INDEPENDENCE DAY

The anniversary of the hoisting of the Greek flag by independence supporters at Moni Agias Lavras is celebrated with parades and dancing on 25 March. This act of revolt marked the start of the War of Independence.

April

In Greece, the biggest day of the year is Easter, when the country – and particularly the islands – shake off the winter slumber. The holiday weekend is busy with Greeks hopping on planes and boats and booking out hotels; be sure to reserve well in advance.

ORTHODOX EASTER

Communities joyously celebrate Jesus' resurrection beginning with candle-lit processions on Good Friday. One of the most impressive of these processions climbs Lykavittos Hill () in Athens. The Lenten fast ends after 40 days on Easter Sunday with the cracking of red-dyed Easter eggs, fire-crackers, feasting and dancing. The Monastery of St John the Theologian on Patmos (), in the Dodecanese, is a great place to witness it.

FESTIVAL OF AGIOS GEORGIOS (ST GEORGE)

The feast day of St George, the country's patron saint and the patron saint of shepherds, falls on 23 April or the first Tuesday following Easter. It's celebrated with dancing, feasting and a general party atmosphere.

May

If you're planning to head out on hiking trails, May is a great time to visit. Temperatures are still relatively mild and wildflowers create a huge splash of colour. Local greens, vegies and produce fill Greek kitchens.

MAY DAY

The first of May is marked by a mass exodus from towns for picnics in the country. Wildflowers are gathered and made into wreaths to decorate houses.

June

For festival-goers looking for contemporary acts rather than traditional village parties, June is hopping in the capital. Top national and international performers fill atmospheric stages with dance, music and drama.

HELLENIC FESTIVAL

The most prominent Greek summer festival features local and international music, dance and drama staged at the ancient Odeon of Herodes Atticus () on the slopes of the Acropolis in Athens. Events run from June all the way through August. Get details and tickets at.

NAVY WEEK

Celebrating their long relationship with the sea, fishing villages and ports throughout the country host historical re-enactments and parties in early June.

FEAST OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST

The country is ablaze with bonfires on 24 June as Greeks light up the wreaths they made on May Day.

ROCKWAVE FESTIVAL

With major international artists (such as Moby, The Killers and Mötley Crüe) and massive crowds, this festival () is held in late June on a huge parkland at the edge of Athens. See for more.

July

Temperatures soar and life buzzes on the islands' beaches, while outdoor cinemas and giant beach clubs continue to draw visitors to Athens' nightlife. If you're staying anywhere near the water, fill your belly with seafood that's hauled in daily.

WINE & CULTURAL FESTIVAL

Held at Evia's coastal town of Karystos, this festival () runs through July and August and includes theatre, traditional dancing, music and visual-art exhibits. It ends with a

sampling of every local wine imaginable.

SPEED WORLD CUP

Kitesurfers from around the world hit Karpathos () in July or August for its excellent surfing conditions and big prize money. Event dates change annually; check for more details.

August

Respect the heat of August; expect to do just a little bit less, move a little more slowly, and relax just a little more fully. If you're planning to travel mid-month, reserve well ahead as Greeks take to the roads and boats in large numbers.

AUGUST MOON FESTIVAL

Under the brightest moon of the year, historical venues in Athens open with free moonlit performances. Watch theatre, dance and music at venues like the Acropolis or Roman Agora. The festival is also celebrated at other towns and sites around the country; check locally for details.

FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION

Assumption Day is celebrated with family reunions on 15 August; the whole population is seemingly on the move on either side of the big day. Thousands also make a pilgrimage to Tinos to its miracle-working icon of Panagia Evangelistria ().

October

Autumn sees temperature drop and the islands quieten down, although city life continues apace. Olive-picking is in full swing in places like Crete and feta production picks up, giving you the opportunity to taste some seriously fresh cheese.

OHI (NO) DAY

Metaxas' refusal to allow Mussolini's troops free passage through Greece in WWII is commemorated on 28 October when national pride fuels remembrance services, military parades, folk dancing and feasting.

Whether you've got six days or 60, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to chat with other travellers.

10 Days Athens & the Cyclades

Begin your tour with a couple of days in Athens, home of some of the world's most important ancient sites. Take in Athens' markets, contemporary art scene and brilliant nightlife. From here head to the Cyclades.

Catch a ferry from **Rafina** for a day or two on the classy island of **Andros**, enjoying its fine beaches and art galleries. Move along to **Tinos**, a pilgrimage island for many Orthodox Christians, with its dramatic landscape and countless Venetian dovecotes.

Next in line is chic **Mykonos**, famous for its colourful harbour, bars and beaches. From here take a day trip to the tiny, sacred island of **Delos** to explore its ancient ruins. Hop back on a ferry to **Naxos**, the greenest and most fertile of the Cyclades and a haven for walkers.

Your final destination is spectacular **Santorini** (Thira). The dramatic sheer cliffs of its volcanic caldera were created by one of the largest eruptions in history and offer an amazing perch from which to watch the sun sinking into the sea. From here you can hop on a flight back to **Athens**.

Two Weeks **Ionian Experience**

If you've a hankering for island life along with beautiful architecture and dramatic scenery, a tour of the Ionian Islands will more than satisfy you. This is doubly true if you're keen to toss some outdoor activities into your trip.

Begin your tour in **Corfu** where you can easily spend a couple of days wandering through **Corfu Town**, with the amazing blend of Italian, French and British architecture of its Old Town, indulging in gourmet cuisine, exploring picturesque coastal villages and lounging on fantastic sandy beaches. If you want to expel a bit more energy, Corfu is also a great place for windsurfing and biking in the island's mountainous interior. Also include a day trip over to the west-coast resort of **Paleokastritsa**, lingering long enough to enjoy the sunset.

Next up is tiny **Paxi**, where visitors can explore a lost world of ancient, gnarled olive groves and derelict farmhouses, along with pretty harbour towns. Hire a boat to explore hidden coves or a scooter to roam the interior. Take an excursion boat over to **Antipaxi** to float in dazzlingly clear water.

With no ferry connections south, hop back on a boat to Corfu or Igoumenitsa to make your way south to **Lefkada**. The beaches of the west coast are the finest in the Ionians, while the southern **Vasiliki Bay** is renowned as a prime windsurfing spot. Southern Lefkada is also the departure point for ferries to **Kefallonia**. Overnight in the picturesque village of **Fiskardo**, kayak to isolated golden beaches and sample the island's well-reputed local wine. Hop across from Fiskardo to **Ithaki** and spend a couple of days exploring the homeland of Homer's 'Odyssey' before returning to Kefallonia. Call in at the stunning west-coast village of **Assos** and the magic beach of **Myrtos** on the journey south to Kefallonia's lively capital, **Argostoli**.

From Kefallonia's south coast port of Pesada, you'll find connections to Agios Nikolaos on **Zakynthos**. Known to the Venetians as the 'Flower of the Orient', the island's capital, **Zakynthos Town**, boasts some fine examples of Venetian and neoclassical

architecture, some great museums and a strong Greek vibe.

Three Weeks **Crete & the Dodecanese**

Once considered out-of-the-way, Crete's eastern half has some fantastic sights and excellent towns that are making it an increasingly magnetic region. From here, you can reach the neighbouring Dodecanese by ferry or on a short flight from Iraklio. The Dodecanese have a wealth of diversity and speedy catamaran service that makes island hopping a joy.

Begin in **Iraklio**, taking in the excellent Archaeological Museum and taking a day trip to the impressive Minoan ruins of **Knossos**. It's worth taking in the surrounding **Peza** wine region en route, which is nestled amid a landscape of shapely hills, sunbaked slopes and lush valleys. From Iraklio head east along the northern coast to the relaxed resort town of **Agios Nikolaos**, which dishes out charm and hip ambience in equal portions. This makes a great base for exploring the surrounding region. Take in **Golden Beach** (Voulisma Beach) and **Istron Bay** for long stretches of sand. Off the north coast, visit the massive fortress on **Spinalonga Island**, a fascinating island that's just a short ferry ride across the Gulf of Mirabello. Visit the nearby Minoan ruins like **Malia**, a palace still filled with mysteries, and rent a bike to explore the tranquil villages of the fertile **Lasithi Plateau**, lying snugly between mountain ranges and home to Zeus' birthplace.

From Agios Nikolaos, continue east to **Sitia** from where you can head for the white sand of **Vai**, Europe's only natural palm-forest beach. You can also travel south from here to **Kato Zakros** to hike through the dramatic Valley of the Dead.

From Sitia, get settled on a 10-hour ferry ride to **Rhodes Island**. Spend a couple of days exploring **Rhodes Town's** walled medieval Old Town and some of the surrounding beaches, fascinating Byzantine chapels and the white-sugar-cube village of Lindos. Catch one of the daily catamarans to lush **Nisyros** to explore deep within its bubbling caldera and then carry on to **Patmos** to experience its artistic and religious

vibe and to visit the cave where St John wrote the Book of Revelations. Backtrack to **Kos** to spend a final couple of days on gorgeous, sandy **Kefalos Bay** and sipping coffee and cocktails in Kos Town's lively squares. From Kos Town you can catch onward flights to **Athens** .

Three Weeks **The Eastern Island Run**

For intrepid travellers without a tight time schedule, Greece's eastern periphery offers languid coasts, lush scenery, amazing sights and divine beaches. Scheduled ferries are regular but not always very frequent; thankfully you won't be in any hurry to leave and many island hoppers would happily extend their exploration from three weeks to three months.

Begin your journey with a few days on **Rhodes** , wandering through the walled medieval Old Town and soaking up the contemporary, atmospheric nightlife. Visit the **Acropolis of Lindos** and the crumbling fairytale castles on the north coast with their phenomenal views. If you have time, take a day trip to **Symi** to enjoy its picturesque harbour and the ornate **Moni Taxiarchou Mihail Panormiti** .

From Rhodes, set sail for the remote-feeling **Tilos** , a great place for bird lovers and walkers, with ancient cobbled pathways and tiny coves only accessible on foot. Head north to **Leros** with its Italian-inspired architecture, ultra-relaxed vibe and fascinating bunker museum revealing the island's starring role in WWII. Continue north to **Samos** , where you can hike through lush forests to secluded waterfalls and laze on idyllic beaches. From Samos, head to **Chios** where you can get lost in the labyrinth of stone alleyways in the southern village of Mesta and then head into the interior to hike through citrus groves under the shade of towering mountain peaks.

The next stop is **Lesvos (Mytilini)** , birthplace of the poet Sappho, producer of some of Greece's finest olive oil and ouzo and – not surprisingly – home to a hopping nightlife. Visit the island's fantastic modern art gallery and the hilltop Byzantine monastery of Moni Ypsilou with its glittering ancient manuscripts. Its landscape is as diverse as its

cultural offerings, with salt marshes to gushing hot springs, dense forests and soft beaches. From here hop to **Limnos** to dine on the day's catch at Myrina's waterside seafood restaurants. Carry on to secluded **Agios Efstratios** to stretch out on volcanic sand beaches before jumping on an overnight boat to **Athens** .

One Month **The Grand Tour**

With time on your hands and the Aegean as your horizon, get into some serious island hopping on this 1350km-long voyage around the periphery of Greece's world of water and rock. Making use of scheduled ferries, this is a good trip if you want variety and the odd challenge.

After exploring bustling **Athens** for a few days, catch a flight or a ferry to spectacular **Santorini** (Thira), whose capital Fira perches precariously atop the sheer walls of a volcanic caldera created by one of the world's greatest eruptions. Next unwind for a few days on some of the smaller islands such as **Anafi** and **Koufonisia** , both perfect for beach lovers. Next visit fertile **Naxos** , famous for its crops and fine wines, and when you're fully recharged, hit the bars and clubs of hedonistic **Mykonos** , favoured by backpackers and socialites alike. Be sure to take a day trip to visit the temples and sanctuaries of sacred **Delos** before moving on to laid-back **Ikaria** – where Icarus crash-landed after he flew too close to the sun.

Next head to **Samos** , where the unspoiled villages of the interior offer lots of opportunities for walkers and nature lovers. Rent a bike on **Kos** to explore its sandy southern coast and jump on the daily catamaran to **Rhodes** , with its amazing walled fortress city built by the Knights of St John. Along with the scrumptious cuisine and laid-back nightlife of the city, be sure to take in a few of the stunning Byzantine churches dotted across the island and the sugar-cube buildings and tower houses of Lindos. Journey west from Rhodes on a flight to **Karpathos** where you can explore the atmospheric mountaintop village of Olymbos. From there, catch another flight to the Cretan capital of **Iraklio** , from where you can visit the nearby magnificent Minoan

ruins of **Knossos** . Rent a car and head out along Crete's northern coast to charming **Hania** , with its beautiful harbour and labyrinth of backstreets. Detour south to **Elafonisi Beach** – Crete's most stunning stretch of sand and then return to the northwestern port of sleepy **Kissamos** . Hop on a ferry to the delightfully unspoiled island of **Kythira** , from where you can catch a ferry back to **Athens** .

PLANNING ESSENTIALS

In Greece, getting there really is half the adventure and island hopping remains an essential part of the Greek experience. Whether you're sailing into a colourful harbour, listening to the pounding surf on a sun-drenched deck, or flying low over azure waters in a propeller-driven twin-engine plane, you will undoubtedly be filled with a sense of adventure. While the local laissez-faire attitude is worth emulating while island hopping, a little bit of planning can also take you a long way. Deciding where and when you want to go and getting your head around routes and schedules before you go will take the work out of your holiday.

Be Flexible

Travelling in Greece is that much more enjoyable when you have room to be somewhat flexible and to go with the flow. While transport information is always vulnerable to change, it seems nowhere is this truer than in Greece. Everything from windy weather to striking workers mean planes and boats are regularly subject to delays and cancellations at short notice. Ferry and airline timetables change from year to year and season to season, with ferry companies often 'winning' contracts to operate different routes annually. When island hopping, it's important to remember that no timetable is watertight.

This doesn't mean travellers should simply throw their hands up in dismay and surrender. Instead it necessitates building some flexibility into your schedule and carefully considering your destinations. Crazy tight schedules are likely to bring stress whereas a more relaxed itinerary means you can spend longer on an island you really like and not panic when high winds mean your flight is delayed for a day. If you don't have a lot of time to play with, choose islands that have regular transport options – daily catamarans rather than a single weekly departure. Try never to schedule island

transport too close to international flights; allow at least a day in your departure city before the flight is due to depart. You can use it to explore the departure city if it all goes according to plan, or to spend thanking those Greek Gods if a strike or altered schedule means you'd have missed your plane.

Travelling by Foot or Car

While almost all islands are served by car ferries, they are expensive and to ensure boarding, you'll generally need to secure tickets further in advance. A more flexible way to travel is to board as a foot passenger and hire a car on islands that you want to explore. Hiring a car for a day or two is relatively cheap and possible on virtually all islands (unless they're so small that you can traverse them easily on foot). It also saves you the cost of buying a ferry ticket to cover your vehicle and if the ferry you'd planned to take is cancelled, it's easier to find an alternative mode of transport, such as a passenger-only boat or flight.

When to Go

High Season

Over the Easter week and from June until September, lots of boats and planes connect the islands to one another and to the mainland. During this time, the sun is shining, the sea is warm and the tourist infrastructure is in full swing, with island hotels, restaurants and sights wide open for business. However, travelling at peak times and between smaller islands and island groups can take some careful planning as transport and hotels can sometimes be booked up months in advance. This is mainly true of the most popular islands and where distances are greater. For example, overnight ferries to and from Athens are best purchased at least a couple weeks in advance if you're wanting anything more than deck class. Many local travel agents have a good handle on the transport and accommodation available and can help you build an itinerary and book all necessary tickets.

Low Season

Out of high season, planning ahead is even more essential. The number of boats and planes diminishes considerably and many hoteliers and restaurant owners close shop and head to Athens. In the dead of winter, all but the most popular islands are virtually closed. Before heading off, always check that transport links are up running and book hotels to ensure that they're open and expecting you. Outside of main cities, museums and sights are often closed or have very reduced hours. And don't go expecting a dip in the sea, unless you're immune to cold water.

Shoulder Season

April, May, September and October are excellent times to hop through the islands. The weather is spring-like, most accommodation, restaurants and sights are open and transport – though somewhat reduced – makes it possible to reach most destinations. Most importantly, you won't be fighting the crowds and everything is a little bit cheaper.

GETTING YOUR SEA LEGS

Even those with the sturdiest stomachs can feel seasick when a boat hits rough weather. Here are a few tips to calm your tummy:

- » Gaze at the horizon, not the sea. Don't read or stare at objects that your mind will assume are stable.
- » Drink plenty and eat lightly. Many people claim ginger biscuits and ginger tea settle the stomach.
- » Don't use binoculars.
- » If possible stay in the fresh air – don't go below deck and avoid hydrofoils where you are trapped indoors.
- » Try to keep your mind occupied.
- » If you know you're prone to seasickness, consider investing in acupressure wrist bands before you leave.

SEA

The Fleet

With a network covering every inhabited island, the Greek ferry network is vast and varied. The slow rust-buckets that used to ply the seas are nearly a thing of the past. You'll still find slow boats, but high-speed ferries are more increasingly common and cover most of the popular routes. Local ferries, excursion boats and tiny, private fishing boats called caiques often connect neighbouring islands and islets. You'll also find water taxis that will take you to isolated beaches and coves. At the other end of the spectrum, hydrofoils and catamarans can cut down travel time drastically. Hydrofoils have seen their heyday but continue to link some of the more remote islands and island groups. Catamarans have taken to the sea in a big way, offering more comfort and coping better with poor weather conditions.

For long-haul ferry travel, it is still possible to board one of the slow boats chugging between the islands and to curl up on deck in your sleeping bag to save a night's accommodation, but Greece's domestic ferry scene has undergone a radical transformation in the past decade and these days you can also travel in serious comfort and at a decent speed. The trade off is, of course, that long-haul sea travel can be quite expensive these days. A bed for the night in a cabin from Piraeus to Rhodes can be more expensive than a discounted airline ticket. Nevertheless, deck class is still very reasonable, cabins are like hotel rooms and the experience of staying overnight on a boat is one you shouldn't pass up too quickly. The key is to choose carefully – you can still find the chug-a-lug voyages with all-night noise and insalubrious bathrooms, or you can opt for vessels more akin to the Love Boat.

Ticketing

As ferries are prone to delays and cancellations, for short trips it's often best not to purchase a ticket until it has been confirmed that the ferry is leaving. During high season, or if you need to reserve a car space, you will need to book in advance. High-speed boats like catamarans tend to sell out long before the slow chuggers. For overnight ferries it's always best to book in advance, particularly if you want a cabin or particular type of accommodation. If a service is cancelled you can usually transfer your ticket to the next available service with that company.

Many ferry companies have online booking services or you can purchase tickets from their local offices and most travel agents in Greece. Agencies selling tickets line the waterfront of most ports, but rarely is there one that sells tickets for every boat, and often an agency is reluctant to give you information about a boat they do not sell tickets for. Most have timetables displayed outside; check these for the next departing boat or

ask the *limenarhio* (port police).

To find specific details on where to buy tickets and other important local information for the islands, see the specific island's Getting There & Away section in the destination chapters throughout this book.

Fares

Ferry prices are fixed by the government, and are determined by the distance of the destination from the port of origin. The small differences in price you may find at ticket agencies are the results of some agencies sacrificing part of their designated commission to qualify as a 'discount service'. (The discount is seldom more than €0.50.) Ticket prices include embarkation tax, a contribution to NAT (the seamen's union) and VAT. In order to make ferry travel more attractive to travellers, embarkation taxes at many ports are being frozen and, in some cases, slightly decreased.

High-speed ferries and hydrofoils cost about 20% more than the traditional ferries, while catamarans are often a third to double the price of their slower counterparts. Caiques and water taxis are usually very reasonable, while excursion boats can be pricey but very useful if you're trying to reach out-of-the-way islands. Children under five travel for free while those between five and 10 are usually given half-price tickets.

Almost all islands are served by car ferries, but they are expensive. Sample prices for vehicles up to 4.25m include Piraeus–Mykonos, €80; Piraeus–Crete (Hania and Iraklio), €90; and Piraeus–Samos, €85. The charge for a large motorcycle is about the same as the price for a deck-class passenger ticket.

Classes

On smaller boats, hydrofoils and catamarans, there is only one type of ticket available and these days, even on larger vessels, classes are largely a thing of the past. The public spaces on the more modern ferries are generally open to all. What does differ is the level of accommodation that you can purchase for overnight boats.

A 'deck class' ticket typically gives you access to the deck and interior, but no overnight accommodation. It's still a very economical option and if you're one of the first to board, you can usually find somewhere to curl up in your sleeping bag, either inside or on the deck. Next up, aeroplane-type seats give you a reserved, reclining seat in which to hopefully sleep. Then come various shades of cabin accommodation: four-berth, three-berth or two-berth interior cabins are cheaper than their equivalent outside cabins with a porthole. On most boats, cabins are very comfortable, resembling a small hotel room with a private bathroom. While these cost the equivalent of a discount airline ticket, the boat ticket buys you a night's accommodation as well. At the other end of the spectrum are luxury cabins with a view to the front of the ship. These resemble standard cruise-ship cabins and are generally very pricey.

Unless you state otherwise, you will automatically be given deck class when purchasing a ticket. Prices quoted in this book are for deck-class tickets, unless otherwise indicated.

Sources

The comprehensive weekly list of departures from Piraeus put out by the EOT (known abroad as the GNTO, the Greek National Tourist Organisation) in Athens is as accurate as possible. While on the islands, the people to go to for the most up-to-date ferry information are the local *limenarhio*, whose offices are usually on or near the quayside.

You'll find lots of information about ferry services on the internet and many of the larger ferry companies also have their own sites. Always check with online schedules, operators or travel agencies for up-to-the-minute info.

A couple of very useful websites:

» **Danae Travel** ([/](#)) This is a good site for booking boat tickets.

» **Greek Travel Pages** () Has a useful search program and links for ferries.

FORGET THE FERRY

One of the more unusual tours in Greece takes you island hopping under your own steam. **Swim Trek** () offers swimming adventure holidays through the closely knit islands of the Cyclades. (In fact, its Little Cyclades' venue has got to be one of the finest, inspired by the wild swimming activities of the poet Lord Byron, who famously swam the Hellespont – known today as the Dardanelles in Turkey – and is said to have also braved Cycladean waters between penning a poem or two.) Participants swim approximately 5km each day with dolphins, turtles and monk seals along isolated coastline. The seven-day tours start from €900, including half-board, a swimming guide and technique analysis. Bring your own swimsuit.

AIR

The Squadron

While the largest and most popular islands tend to have airports, many of the smaller ones don't. Flights between the islands tend to be short and aeroplanes small, often making for a bumpy ride. The vast majority of domestic flights are handled by the country's national carrier, **Olympic Air** (801 801 0101;) , and its main competitor **Aegean Airlines** (801 112 0000;) . Both offer regular services and competitive rates. In addition to these national airlines, there are a number of smaller outfits running seaplanes or complementing the most popular routes.

Most people tend to add a few flights to their island-hopping itinerary and it's well worth it. A flight can save you hours at sea and offers extraordinary views across the island groups. It's a good option to fly to or from your furthest destination, working your way there or back by ferry.

Ticketing & Fares

The easiest way to book tickets is online, via the carriers themselves. You can also purchase flight tickets in most travel agencies in Greece. Olympic Air has offices in the towns where flights depart from, as well as in other major towns. The prices listed in this book are for full-fare economy, and include domestic taxes and charges. There are discounts for return tickets when travelling midweek (between Monday and Thursday), and bigger discounts for trips that include a Saturday night away. You'll find full details on the airline's website, as well as information on timetables.

The baggage allowance on domestic flights is 15kg, or 20kg if the domestic flight is part of an international journey. Olympic offers a 25% student discount on domestic flights, but only if the flight is part of an international journey.

Sources

Up-to-date information on timetables is best found online. Airlines often have local offices on the islands (see the relevant destination chapter for details).

- » **Aegean Airlines** (801 112 0000, 210 626 1000;)
- » **Athens Airways** (801 801 4000, 210 669 6600;)
- » **Greek Travel Pages** () Has a useful search program and links for flights.
- » **Olympic Air** (801 801 0101;)
- » **Sky Express** (28102 23500;)

THE ROUTES

While it's possible to book an international flight directly to a number of the islands (such as Corfu or Rhodes), many people begin their island hopping in Athens, from where it's an easy trip to the nearby mainland ports of Piraeus, Rafina and Lavrio. Countless ferries, catamarans and hydrofoils set sail from these ports to the majority of the island groups, including overnight boats to shores as distant as Crete and Kastellorizo.

Nearby Athens you'll also find the Peloponnese ports of Patra and Kyllini (to the Ionian Islands), Gythio (to Kythira) and Neapoli (to Kythira). In the eastern Peloponnese, high-speed services run from Porto Heli, Ermioni and Galatas to a combination of Spetses,

Hydra and Poros.

Flying into Thessaloniki is another mainland option for beginning your island hop, particularly if you're wanting to visit Thasos and Samothraki, which have frequent and reliable connections to Northern Greece in the summer.

Crete

This island is home to some of Greece's top beaches and full of historic cities and sights. It's large enough to keep you busy for a month, and Crete is often visited as a single destination. But if you are heading to Crete and also want to experience some island hopping, ferries connect many of the island's ports to Piraeus near Athens. Crete also has easy ferry connections to nearby popular islands like Santorini and is a good starting or ending point for a tour of the Cyclades. You can also combine a visit to Crete with a trip to the Dodecanese, with easy flights from here to Rhodes.

As one of Greece's major destinations, Crete is very well connected by boat and air with the rest of the country and even with some international airports/destinations. Given the size and wealth of the island, it's no surprise that some of the biggest transport companies (such as the maritime Minoan Lines and Aegean Airlines) were founded by Cretan businessmen.

For more general information on Crete see.

Cyclades

The Cyclades are numerous and varied and many are little more than a stone's throw from Piraeus. It's no surprise then that they're also very popular destinations. Islands like dramatically scenic Santorini, ancient Delos and glamorous Mykonos have fairly continuous connections ferrying visitors back and forth. If you're short on time and don't want to stray far from Athens but want some classic Greek experiences, the Cyclades are a great option.

Olympic Air provides regular flights between Athens and the Cyclades. Ferry routes separate the Cyclades into western, northern, central and eastern subgroups. Most ferry services operating within the Cyclades connect one of these subgroups with the ports of Piraeus, Lavrio or Rafina on the mainland. Large high-speed boats and catamarans are a regular feature on Cyclades' routes from about mid-June to mid-September. Their travel times are usually half those of regular ferries. The eastern Cyclades (Mykonos, Paros, Naxos, Ios and Santorini) are the most visited and have the best ferry links with the mainland, usually to Piraeus. The eastern Cyclades also have ferry links to the Dodecanese and the northeastern Aegean Islands. The small islands south of Naxos – Iraklia, Schinoussa and Koufonisia – make up the main grouping known as the Little Cyclades. For more general information on this region, see .

Dodecanese

The Dodecanese are packed with top beaches, ancient sights, atmospheric towns and opportunities for outdoor activities like windsurfing and climbing. While the Dodecanese are a little far-flung from the mainland, they're relatively easy to reach and the most popular and worthwhile islands are connected daily with high-speed catamarans.

There are regular direct flights between many of the Dodecanese islands and Athens, along with flights between some of the larger islands in this group and from Rhodes to Crete. Overnight ferries between Piraeus and Rhodes stop at many of the Dodecanese en route, albeit at some fairly antisocial hours. Within the Dodecanese are a vast array of high-speed catamarans and older clunkers, calling in at the majority of islands in the group. The Dodecanese are also linked by boat to the eastern Cyclades, the northeastern Aegean Islands and the Turkish ports of Marmaris, Datca and Bodrum. For more general information on the Dodecanese, see .

Evia & The Sporades

While these islands are popular with Greek tourists, they haven't traditionally been

hotspots with international visitors. The filming of *Mamma Mia!* has changed that. Easily reached from Athens with amazing stretches of sand, they're a good choice if you're short on time but want to feel like you've escaped to an island getaway. Domestic and a few international flights land at Skiathos and Skyros airports. You can also catch a bus from Athens' Terminal B station () to Halkida and Paralia Kymis, for Skyros; and to Agios Konstantinos, for the Sporades. From Athens' Mavromateon terminal (), there are frequent buses to Rafina, for Evia.

There are daily ferries to the Sporades from both Agios Konstantinos and Volos, and weekly ferries from Thessaloniki to the Sporades, as well as regular ferry routes connecting Evia to the mainland. There are frequent daily hydrofoil links from both Agios Konstantinos and Volos to the Northern Sporades (Skiathos, Skopelos and Alonnisos only). There is also a service between Skopelos, Alonnisos and Skyros (via Paralia Kymis, Evia). For more general information on this region, see .

Ionian Islands

Strung out along Greece's eastern coast, the Ionian's golden sands and proximity to the mainland have long made them popular island destinations. You can take very long ferry rides from here to Crete, however most people visiting the Ionians find enough here to fill their itinerary.

Corfu, Kefallonia and Zakynthos have airports, with international links from Corfu. Lefkada has no airport, but Aktion airport, near Preveza on the mainland, is about 20km away. All four airports have frequent flights to/from Athens. There are interisland flight connections between Corfu and Preveza, Preveza and Kefallonia and between Kefallonia and Zakynthos.

The Peloponnese has two departure ports for the Ionian Islands: Patra for ferries to Corfu, Kefallonia and Ithaki; and Kyllini for ferries to Kefallonia and Zakynthos. Epiros has one port, Igoumenitsa, for Corfu (island) and Paxi; and Sterea Ellada has one, Astakos, for Ithaki and Kefallonia (although this service is limited to high season).

KTEL long-distance buses connect each major island with Athens and Thessaloniki, and usually also with Patra or Kyllini in the Peloponnese. Buses to Corfu, Lefkada, Kefallonia, Ithaki and Zakynthos depart from Athens' Terminal A bus station.

For more general information on this region, see .

Northeastern Aegean Islands

If you're looking to get a little off the beaten track and aren't short of time, the northeastern Aegean Islands have some amazing, unique scenery and sights. These islands are fairly well connected to various ports in mainland Greece and other island chains, most notably the Cyclades and the Dodecanese. However, many of these islands are not very well connected among themselves and here especially travellers will need to take a patient and flexible approach when planning trips. The northernmost of them, Thasos and Samothraki, are only accessible via the northern Greece mainland, while route wars between ferry lines wreak havoc with schedules. New lines and companies spring up, others shut down, and unscheduled 'ghost ships' set sail in the early morning hours. Factor in a few extra days to be on the safe side, especially when setting sail for the smaller and more remote islands. Services out of summer can be much reduced and, when the weather is stormy, the result can be long delays.

Just five of the northeastern Aegean Islands have airports (Samos, Chios, Lesbos, Limnos and Ikaria) from where you can fly directly to Athens and Thessaloniki. While interisland flights are possible, most go via Athens, although the smaller carrier Sky Express has several direct flights between the islands.

The northeastern Aegean Islands are also significant for their frequent boats to various resorts and historical sites on the Turkish coast. For information on these and other excursion boats and special short-haul lines, see the specific island sections in the

Northeastern Aegean Islands chapter, .

Saronic Gulf Islands

With popular destinations like laid-back Hydra and stunning settings like Poros, the Saronic Gulf Islands are close to one another and, despite feeling worlds away, are also close to the mainland port of Piraeus. This makes them ideal destinations for short island hopping holidays. If you only have time to visit one island from Athens, nearby Hydra is an excellent choice.

The Saronic Gulf Islands have regular links to and from each other and Piraeus. An alternative way of reaching Poros, Hydra and Spetses is to travel overland through the Peloponnese and then to take local ferries to your island of choice. For more general information on this region, see .

WHY CRUISE?

With over 1400 islands scattered across it, Greece's gorgeous azure water practically begs to be navigated. Not surprisingly, cruising is an increasingly popular way of seeing the country. Not only does cruising remove the stress of sorting out your own interisland transport, accommodation, meals and itinerary, it also gets you out on the sea with the *meltemi* (north wind) at your back and another island always on the horizon. Depending on the cruise you choose, it can also open doors to cultural tours and experiences otherwise not available and take you to destinations where you might not have ventured.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT CRUISE

Cruises aren't what they used to be and certainly no longer the domain of blue-rinses and slot-machines. Catering to a discerning, ever-growing clientele, cruises are often geared to specific interests and niches. Greater competition also means better facilities, more varied excursions, worthwhile onboard diversions and increased dining options. Whether you're in the thirty-something crowd, travelling with kids, after a little luxury or just want a no-frills adventure, if the idea of boarding a cruise ship appeals to you, chances are there's a perfect liner out there waiting.

Assessing Your Needs

There are a number of things that are worth considering in order to decide which cruise is going to meet your expectations and give you the experience you're hoping for.

- » Who is the cruise marketed at? For example, if you're travelling with children, is it family-oriented or if you're looking for a quiet trip, is it dominated by discos and party-seekers?
- » Do you see the cruise as a means of getting from A to B and plan to see as much of the country as possible, or as an experience in itself that's as important as the destination? Some cruises spend full days at sea while others make one or two stops per day.
- » If you plan to spend as much or more time aboard than ashore, does the cruise offer the level of comfort that you're after?
- » Where does the cruise begin and end? Is it a round-trip? This is particularly important if you're planning to travel independently at either end of the cruise.
- » How much structure are you after? Do you want specific meal times, daily onboard activities and tours and excursions all the way?
- » What sights or excursions are you looking for? Are there specific ports you want to visit?

TURKISH DELIGHTS

From many of the Greek islands, Turkey looms large on the horizon. At times it appears so close,

it seems you could reach out and touch it – and on many cruises you can. A number of Turkish ports make it onto cruise itineraries, giving passengers a glimpse into the rich culture next door. Here are a few of the options:

» **Istanbul** This cosmopolitan city is packed with sights, including the Hippodrome, the Blue Mosque, Topkapi Palace and the Spice Market.

» **Kusadasi** One of Turkey's most popular ports for cruise ships, you need to dig beyond the tourist hype; explore the Old Quarter and visit the nearby site of Ancient Ephesus.

» **Dikili** Visited only by small cruise ships, this tiny place is still packed with charm and Turkish hospitality, and has a gorgeous beach.

» **Marmaris** This tourist hotspot has a bustling harbour and bazaar, a buzzing nightlife and is the yachty capital of Turkey. Not far away is an unspoilt, azure coastline backed by pine-covered mountains.

» **Datca** With small sandy beaches and a pretty harbour, Datca is a family-friendly destination. With no sights, it's a good place to just kick back and absorb Turkish culture.

» **Bodrum** It may be a big resort town with an influx of tourists, but it's also got lots of charm, stylish restaurants and a gorgeous modern marina. The Museum of Underwater Archaeology is worth a visit.

Ship Size

Forget what you've heard, size does matter – at least when you're choosing a cruise ship. A ship's size says a lot about the experience it's offering; mega-ships can seem more like floating resorts, with a few thousand people onboard, while tiny liners cater to fewer than 50 passengers.

Large or mega-ships

These ships can accommodate 1000-plus people and most often offer non-stop activities, complete amenities and the potential to cater to your every whim. You'll find casinos, restaurants, spas, theatres, children's clubs, discos, bars, cafes and shops. On these cruises, the destination is almost like an aside or further activity than the focus of the journey and at least as much time is spent at sea as in port. These big boats are also unable to squeeze into some of the smaller islands' harbours and so visit the largest, most popular ports (and even at these, passengers are often transported ashore aboard smaller boats). The islands take out all stops when these liners pull into town and so you know everything will be open, however mega-ships can seem to dwarf an island with its passengers more than doubling the destination's population.

Medium or midsized ships

Catering for 400 to 1000 passengers, midsized ships are usually more focused on the destination than their super-sized sisters. They generally have more port stops, more excursions and fewer on-board activities. You'll still find a spa, pool, restaurants and bars, and even a casino is likely. These boats are able to dock in the island harbours more often and the smaller number of passengers disembarking means you're likely to have a more meaningful experience on the islands.

Small cruises

Offering a somewhat alternative experience, smaller ships have the ability to get into snug harbours. Their itineraries often more varied as they can stop at out-of-the-way ports in addition to the more popular harbours. They generally offer a more relaxed atmosphere with more interaction between guests and the crew. As they're not catering en masse, they often concentrate on a particular cruise niche, whether that's pure luxury or activity-based adventure. Not surprisingly, these cruises are often equally or more expensive than the bigger boats. You won't find a pool or a spa, your cabin will likely be on the small side and there won't be a plethora of dining options, but you're likely to get a very authentic Greek experience.

Itineraries

International cruises tend to visit Greece in combination with ports from other countries – usually Italy, Turkey, Croatia, Egypt and Israel, often beginning at one port and ending at another. Greece-based cruises usually focus solely on ports within Greece and offer round trips. These cruises are often much more destination-focused, with one or two stops each day. The crew are usually Greek, adding to the feel of authenticity, and cuisine and entertainment is more locally-based with a bit of international flavour thrown in. Greek-based cruise lines worth checking out include:

Louis Cruise Line ()

Monarch Classic Cruises ()

Golden Star ()

Variety Cruises ()

Windstar Cruises ()

See 'Who's Who in the Water' ([Click here](#)) for more.

MOVING ON?

For tips, recommendations and reviews, head to [Lonely Planet's Italy](#) chapter of *Western Europe* guide or the *Istanbul* chapter of the *Turkey* guide.

Popular Greek Ports of Call

- » **Piraeus** () The nearest port to Athens, allowing cruisers to explore ancient sites and experience contemporary Greece.
- » **Mykonos** () Famous for its nightlife and glamour, it's worth stopping overnight to take this in.
- » **Delos** () Ancient ruins cover this tiny island. Explore it on a half-day stop.
- » **Corfu** () Fantastic architecture and activity-based excursions to stunning beaches.
- » **Santorini** () Visits to villages, beaches, volcano hiking and sunset cocktail bars.
- » **Crete** Atmospheric Hania () or Iraklio () are perfect for excursions to Knossos.
- » **Rhodes** A bustling medieval walled city can be explored when docked at the Old Town ().
- » **Patmos** () An artistic haven and pilgrim site where St John wrote the Book of Revelations.

Excursions

Excursions are often what make cruises worthwhile and are designed to help you make the most of your sometimes brief visits ashore. Ensure that you choose a cruise that takes in any sights you're set on seeing and factor in the cost of these excursions from the get-go. Excursions are generally most valuable when sights are not near the port or if a cultural expert is leading the tour. On the other hand, you may want to make your own way there in order to experience the local transport and take things at your own pace. Where all of the sights are near the harbour, it's often just as worthwhile and more relaxing to go exploring on your own. This also gives you a bit of independence. If you plan to explore alone, it's worth double-checking before you book; some larger cruise boats dock at distant ports and it's difficult to reach the island's sights or main towns independently.

Excursions are usually booked before you depart or else when you first board the ship. They're offered on a first-come, first-served basis and are generally very popular so if you're choosing your cruise based on the excursions on offer, it's important to book them as soon as possible. Bookings are generally non-refundable so think carefully about your choices, including the activity level required (for example, if there is a lot of strenuous walking, cycling, or stairs to climb). Tours generally range from €35 to €60 for a half day or €70 to €110 for a full day. Activity-based tours such as mountain biking or kayaking tend to be more, with a half day around €100.

BUDGETING

Cruise prices vary greatly depending on the time of year. Booking during the low-season will get you good deals but means you will probably only have the opportunity to visit the largest and busiest ports as smaller islands virtually close out of season. Other factors that can swiftly increase and decrease your costs include how many people you share a cabin with and the type of cabin you choose. Children often only pay port fees if they bunk in with parents.

There are cruises available for a range of budgets, whether you want to splash out on a luxury liner or would prefer a no frills option. Budget cruises can be anywhere from €60 to €144 per day, mid-range run from €145 to €359 and luxury liners begin at €360 up to as much as €560 per day. Prices advertised on websites and in brochures are often inflated and more than the actual price you'll pay. Deals to look out for include two-for-one offers, prices including airfare or hotels, and early-bird rates.

Prices on cruises include meals, on-board activities, entertainment, port fees and portage but there are sometimes additional fuel charges. You also need to budget for airfare, tips, alcohol, pre-and post-cruise accommodation and excursions.

BOOKING

If you are confident manoeuvring your way around websites and know what you want from your cruise, booking online can be a straight-forward option. However, doing so does not necessarily bring discounts and if you are new to cruising, it can be wise to book through an agency. It's certainly worth looking online for virtual tours and reviews, but a knowledgeable travel agent can help you through the plethora of options available and ensure you get the cruise you're after. Agents are also able to advise you on extra excursion charges and surcharges that you may miss when booking online.

There are often great rates for booking early and this also allows you more choices in choosing cabins, excursions, dining options and so forth. While you can get great last minute deals, you need to be willing and able to be flexible about dates and options. Booking through a travel agency means you may get a few days in Athens and even a discount flight tacked on. Try:

- » **Fantasy Travel** ([link](#))
- » **Seafarer Cruises** ([link](#))
- » **Brendan Tours** ([link](#))

Booking your airfare through the cruise line may also mean you're collected at the airport and taken to the ship, and if your flight or luggage is delayed, they'll wait or transport you to the first port.

SPA BOOKINGS

While most on-board activities are included in the price of the cruise and available to everyone, if you want to pamper yourself at the on-board spa, it's worth booking treatments in advance. The most popular treatments and times (for instance, full days at sea or the slots between excursions and dinner) tend to book up quickly. If your cruise doesn't offer the option of booking these in advance, do so on your first day aboard.

Choosing A Cabin

There are three things to consider when choosing a cabin: your budget, how much time you plan to spend in your room and the level of comfort you require. Standard cabins are akin to very small hotel rooms, with fully equipped en suites, a double bed and somewhere to unpack. The cheapest accommodation option is an 'inside cabin', meaning there is no window. These are generally for budget-minded travellers who don't plan to spend a huge amount of time in their room. If you get claustrophobic, you can pay significantly more for an 'outside cabin' where you get either a window or porthole, depending on the age of the ship. From here, cabins increase in price and size, with mid-range cabins offering a little more room to move around and suites being relatively spacious. Prices tend to climb with each floor on the ship but so does the ship's movement. If you suffer from seasickness, choose a lower deck where it's less

rocky.

Cabin pricing is for double-occupancy; if you're travelling solo you pay a surcharge and if you're travelling as a group of three or four and willing to share a cabin, you can receive substantial discounts. Bunks are referred to as upper and lower berths, otherwise there is a double bed or two twins that can be pushed together to make a double. Family rooms are sometimes available by having connecting cabins.

Cabins generally have a mini-fridge, safe, hairdryer, and DVD player but double-check with your agent if life at sea without any of these amenities sounds unbearable. Other things to check are how close your cabin is located to the disco and, if you're paying extra for a window, whether or not your view is likely to be blocked by a lifeboat.

WHO'S WHO IN THE WATER

COMPANY	CONTACT	SHIP SIZE	CRUISE LENGTH	DESTINATIONS	BUDGET
Azamara		medium	7-10 days	Greece, Turkey	\$
Celebrity Cruises		mega	10-13 days	Greece, Italy, Turkey, Egypt, Israel	\$
Costa Cruise Lines		large	7 days	Greece, Italy, Turkey, Croatia, Cyprus	\$
Crystal Cruises		large	7-12 days	Greece, Italy, Turkey, Croatia	\$\$
Cunard Line		large	12 days	Greece, Italy, Croatia, Turkey	\$\$
Golden Star		medium	3-4 days	Greece, Turkey (round-trip)	\$
Holland America Line		large	12 days	Italy, Greece, Spain	\$
Louis Cruise Lines		medium & large	3-10 days	Greece	\$\$
Monarch Classic Cruises		medium	3-7 days	Greece	\$\$
MSC		large	7 days	Greece, Turkey, Croatia, Italy	\$
Oceania Cruises		medium	12 days	Greece, Turkey	\$\$
Princess Cruises		medium & large	7-12 days	Greece, Croatia, Italy, Turkey, Monaco	\$
Regent Seven Sea Cruises		medium	7-14 days	Greece, Italy, Turkey, Croatia, Egypt, Israel	\$\$\$

LIFE ON BOARD

Embarking: What to Expect

- » A check-in time that's two or three hours before sailing
- » Your passport to be taken for immigration processing
- » The first day's program and a deck map, found in your cabin
- » The offer of a tour of the ship
- » A safety drill, a legal requirement for all ships

» The opportunity to set up an on-board credit account

» Your dining-room table assignment

Meals

Set mealtimes and seating assignments are still the norm on most ships and you will be able to choose your preferred dinnertime and table size when you book. Larger ships can offer up to four mealtimes, with the earliest being the least crowded option and the last seating the least rushed. On smaller and more upscale cruise boats, there's an increasing tendency to offer open seating, allowing you to dine when and where you please. On mega-ships there can be up to 10 restaurants to choose between whereas on the smallest boats there is likely only one dining area and dinner is often served on-deck.

Many ships continue to have formal dining evenings; details of dress codes will be included in a daily bulletin delivered each morning to your cabin. Formal dining equals tuxedos, suits, cocktail dresses and formal gowns. Informal means jackets and ties, dresses and skirts. Casual means almost anything, however jeans and shorts are generally frowned upon. Some smaller ships have an all-casual policy while others have alternative dining options for those not interested in attending the formal evenings. Lunch times are much less formal and often offered as buffets on deck.

Tipping

Firstly, don't tip the captain or officers; it would be akin to tipping your dentist or airline pilot. On the final day of your cruise, it's likely you'll find tipping guidelines in your cabin. Remember that while they're not required, tips make up a huge part of the service staffs' wage and unless the service is notably bad, they are expected. If you have an onboard account, the suggested tip will often be added to your bill automatically unless you request otherwise. It usually ends up being around €8 to €10 per person per day. Bar bills will usually carry a 15% inclusive tip and spa staff should be tipped at the time of treatment.

Disembarking

You'll most likely be asked to have your bags packed and ready outside your cabin the night before arrival. You will find them again in the arrivals hall at the terminal. Cruise lines handle baggage in a similar fashion to airlines so don't pack anything breakable in the bags and ensure you keep any vital necessities (like medication) with you.

You will be given a preliminary bill for your onboard account the evening before your arrival at your final destination. If it looks acceptable and you are paying by the credit card used to secure the account, you need not do anything. If you are paying by cash or some other means, you must settle that evening.

CRUISING INDEPENDENTLY

So you want to cruise the Greek islands but don't want to board a liner? Yachting is an amazing way to sail the seas, offering the freedom of being able to visit remote and uninhabited islands. If your budget won't cover buying a yacht, there are several other options open to you. You can hire a bare boat (a yacht without a crew) if two crew members have a sailing certificate. Prices start at €1200 per week; check out **Set Sail Holidays** ([/](#)). If you'd rather have someone else do the sailing for you, **Trekking Hellas** ([/ 210 331 0323](#); *Rethymno 12, Exarhia, Athens*) offers a fully crewed, fully loaded yacht that sleeps 10 from €3400 per day. **Tasemaro** ([/](#)) takes a maximum of four passengers, allowing you to be as involved (or uninvolved) as you like in the sailing. Prices start from €650 per person per week.

The free EOT booklet *Sailing the Greek Seas* contains lots of information about weather conditions, weather bulletins, entry and exit regulations, entry and exit ports and guidebooks for yachties. You can pick up the booklet at any Greek National Tourist Organisation (GNTO/EOT) office either abroad or in Greece. **Hellenic Yachting Server** ([/](#)) has general information on sailing around the islands and lots of links, including information on chartering yachts.

The sailing season lasts from April until October, although the most popular time is between July and September. Unfortunately, it also happens to be the time of year when the *meltemi*

(north wind) is at its strongest. This isn't an issue in the Ionian Sea, where the main summer wind is the *maistros*, a light to moderate northwesterly that rises in the afternoon and usually dies away at sunset.

For a look at the history of flotillas and the impact of yachting on the Greek islands, pick up a copy of *From the Deck of Your Own Yacht* (2009) by Mike Jakeways. The author has spent the past 20 years sailing the Greek seas.

Part ambience, part attitude, part great produce, dining in the magical Greek islands is never just about what you eat, but the whole sensory experience.

In Greece, eating out and sharing a meal with family and friends is as important as the food itself. Meals are drawn-out, casual and convivial affairs and the atmosphere is at times almost festive, with families out until late.

The grazing tradition of sharing mezedhes, or small plates of food, is not just social but a great way to sample new and familiar dishes. Mains are also generally ordered for the table, which is why in many places meat and fish are ordered by the kilo, not per portion.

On the islands, food is part of the slow-paced way of rural life that has always made an ideal fit with the leisurely holiday lifestyle.

Late lunches are the order of the day, with many a *parea* (group of friends or dining companions) lazing the afternoon away over mezedhes and ouzo (or drink of preference), before retiring for a siesta.

For the low-down on Greek cuisine see .

Food Experiences

From the humble beach fish taverna to fine dining in elegant mansions to rustic village cooking, there are plenty of culinary treats in Greece.

Fresh seafood at a seaside restaurant is one of Greece's enduring delights. Other foodie pleasures are as simple as fresh, sun-kissed tomatoes tasting like tomatoes should.

Take a cue from the locals by going to the source, heading to mountain villages for local meat or seaside fishing hamlets for fresh fish. Seek out tavernas where the vegetables, wine and oil are produced by the owner, the fried potatoes freshly hand-cut, or the fish caught by the owner (or his brother, cousin etc), though these places are becoming rare.

Hospitality remains a key element of Greek culture. Many tavernas will offer a complimentary shot of liquor and/or fruit or dessert at the end of the meal.

Cheap Treats

Souvlaki is still Greece's favourite fast food, both the gyros and skewered meat versions

wrapped in pitta bread, with tomato, onion and lashings of tzatziki. You'll see people queuing up outside the best places on the islands.

At bakeries and snack stores you'll find *tyropites* (cheese pies) and *spanakopites* (spinach pies) as well as other variations of the pie.

There is no shortage of Western-style *fastfoudadhika* (fast-food joints) in major towns on the islands.

MEALS OF A LIFETIME

Some of the most memorable meals in Greece will inevitably involve a spectacular view or unique setting, whether you are dining at a fine restaurant or enjoying simple home-cooked food and warm hospitality in a village taverna. Some of the best places for food and ambience:

» **Varoulko** () serves stellar seafood by one of Greece's top chefs with a view of the floodlit Acropolis in Athens.

» **Koukoumavlos** () and **1800** () in Santorini have stunning cliff-top sunset vistas over the caldera, and innovative Greek cuisine.

» **Selene** (), in a new hill-top village location on Santorini, is renowned for creative island cuisine based on local produce.

» **Portes** () in Hania's old town serves Cretan food with flair in a delightful setting on a quiet, narrow alleyway under the city walls.

» **Levantis** () in Paros serves superb modern Greek cuisine with an Aegean bent, in a delightful courtyard garden.

» **Klimataria** () in the quaint fishing village of Benitses on Corfu is a standout example of fresh, simple food from the humble Greek taverna.

» **Tassia** () in picturesque Fiskardo, on Kefallonia, is renowned for refined cuisine and excellent desserts.

Cooking Courses

Well-known Greece-based cooking writers and chefs run cooking workshops and tours, mostly during spring and autumn, on several islands.

» **Glorious Greek Kitchen Cooking School** () Award-winning Greek-American food writer, author and cook Diane Kochilas runs week-long courses on her ancestral island Ikaria in July and August, as well as cooking classes and culinary tours in Athens, Crete and the Cyclades.

» **Kea Artisanal** () Aglaia Kremezi and her friends open their kitchens and gardens for hands-on cooking workshops on Kea.

» **Crete's Culinary Sanctuaries** () Run by Greek-American chef and food writer Nikki Rose, this course combines cooking classes, organic farm tours, hiking and cultural excursions around the island.

» **Selene** () This restaurant on Santorini runs one- and three-day programs focusing on island specialities and wines.

PRICE RANGES

Price indicators in this book refer to the average cost of a main course:

» **Budget** under €15

» **Midrange** €15-40

» **Top End** more than €40

Cook it at Home

While you can find most fresh ingredients for Greek cooking at home, leave room in your baggage for some local treats (customs and quarantine rules permitting).

Your holiday souvenirs should include olives and extra virgin olive oil from small, organic producers, aromatic Greek thyme honey, dried herbs such as oregano, mountain tea or camomile flowers, and dried barley rusks. Hard to find caper leaves are great in salads and fruit preserves or 'spoon sweets', make an easy dessert poured atop Greek yogurt or ice cream. Sweet toothers should also look for local specialities such as *amygdalota* from the Cyclades ().

Local Specialities

Island hopping is a great opportunity to travel your taste buds. From the raw ingredients, to cheese, olive oil, wine and local dishes, you will find many regional variations and specialities across the islands.

Crete is arguably the closest thing Greece has to a gourmet travel destination, with a distinct culinary tradition and produce, while Lesbos, Naxos and many other islands offer their own culinary treats.

Be sure to ask about local dishes, cheese, olive oil and produce wherever you go. For more information about island cuisine, see .

ALFRESCO DINING

Given the long summers and mild winters, alfresco dining is central to the dining experience in Greece. Most people prefer to eat outdoors rather than in air-conditioned spaces – tables are set up on pavements, roads, in squares, on beaches, terraces and anywhere else they can get away with it.

While dining on balmy summer nights, soaking up the views and atmosphere, be prepared to share the experience with smokers. Smoking is banned in enclosed public spaces, including restaurants and cafes, but outdoor spaces are still open slather for the EU's biggest smokers.

How to Eat & Drink Like a Local

Getting into the local spirit of things is pretty easy. The dining scene on the Greek islands is relaxed and hospitable.

When to Eat

Greeks eat late. Most wouldn't think of eating dinner before sunset during the summer, which coincides with shop closing hours, so restaurants often don't fill up until after 10pm. Try adapting to local eating times to get the whole experience – a near-empty restaurant at 7pm might be heaving by 11pm.

While changes in working hours are affecting traditional meal patterns, lunch is still usually the big meal of the day and does not start until after 2pm.

Most tavernas are open all day, but many upmarket restaurants open for dinner only. Cafes do a roaring post-siesta afternoon trade.

Greece does not have a big breakfast tradition, unless you count a cup of coffee and a cigarette and maybe a *koulouri* or *tyropita* eaten on the run. You will find Western-style breakfasts in hotels and tourist areas.

Choosing Your Restaurant

Avoiding 'tourist' restaurants is part of the challenge of eating in Greece, along with avoiding the trendy, often overpriced and underwhelming 'in' places. Luckily, there is plenty in between. Even in the most touristy places, you can still find good food, you might just have to look harder to find it.

Location isn't always paramount. While there's no lack of fancy restaurants in exquisite seaside settings, some of the best and most authentic food is found inside humble downtown taverns and no-frills places a block away from that killer sea view.

The key to picking a restaurant is to find where locals are eating. As a general rule, avoid places on the main drags with touts and big illuminated signs with usually unappealing photos of food. Hotel recommendations can be tricky, as some have deals with particular restaurants. Restaurants must display their menus and prices out front.

Traditional tavernas remain the most common and popular style of eatery, for tourists and locals alike. They are casual, good value, often family-run (and child-friendly) places, where the waiter arrives with a paper tablecloth and plonks a basket of bread and cutlery on the table. Go for places with a smaller selection (more likely to be freshly cooked) rather than impossibly extensive generic menus.

Upmarket 'modern' tavernas have better wine lists, fancier decor and more refined versions of Greek cuisine. However, many new places espousing 'creative' or modern Greek can be hit-or-miss affairs. Stick to established players. The major islands and Greece's big resorts have many award-winning restaurants, serving Greek and international cuisine, with fine wine and impeccable service.

RESTAURANT GUIDE

The Greek taverna has many specialist variations – the *psarotaverna* specialises in fish and seafood, the *psistaria* or *hasapotaverna* specialises in char-grilled or spit-roasted meat.

A *mayireio*, or cookhouse, specialises in traditional home-style, one-pot stews, casseroles and baked dishes (known as *mayirefta*). In cities, these often only open during the day to cater for workers.

An *estiatorio* (restaurant) is where you pay more for essentially the same dishes as in a taverna or *mayireio* but with a nicer setting and formal linen service. The term also refers to upmarket restaurants serving international cuisine.

For a real sharing experience, *mezedhopoleio* offers lots of small plates of mezedhes (appetisers). In a similar vein, the *ouzerie* traditionally serves tiny plates of mezedhes with each round of ouzo, while in Crete they have *rakadhiko* (serving raki).

The *kafeneio* (coffee house) is one of the oldest institutions, serving Greek coffee, spirits and little else (though in rural villages it may serve food), and remains largely the domain of men.

Etiquette & Table Manners

Greek tavernas can be disarmingly and refreshingly laid-back. The dress code in holiday areas is casual but in towns and upmarket places, locals dress to impress. Service can be slow (and patchy) by Western standards, but the staff is not in a rush to get you out of there either. Don't be shy in gesturing to get the waiter's attention. Tables are not generally cleared until you ask for the bill, which in traditional places is brought out with complimentary fruit or sweets, and occasionally a shot of liquor. Receipts may be placed on the table at the start of the meal in case tax inspectors visit. Greeks love to drink with meals (the drinking age is 16), but public drunkenness is uncommon and frowned upon.

It is best to book for upmarket restaurants or popular tourist haunts, but bookings are unnecessary in most island tavernas.

Service charges are included in the bill, but most people leave a small tip or round up the bill – 10% to 15% is acceptable. If you want to split the bill, it is best you work it out among your group. Greeks are more likely to argue heatedly over whose turn it is to pick up the tab, rather than split bills.

Greeks are generous and proud hosts. Don't refuse a coffee or drink – it's a gesture of hospitality and goodwill. If you are invited out, the host will normally pay. If you are invited to someone's home, it is polite to take a small gift (flowers or sweets) and pace yourself, as you will be expected to eat everything on your plate.

OUZO TIME?

Ouzo – Greece's famous aniseed-flavoured liquor – has come to embody a way of eating and socialising. It is best enjoyed with leisurely rounds of mezedhes during long and lazy summer afternoons with friends. Ouzo is sipped slowly and ritually to cleanse the palate between tastes. It is served in small bottles or *karafakia* (carafes) with water and a bowl of ice cubes to dilute it (it turns a cloudy white).

Ouzo is made from distilled grapes with residuals from fruit, grains and potatoes, and is flavoured with spices, primarily aniseed, giving it that licorice flavour. The best ouzo is produced in Lesbos (Mytilini), where there are several major producers. **Barbayannis** () in Plomari has the Varvagianni Ouzo Museum (), tastings and tours of the famous distillery.

Menu Advice

Most restaurants on the tourist trail will have menus in English and other languages. Off the beaten track, you may encounter only Greek menus or staff will just tell you what's available. Many places encourage you to go into the kitchen and see what's cooking in the pots, while some have the day's *mayirefta* specials out in big trays.

Bread and occasionally small dips or nibbles are served on arrival (you're not given a choice, and be aware that it's normally added to the bill).

You don't have to stick to the three-course paradigm, most Greeks will share a range of starters and mains (or starters can be the whole meal). Dishes may arrive in no particular order (they often arrive in the order they are cooked), and you can keep

ordering more food during the meal.

Frozen ingredients, especially seafood, are usually flagged on the menu (an asterisk or 'kat' on Greek menu).

Fish is usually sold by weight rather than in portions, and is generally cooked whole rather than filleted. It is customary to go into the kitchen to choose your fish (go for firm flesh and glistening eyes). Check the weight (raw) so you know what to expect to pay on the bill, as fish is generally very expensive.

WATER ACTIVITIES

Diving & Snorkelling

Snorkelling can be enjoyed off almost any of the islands and equipment is cheaply available. Especially good spots to don your fins are Monastiri on Paros; Paleokastritsa on Corfu; Ammoöpi in southern Karpathos; Xirokambos Bay on Leros; and anywhere off the coast of Kastellorizo (Megisti). Many dive schools also use their boats to take groups of snorkelers to prime spots.

Greek law insists that diving be done under the supervision of a diving school in order to protect the many antiquities in the depths of the Mediterranean and Aegean seas. Until recently dive sites were severely restricted, but many more have been opened up and diving schools have flourished. You'll find schools on the islands of Corfu, Evia, Hydra, Leros, Milos, Mykonos, Paros, Rhodes, Santorini and Skiathos; and in Agios Nikolaos and Rethymno on Crete. The **Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI;)** has lots of useful information, including a list of all PADI-approved dive centres in Greece.

Windsurfing

Windsurfing is very popular on the islands. Hrysi Akti on Paros, and Vasiliki on Lefkada vie for the position of the best windsurfing beach. According to some, Vasiliki is one of the best places in the world to learn the sport.

There are numerous other prime locations around the islands, including Afiartis Bay on Karpathos; Ormos Korthiou on Andros; Kalafatis Beach on Mykonos; Agios Georgios on Naxos; Milopotas Beach on Ios; Cape Prasonisi in southern Rhodes; around Tingaki on Kos; Kokkari on Samos; around Skala Sotira on Thasos; and Koukounaries Beach on Skiathos.

You'll find sailboards for hire almost everywhere. Hire charges range from €10 to €25, depending on the gear and the location. If you are a novice, most places that rent equipment also give lessons. Sailboards can be imported freely from other EU

countries, but importing boards from other destinations, such as Australia and the USA, is subject to regulations. Theoretically, importers need a Greek national residing in Greece to guarantee that the board will be taken out again. Contact the **Hellenic Windsurfing Association** (210 323 3696; *Filellinon 4, Syntagma, Athens*) for more information.

Kitesurfing & Surfing

With a constant gale and near-perfect conditions, Karpathos' Ammoöpi beach is a magnet for the sport's top talent. Each summer, Karpathos hosts an international kitesurfing competition. This is also an ideal place to learn the art of surfing.

Waterskiing

There are three islands with water-ski centres: Kythira, Paros and Skiathos. Given the relatively calm and flat waters of most island locations and the generally warm waters of the Mediterranean, waterskiing can be a very pleasant activity. August can be a tricky month, when the *meltemi* (northeasterly winds) can make conditions difficult in the central Aegean. Poros, near Athens, is a particularly well-organised locale, where **Passage** (22980 42540;; *Neorion Bay*) hosts a popular school and slalom centre.

DIVING INTO HISTORY

In the last half decade, Greek dive laws have relaxed to allow divers to visit many more underwater locations. While most divers and dive companies are heralding this as a positive move, historians and archaeologists are increasingly alarmed and calling for a return to the law prior to 2007, which strictly limited diving to a handful of areas. Their reason? The looting of underwater archaeological sites.

Greece's underwater world holds a wealth of historic discoveries. Over the centuries, a great many statues on land were melted down to make weapons and coins. Consequently, many of the largest ancient statues you'll see in Greek museums have been salvaged from the watery depths in the past century. The sea is now the country's largest archaeological site. Approximately 100 known underwater sites are protected; however, historians claim there are likely to be thousands more yet to be discovered. Greece's ocean bed is a graveyard to countless shipwrecks dating all the way back to Classical times, which are considered both fascinating dive sites and archaeological hotbeds.

Despite a law dating back to 1932 that asserts that all found artefacts belong to the state (see also Customs Regulations,), divers are said to be surfacing with sculptures, jewellery, warrior helmets and more. Meanwhile, archaeologists claim that the removal of even the most seemingly mundane objects can affect and eventually destroy sites.

The moral for divers? Don't become another masked and finned pirate. Look but don't touch.

LAND ACTIVITIES

Hiking

The interior of many of the islands are mountainous and, in many ways, a hikers' paradise. The most popular routes are well walked and maintained; however, the **EOS** (*Greek Alpine Club*; 210 321 2429; *Plateia Kapnikareas 2, Athens*) is grossly underfunded and consequently many of the lesser-known paths are overgrown and inadequately marked. You'll find EOS branches such as the **EOS Mountaineering Club of Rethymnon** (2831 057766;; *Dimokratias 12, Rethymno*) on Crete and the Halkida Alpine Club on Evia ().

On small islands you will encounter a variety of paths, including *kalderimia* , which are cobbled or flagstone paths that have linked settlements since Byzantine times. Other paths include *monopatia* (shepherds' trails) that link settlements with sheepfolds or link remote settlements via rough unmarked trails. Be aware that shepherd or animal trails can be very steep and difficult to navigate.

If you're going to be venturing off the beaten track, a good map is essential.

Unfortunately, most of the tourist maps sold around the islands are completely

inadequate. The best hiking maps for the islands are produced by **Anavasi** ([\(\)](#)), based in Athens.

Spring (April to May) is the best time. Walkers will find the countryside green and fresh from the winter rains, and carpeted with the spectacular array of wildflowers for which the islands are justly famous. Autumn (September to October) is another good time, but July and August, when the temperatures are constantly up around 40°C, are not much fun at all. Whatever time of year you opt to set out, you will need to come equipped with a good pair of walking boots to handle the rough, rocky terrain, a wide-brimmed hat, a water bottle and a high UV-factor sunscreen.

A number of companies run organised hikes. The biggest is **Trekking Hellas** ([\(\)](#)), which offers a variety of hikes on Crete and in the Cyclades.

TOP ISLAND HIKES

ISLAND GROUP	DESTINATION	SKILL LEVEL	DESCRIPTION
Crete	Samaria Gorge	easy-medium	One of Europe's most popular hikes with 500m vertical walls, countless wildflowers and endangered wildlife (impassable mid-Oct–mid-Apr)
Crete	Zakros & Kato	easy-medium	Passing through the mysterious Valley of the Dead, this trail leads to a remote Minoan palace site
Cyclades	Tragaea, Naxos	easy-medium	A broad central plain of olive groves, unspoiled villages and plenty of trails
Cyclades	Filoti, Naxos	medium-difficult	A strenuous climb to the Cave of Zeus (a natural cavern on the slopes of Mt Zeus)
Dodecanese	Tilos	easy-medium	Countless traditional trails along dramatic cliff tops and down to isolated beaches; a bird-lover's paradise
Dodecanese	Nisyros	easy-medium	A lush volcanic island with hikes that lead into the hissing craters of Mt Polyvotis
Evia	Steni	medium-difficult	Day hikes and more serious trekking opportunities up Mt Dirfys, Evia's highest mountain
Ionians	Paxi	easy	Paths along ancient olive groves and snaking dry-stone walls; perfect for escaping the crowds
Ionians	Ithaki	easy-medium	Mythology fans can hike between sites linked to the Trojan War hero Odysseus
Northeastern Aegean Islands	Samos	easy-medium	Explore the quiet interior with mountain villages and the forested northern slopes of Mt Ampelos
Saronic	Hydra	easy	A vehicle-free island with a well-maintained network of paths to beaches and monasteries

Sporades	Alonnisos	easy	A network of established trails that lead to pristine beaches
Sporades	Skopelos	easy	Well-maintained trails through pine forests, olive groves, orchards and vineyards

Cycling

While it's possible to rent a bike for a day, many people are choosing cycling as their main form of transport. Bicycles usually travel for free on the ferries so there is no extra outlay, nor do you have to pony up valuable cash to hire motorised wheels when you arrive. You can be last onto the ferry and first off – free to pedal off to the nearest beach or to look for accommodation.

Most islands aren't exactly flat but a bike with a good set of gears should tackle most inclines with ease. While virtually any island will lend itself to some kind of cycling activity, the Dodecanese island of Kos is perhaps the best equipped and most cyclist-friendly. Bicycle-hire outfits are everywhere and a bicycle is almost *de rigueur* for many visitors. Groups of cyclists can be encountered all over the flat and winding lanes of the north coast of Kos.

The islands don't have the frenzied traffic of the mainland, however motorists are nevertheless notoriously fast and not always travelling in the expected lane; extra caution on corners and narrow roads is well-warranted. In remote locations, be sure to carry a repair and first-aid kit with you. In July and August, most cyclists break between noon and 4pm to avoid sunstroke and dehydration.

There are an increasing number of tour companies specialising in cycling holidays.

Cycle Greece () runs bike tours for various skill levels across the Cyclades, the Dodecanese, the Saronic Gulf Islands and Crete. **Hooked on Cycling** () runs boat and bike tours to similar destinations, as well as the Ionian Islands.

Greek Islands for Kids

Sights & Activities

The Greek islands don't cater to kids in the way that some countries do – you won't find endless theme parks and stacks of children's menus. Instead, you'll discover that children are simply welcomed and included wherever you go. With family woven so tightly into the fabric of Greek society, children are actively encouraged to join in most experiences. You'll see families dining out late into the evening and kids freely exploring in galleries and at ancient sites. Greeks will generally make a fuss over your kids, who may find themselves on the receiving end of many small gifts and treats. Teaching your children a few words in Greek will make them even more appreciated.

While even the most modern Greek museums are often quite simply filled to the gills with relics and objects that not all children are going to appreciate, the settings are often intriguing as kids wander through the ancient palace-like buildings. The stories behind the objects can also captivate kids – ancient statues hauled up from the depths of the sea or helmets worn by gladiators. Generally more popular than the museums are the many ancient sights where kids enjoy climbing and exploring. They can scale pillars at Asklepieion (Kos), run Olympic laps at the Acropolis of Rhodes and conquer Knossos (Crete).

One of the biggest sights and activities for children is the beach. In summer, many of the larger, popular beaches have boogie boards, surfboards, snorkelling gear and windsurfing equipment for rent. Many also offer lessons or trips on boats or giant rubber, air-filled bananas. Kos, Patmos, Crete, Corfu and Skiathos are just a few of the islands with family-friendly beaches. While some beaches have steep drop-offs or strong currents, there is generally a calmer side to each island or a shallow, protected bay that locals can direct you to.

Most towns will have at least a small playground, while larger cities often have fantastic, modern play parks. In many cases, you can admire children's innate ability to overcome language barriers through play while you enjoy a coffee and pastry at the park's attached cafe. Some of the larger and more popular locations (such as Rhodes, Crete and Athens) also have water parks.

Dining Out

While eating out with children in Greece, it quickly becomes apparent that the lack of kids' meals is a blessing in disguise. Greek cuisine is all about sharing; ordering lots of mezedhes (small dishes) lets your children try the local cuisine and find their favourites. You'll also find lots of kid-friendly options like pizza and pasta, omelettes, chips, bread,

savoury pies and yoghurt.

The fast service in most restaurants is good news when it comes to feeding hungry kids. Tavernas are very family-friendly affairs and the owners will generally be more than willing to cater to your children's tastes. Ingredients like nuts and dairy find their way into lots of dishes so if your children suffer from any severe allergies, it's best to ask someone to write this down for you clearly in plain Greek to show restaurant staff.

Accommodation

Many hotels let small children stay for free and will squeeze an extra bed in the room. In all but the smallest hotels, travel cots can be found however it's always best to check this in advance if it's a necessity for your family. In larger hotels, cities and resorts, there are often package deals for families and these places are generally set up to cater to kids with childcare options, adjoining rooms, paddling pools, cots and highchairs.

Safety

Greece is a safe and easy place to travel with children. Greek children are given a huge amount of freedom and can often be seen playing in squares and playgrounds late into the night. Nevertheless, no parent needs to be told to be extra vigilant with their children when travelling and it's wise to ensure your child always knows where and who to go to for help. This is especially true on beaches or playgrounds where it's easy for children to become disorientated. It's also prudent not to have your children use bags, clothing, towels, etc with their name or personal information (such as national flag) stitched onto them; this kind of information gives a possible in to potential predators.

Dangers children are far more likely to encounter are heat stroke, water-borne bugs and illness, mosquito bites and cuts and scrapes from climbing around on ancient ruins and crumbling castles. Most islands have a clinic of some sort although hours may be irregular so it's handy to carry a first-aid kit with basic medicine and bandages.

Children's Highlights

Keep Busy

- » **Boat Trips** Zip over the sea in a catamaran, bob up and down in a fishing boat or sail on a day trip to a secluded bay.
- » **Kayaking** Paddle alongside dolphins and visit pirate coves off Kefallonia.
- » **Beach Time** Jump waves, build sandcastles and snorkel.
- » **Cycling** Use pedal power along the flat bike-friendly road of Kos.

Explore

- » **Acropolis** Explore the home of the Greek Gods, perfect early in the day.
- » **Nisyros' Volcano** See it bubble and hear it hiss up close.
- » **Medieval Castles** Get lost in castles perched on cliffs above the sea and in varying stages of crumbling decay on Rhodes Island – great for climbing and make-believe.
- » **Knossos** Let those young imaginations loose in the labyrinth.

Dig In

- » **Yemista** Vegies (usually tomatoes) stuffed with rice.
- » **Pastitsio** Buttery macaroni baked with minced lamb.
- » **Tzatziki** A sauce or dip made from cucumber, yoghurt and garlic.
- » **Loukoumadhes** Doughnut-holes served with honey and cinnamon.
- » **Galaktoboureka** Custard-filled pastry.
- » **Politiko Pagoto** Constantinople-style, slightly chewy ice-cream made with mastic.

Cool Culture

- » **Carnival Season** Enthral even older kids with fancy dress, parades and traditional dancing.
- » **Football** Snag tickets for a game to catch some national spirit.
- » **Hellenic Children's Museum** Join Greek cooking and craft classes at this excellent diversion in Athens.

Planning

The shoulder seasons (April/May and September/October) are great times to travel with children as the weather is milder and the crowds fewer.

A good way to prepare your kids for their holiday and to encourage an active interest in the destination is by introducing them to some books or DVDs ahead of time. Lot of younger children enjoy stories of Greek gods and Greek myths, while slightly older kids will enjoy movies like *Mamma Mia!* or *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* for their Greek-island settings. You can also find children's books about life in Greece that include a few easy phrases that your kids can try out.

If your kids aren't old enough to walk on their own for long, consider a sturdy carrying backpack; pushchairs are a struggle in towns and villages with slippery cobbles and high pavements. Nevertheless, if the pushchair is a sturdy, off-road style, with a bit of extra muscle you should be OK.

Travel on ferries, buses and trains is free for children under four. They pay half-fare up to the age of 10 (ferries) or 12 (buses and trains). Full fares apply otherwise. On domestic flights, you'll pay 10% of the adult fare to have a child under two sitting on your knee. Kids aged two to 12 pay half-fare. If you plan to rent a car, it's wise to bring your own car or booster seat as many of the smaller local agencies won't have these.

What to Pack

- travel booster seat (the deflatable kind that is light, easy to pack away and perfect for restaurants)
- lightweight pop-up cot for babies (if travelling to remote locations)
- car seats (rental agencies are not always reliable for these, particularly on small islands or with local agencies)
- plastic cups and cutlery for little ones
- medicine, inhalers, etc, along with the prescription
- motion-sickness medicine and mozzie repellent
- hats, waterproof sunscreen, sunglasses and water bottles

Fresh milk is available in large towns and tourist areas, but harder to find on smaller islands. Supermarkets are the best places to look. Formula is available almost everywhere, as is condensed and heat-treated milk. Disposable nappies are also available everywhere, although it's wise to take extra supplies of all of these things to out-of-the-way islands in case of local shortages.

Matt Barrett has been dispensing his knowledge of Greece across the internet for years. His website, **Travel Guide to Greece** ([/](#)) has lots of useful tips for parents, while his daughter Amarandi has put together some tips for kids ([/](#)).

If you're after knockout sites, Crete, the Dodecanese, the Ionians and the Cyclades have atmospheric architecture and ancient ruins that draw crowds. If you fancy getting active, these same regions offer diving, surfing, rock-climbing, hiking and kayaking. They're well geared for tourists and receive lots.

For a beach scene head to Corfu, Mykonos or Kos. Thankfully, isolated pockets of sandy bliss can be found within almost all of the groups but to really escape, head to the northeastern Aegean.

Some island groups like the Dodecanese and Cyclades have strong transportation links that zip you easily from one harbour to the next, while others, like the northeastern Aegean Islands, require more time and intrepidity to manoeuvre to and between.

Athens & Around

Ruins

Nightlife

Museums

ANCIENT RUINS

The Acropolis is an experience not to be missed. But don't stop there – the capital and surrounding region is littered with more ruins to explore, from Ancient Agora in the city's heart to the Temple of Poseidon on Cape Sounion.

NIGHTLIFE

This city refuses to snooze, with glamorous beachside clubs, intimate *rembetika* (blues) bars and everything in between.

MUSEUMS

From the eclectic Benaki Museums to the ultra-modern Acropolis Museum, Athens is a major contributor in the world's museum scene. Regardless of your interests, you're sure to find one to wow you.

Saronic Gulf Islands

Activities

Architecture

Museums

ACTIVITIES

Diving is magical in these waters, with dolphin safaris, sunken pirate ships and underwater caves. The peaceful interiors of Poros, Hydra and Spetses offer forests and hilltops to explore.

ARCHITECTURE

Hydra is picture-perfect with tiers of traditional buildings sweeping down to the harbour. Spetses' Old Harbour shows off traditional boatbuilding, while mansions are scattered across the island.

MUSEUMS

The museums here are small, relaxed and easy on the eyes. See fully restored mansions, eclectic naval collections, gold-cruited ecclesiastic paraphernalia, traditional seafarer's homes and a museum of sea craft with caiques to yachts.

Cyclades

Ancient Ruins

Cuisine

Nightlife

ANCIENT RUINS

The sacred relics of Delos, with their own private island, are one of Greece's most important sites. Thira on Santorini is equally atmospheric with mosaics, temples and phenomenal views.

CUISINE

Smoked eel and ham, Mykonian prosciutto, soft cheeses and wild mushrooms are gathered locally and fill the menus on Mykonos and Paros. Add creative, modern takes on traditional food.

NIGHTLIFE

The nightlife on Mykonos is legendary, sometimes frantic, at other times all gloss and glitter. Ios' scene is less swanky but very full-on, while Santorini has cocktail bars over the caldera.

Crete

Ruins

Activities

Beaches

ANCIENT RUINS

Splendid Minoan ruins grace the island. The impressive, restored palace of Knossos is the star, with its famous labyrinth.

ACTIVITIES

A footpath winds down between the steep canyon walls of Samaria Gorge, Europe's longest gorge and one of Crete's most popular draws. There are quieter, equally dramatic gorges for trekking and rock climbing and a mountainous interior concealing hermit caves and haunted woodland.

BEACHES

Crete's beaches spoil you for choice with palm-fringed stretches of powder-soft sand. Some are celeb haunts, others isolated oases, but all are worthy of sinking your toes into.

Dodecanese

Architecture

Activities

Cuisine

ARCHITECTURE

Architectural eye candy galore, with fairytale castles, frescoed Byzantine churches and a walled medieval city. Find mountain villages hidden from pirates, ancient temple ruins and Italian-inspired harbour towns.

ACTIVITIES

World-class rock climbing, kite-surfing, beach-combing, diving and walking is all here. Follow ancient footpaths, hike into the caldera of a bubbling volcano or surf the waves.

CUISINE

Traditional Greek cuisine stirred up with an Italian influence equals scrumptious results. Creative pizzas, pastas, stews and stuffed vegies, lots of fresh cheeses, honey, wild greens and herbs, seafood and grilled meats.

Northeastern Aegean Islands

Activities

Cuisine

Beaches

ACTIVITIES

Dive into the clear water that laps these islands. You'll be beckoned by waterfalls, rivers and old-growth forests to explore on foot or cycle.

CUISINE

Dining daily on fresh seafood is a way of life here. Venus clams, sea urchins, crayfish, grilled cod and lobster are all washed down with ouzo and Samos' sweet wine. Wherever you go, you'll be greeted with locally sourced, homemade meals.

BEACHES

From the remote, white-pebbled coast on Ikaria to hidden coves on the Fourni Islands, pristine sandy stretches on Chios and seaside resorts on Samos, you're never far from a beach gently lapped by the Aegean.

Evia & the Sporades

Activities

Cuisine

Nightlife

ACTIVITIES

Soak in thermal waters, watch for dolphins as you tour a marine park and hike through olive groves. This region's watery depths are renowned for scuba, with opportunities for beginners and pros.

CUISINE

Don't leave without trying the local honey, especially the *elatos* (fir) and *pefko* (pine) varieties. Also try the amazingly fresh fish – choose it from the nets and dine on the dock. Locally grown vegies and pressed olive oil means home cooking just like *yiayia* makes it.

NIGHTLIFE

Nightlife here is about listening to some of the country's top bouzouki players and watching the sun sink over the horizon from low-key wine bars.

Ionian Islands

Architecture

Activities

Cuisine

ARCHITECTURE

Corfu Town is a symphony of pastel-hued Venetian mansions, French arcades and British neoclassical architecture. Neighbouring islands have traditional whitewashed villages and ancient windmills.

ACTIVITIES

Kayak to remote coves, windsail across the deep blue Aegean and trek through the mountains. Continuous stretches of gorgeous coastline and quiet interiors lure the adventurous here.

CUISINE

Soft-braised meat, plenty of garlic, homemade bread, seafood risottos and hand-rolled pasta allude to an Italian influence. Without a history of Turkish rule, Corfiot has a distinct cuisine.

On the Road

Athens & Around

Includes »

[Athens](#)

Why Go?

Ancient and modern, with equal measures of grunge and grace, bustling Athens (Αθήνα) is a heady mix of history and edginess. Iconic monuments mingle with first-rate museums, lively cafes and alfresco dining, and it's downright fun.

The historic centre is itself an open-air museum, yet the city's cultural and social life takes place amid these ancient landmarks, merging past and present. The magnificent Acropolis rises majestically above the sprawling metropolis and has stood witness to the city's many transformations.

Post-Olympics Athens is conspicuously more sophisticated and cosmopolitan than ever before. Stylish restaurants, shops and hip hotels, and the emerging artsy-industrial neighbourhoods and entertainment quarters like Gazi show Athens' modern face.

The surrounding region of Attiki holds spectacular antiquities, like the Temple of Poseidon at Sounion, and lovely beaches like those near historic Marathon.

Embrace Athens and its environs for all they have to offer.

When to Go

Jun Soak up the city's ancient history before jumping out to the islands to soak up the sun.

Late May-Oct Athens' cultural centrepiece, the Hellenic Festival, lights the city with drama and music.

Sep Weather cools and the social scene heats up as residents return from the islands.

Best Places to Eat

- » Café Avyssia ()
- » Spondi ()
- » Hytra ()
- » Tzitzikas & Meringas ()

Best Places to Stay

- » Magna Grecia ()
- » Athens Gate ()
- » NEW ()
- » Hotel Grand Bretagne ()

Athens Highlights

Climb to the awe-inspiring **Acropolis** ([Click here](#))

Promenade around Plaka, Monastiraki and Thisio in the streets of **Athens' historic centre** ([Click here](#))

Live it up: Athens' hot **nightlife** () includes lively bars, jamming discos, chic beach clubs and moonlit cinemas

Compare superb antiquities and contemporary art at the **National Archaeological Museum** ([Click here](#)), the **Museum of Cycladic Art** ([Click here](#)), the **Benaki Museum** ([Click here](#)) and Athens' multicultural centres ([Click here](#))

Catch an **Athens Festival** () show at the Odeon of Herodes Atticus

Dine out in **Thisio** or **Makrygianni** () with a view of the floodlit Acropolis

Enjoy the majesty of the Parthenon sculptures in their fabulous modern building at the **Acropolis Museum** ([Click here](#))

ATHENS ΑΘΗΝΑ

POP 3.8 MILLION

History

EARLY HISTORY

The early history of Athens is inextricably interwoven with mythology, making it impossible to disentangle fact from fiction. What is known is that the hill-top site of the Acropolis, with two abundant springs, drew some of Greece's earliest neolithic settlers. When a peaceful agricultural existence gave way to the war-orientated city states, the Acropolis provided an ideal defensive position.

By 1400 BC the Acropolis had become a powerful Mycenaean city. It survived the Dorian assault in 1200 BC but didn't escape the dark age that enveloped Greece for the next 400 years. Then, in the 8th century BC, during a period of peace, Athens became the artistic centre of Greece, excelling in ceramics.

By the 6th century BC, Athens was ruled by aristocrats and generals. Labourers and peasants had no rights until Solon, the harbinger of Athenian democracy, became *arhon* (chief magistrate) in 594 BC and improved the lot of the poor, with reforms such as the annulment of debts and the implementation of trial by jury. Continuing unrest over the reforms created the pretext for the tyrant Peisistratos, formerly head of the military, to seize power in 560 BC.

Peisistratos built up a formidable navy and extended the boundaries of Athenian influence. A patron of the arts, he inaugurated the Festival of the Great Dionysia, the precursor of Attic drama, and commissioned many splendid works, most of which were destroyed by the Persians.

Peisistratos was succeeded by his son Hippias in 528 BC and Athens rid itself of this oppressor in 510 BC with the help of Sparta.

CONTEST FOR ATHENS

As the myth goes, Athena, the city's namesake and patron deity, won this honour in a battle with Poseidon. After Kekrops, a Phoenician, founded a city on a huge rock near the sea, the gods of Olympus proclaimed that it should be named after the deity who could provide the most valuable legacy for mortals. Athena (goddess of wisdom, among other things) produced an olive tree, symbol of peace and prosperity. Poseidon (god of the sea) struck a rock with his trident and a saltwater spring emerged (some versions of the myth say he made a horse). The gods judged that Athena's gift would better serve the citizens of Athens with nourishment, oil and wood. To this day the goddess dominates Athens' mythology and the city's great monuments are dedicated to her.

ATHENS' GOLDEN AGE

After Athens finally repulsed the Persian Empire at the battles of Salamis (480 BC) and Plataea (again, with the help of Sparta), its power knew no bounds.

In 477 BC Athens established a confederacy on the sacred island of Delos and demanded tributes from the surrounding islands to protect them from the Persians. The treasury was moved to Athens in 461 BC and Pericles (ruler from 461 BC to 429 BC) used the money to transform the city. This period has become known as Athens' golden age, the pinnacle of the classical era.

Most of the monuments on the Acropolis today date from this period. Drama and literature flourished with such luminaries as Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. The sculptors Pheidias and Myron and the historians Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon also lived during this time.

RIVALRY WITH SPARTA

Sparta did not let Athens revel in its new-found glory. The jockeying for power between the two led to the Peloponnesian Wars in 431 BC, which dragged on until 404 BC, when Sparta gained the upper hand. Athens was never to return to its former glory. The 4th century BC did, however, produce three of the West's greatest orators and philosophers: Socrates, Plato and Aristotle.

In 338 BC Athens, along with the other city states of Greece, was conquered by Philip II of Macedon. After Philip's assassination, his son Alexander the Great, favoured Athens over other city states. After Alexander's untimely death, Athens passed in quick succession through the hands of his generals.

ROMAN & BYZANTINE RULE

The Romans defeated the Macedonians and in 186 BC attacked Athens after it sided against them in a botched rebellion in Asia Minor. They destroyed the city walls and took precious sculptures to Rome. During three centuries of peace under Roman rule known as the 'Pax Romana', Athens continued to be a major seat of learning and the Romans adopted Hellenistic culture. Many wealthy young Romans attended Athens' schools and anybody who was anybody in Rome at the time spoke Greek. The Roman emperors, particularly Hadrian, graced Athens with many grand buildings. Christianity became the official religion of Athens and worship of the 'pagan' Greek gods was outlawed.

After the subdivision of the Roman Empire into east and west, Athens remained an important cultural and intellectual centre until Emperor Justinian closed its schools of philosophy in AD 529. The city declined, and between 1200 and 1450, Athens was continually invaded: by the Franks, Catalans, Florentines and Venetians, all preoccupied with grabbing principalities from the crumbling Byzantine Empire.

OTTOMAN RULE & INDEPENDENCE

Athens was captured by the Turks in 1456, and nearly 400 years of Ottoman rule followed. The Acropolis became the home of the Turkish governor, the Parthenon was converted into a mosque and the Erechtheion a harem.

On 25 March 1821 the Greeks launched the War of Independence (declaring independence in 1822). Fierce fighting broke out in the streets of Athens, which changed hands several times. Britain, France and Russia eventually stepped in and destroyed the Turkish-Egyptian fleet in the famous Battle of Navarino in October 1827. Initially, the city of Nafplio was named Greece's capital. After elected president Ioannis Kapodistrias was assassinated in 1831, Britain, France and Russia again intervened, declaring Greece a monarchy. The throne was given to 17-year-old Prince Otto of Bavaria, who transferred his court to Athens. It became the Greek capital in 1834 and was little more than a sleepy town of about 6000, mainly residents having fled after the 1827 siege. Bavarian architects created imposing neoclassical buildings, tree-lined boulevards and squares. The best surviving examples are on Leoforos Vasilissis Sofias and Panepistimiou.

Otto was overthrown in 1862 after a period of power struggles, including British and French occupation of Piraeus aimed at quashing the 'Great Idea', Greece's doomed expansionist goal. The new imposed sovereign was Danish Prince William, crowned Prince George in 1863.

THE 20TH CENTURY

Athens grew steadily throughout the latter half of the 19th and early 20th centuries. In 1923 – with the Treaty of Lausanne – nearly a million Greek refugees from Turkey descended on Athens.

Athens suffered appallingly during the German occupation of WWII, during which time more Athenians died from starvation than were killed by the enemy. This suffering continued in the bitter civil war that followed.

The industrialisation program launched during the 1950s, with the help of US aid, brought another population boom, as people from the islands and mainland villages moved to Athens in search of work.

The colonels' junta (1967–74; see) tore down many of the old Turkish houses of Plaka and the neoclassical buildings of King Otto's time, but failed to tackle the chronic infrastructure problems resulting from such rapid growth of the 1950s. The elected governments that followed didn't do much better, and by the end of the 1980s the city had a reputation as one of the most traffic-clogged, polluted and dysfunctional in Europe.

In the 1990s authorities embarked on an ambitious program to drag the city into the 21st century. The 2004 Olympics deadline fast-tracked projects, such as the expansion of road and underground metro networks and the construction of a new international airport, and forced changes across the public and private sectors. As Athens absorbed more than 600,000 migrants, legal and illegal, the city's social fabric also changed, presenting a new set of challenges.

THE NEW MILLENIUM

The 2004 Olympics legacy was a cleaner, greener and more efficient capital and a newfound pride and optimism, buoyed by a decade of booming economic growth. But the optimism and fiscal good times were short-lived: the financial crisis and widespread disenchantment with the country's governance combined to darken Athens' mood. The extraordinary December 2008 riots, sparked by the police shooting of a teenaged boy in Exarhia, saw some of the worst social unrest in decades. As the seat of government and therefore the source of the reforms required by the 2010 and 2011 bailouts (sponsored by the European Commission, International Monetary Fund and European Central Bank), Athens is regularly beset by strikes and demonstrations these days. Nevertheless, small businesses persist and Athens' creative life continues to flourish in the face of adversity.

ATHENS IN...

Two Days

Start by climbing Plaka's early-morning streets to the glorious **Acropolis** then wind down through the **Ancient Agora**. Explore **Plaka** and the **Monastiraki Flea Market**, taking a break at an Adrianou cafe. Head to the **Acropolis Museum** for the Parthenon masterpieces. Amble around the **grand promenade**, then up to **Filopappou Hill** and the cafes of **Thisio**, before dinner at a restaurant with Acropolis views.

On day two, watch the **changing of the guard** at Syntagma before heading through the gardens to the **Panathenaic Stadium** and the **Temple of Olympian Zeus**. Take a trolleybus to the **National Archaeological Museum** then catch an evening show at the historic **Odeon of Herodes Atticus**, or head to **Gazi** for dinner and nightlife.

Four Days

With a couple more days, visit the **Benaki Museum** and **Museum of Cycladic Art** before lunch and shopping in **Kolonaki**. Take the *teleferik* (funicular railway) or climb **Lykavittos Hill** for panoramic views. Catch a **movie by moonlight** at one of Athens' outdoor cinemas, or enjoy **live music** at a Psyrri taverna or **rembetika club** in winter.

On day four explore the dynamic **central market** and the **Keramikos site**. Trip along the coast to Cape Sounion's **Temple of Poseidon** or save your energy for summer nightlife at Glyfada's **beach bars**.

Sights

Plateia Syntagmatos (Syntagma Sq; translated as Constitution Sq) is the heart of modern Athens, dominated by the Parliament and most major sites are located within walking distance. South of Syntagma, the old Turkish quarter in Plaka is virtually all that existed when Athens was declared capital of Greece. Its paved, narrow streets nestle into the northeastern slope of the Acropolis and pass by many of the city's ancient sites. Plaka is touristy in the extreme, but it is still the most character-filled part of Athens.

WANT MORE?

For in-depth information, reviews and recommendations at your fingertips, head to the Apple App Store to purchase Lonely Planet's *Athens City Guide* iPhone app.

Centred on busy Plateia Monastirakiou (Monastiraki Sq), the area just west of Syntagma is the city's grungier but nonetheless atmospheric market district. Psyrri (psee-ree), just north of Monastiraki, has morphed into a busy entertainment precinct, with bars, restaurants and theatres.

The Thisio neighbourhood's Apostolou Pavlou is a lovely green pedestrian promenade

under the Acropolis, with a host of cafes and youth-filled bars. Kolonaki, tucked beneath Lykavittos Hill east of Syntagma, is undeniably chic. Its streets are full of classy boutiques and private art galleries, as well as dozens of cafes and trendy restaurants. To the east of the Acropolis, Pangrati is an unpretentious residential neighbourhood with interesting music clubs, cafes and restaurants.

The quiet residential neighbourhoods of Makrygianni and Koukaki, south of the Acropolis, around the new Acropolis Museum, are refreshingly untouristy. The commercial district around Omonia was once one of the city's smarter areas, but despite ongoing efforts to clean it up, it is still super-seedy, especially at night – exercise caution. Exarhia, the bohemian graffiti-covered neighbourhood squashed between the Polytechnio and Strefi Hill, is a lively spot popular with students, artists and left-wing intellectuals.

The revival of Gazi started with the transformation of the historic gasworks into a cultural centre. The red neon-lit chimney stacks illuminate the surrounding streets, packed with bars and restaurants and it is one of the burgeoning gay-friendly neighbourhoods of Athens.

The swank suburbs of Kifisia (inland) and Glyfada (seaside) have their own shopping, cafe and nightlife scenes.

Acropolis

Sights

- 1 [Asclepion](#)B2
- 2 [Beulé Gate](#)A2
- 3 [Caryatids](#)B2
- 4 [Erechtheion](#)A2
- 5 [Monument of Agrippa](#)B2
- 6 [Odeon of Herodes Atticus](#)B2

- 7 [Old Acropolis Museum](#) B2
- 8 [Panagia Hrysoptilotissa](#) B2
- 9 [Parthenon](#) B2
- 10 [Propylaia](#) B2
- 11 [Statue of Athena Promachos](#) B2
- 12 [Stoa of Eumenes](#) B2
- 13 [Temple of Athena Nike](#) B2
- 14 [Theatre of Dionysos](#) A2

Ancient Ruins

Acropolis LANDMARK, ANCIENT SITE

(210 321 0219;; adult/child €12/6; 8am-8pm Apr-Oct, 8.30am-3pm Nov-Mar; Akropoli) The Acropolis is the most important ancient site in the Western world. Crowned by the Parthenon, it stands sentinel over Athens, visible from almost everywhere within the city. Its monuments of Pentelic marble gleam white in the midday sun and gradually take on a honey hue as the sun sinks, while at night they stand brilliantly illuminated above the city. A glimpse of this magnificent sight cannot fail to exalt your spirit.

Inspiring as these monuments are, they are but faded remnants of Pericles' city. Pericles spared no expense – only the best materials, architects, sculptors and artists were good enough for a city dedicated to the cult of Athena. The city was a showcase of lavishly coloured colossal buildings and of gargantuan statues, some of bronze, others of marble plated with gold and encrusted with precious stones.

There are several approaches to the site. The main approach from Plaka is along the path that is a continuation of Dioskouron. From the south, you can walk along Dionysiou Areopagitou to the path just beyond the Odeon of Herodes Atticus to get to the main entrance, or you can go through the Theatre of Dionysos entrance near the Akropoli metro station, and wind your way up from there. Anyone carrying a backpack or large bag (including camera bags) must enter from the main entrance and leave bags at the cloakroom.

HAVE YOUR SAY

Found a fantastic restaurant that you're longing to share with the world? Disagree with our recommendations? Or just want to talk about your most recent trip?

Whatever your reason, head to, where you can post a review, ask or answer a question on the Thorntree forum, comment on a blog, or share your photos and tips on Groups. Or you can simply spend time chatting with like-minded travellers. So go on, have your say.

Arrive as early as possible, or go late in the afternoon, as it gets incredibly crowded.

Wear shoes with rubber soles – the paths around the site are uneven and slippery.

People in wheelchairs can access the site via a cage lift rising vertically up the rock face on the northern side. Those needing this service should go to the main entrance.

The Acropolis admission includes entry to other sites (see boxed text, [Click here](#)).

Akropoli & Makrygianni

Top Sights

[Acropolis Museum](#) B2

[Hadrian's Arch](#) D1

[Temple of Olympian Zeus](#) D1

Activities, Courses & Tours

[1](#) C2

[2](#) C2

[3](#) D2

Sleeping

[4](#) A3

[5](#) C2

[6](#) C1

[7](#) B2

[8](#) B2

[9](#) B2

[10](#) B2

Eating

[11](#) B3

[12](#) A1

Drinking

[13](#) C1

[14](#) C2

[15](#) C2

(see 7)

[16](#) B3

Entertainment

17 B3

Shopping

18 B2

History

The Acropolis was first inhabited in neolithic times (4000–3000 BC). The first temples were built during the Mycenaean era in homage to the goddess Athena. People lived on the Acropolis until the late 6th century BC, but in 510 BC the Delphic oracle declared that it should be the province of the gods.

SIX FOR THE PRICE OF ONE

The €12 Acropolis admission includes entry to Athens' main ancient sites: Ancient Agora, Roman Agora, Keramikos, the Temple of Olympian Zeus and the Theatre of Dionysos. The ticket is valid for four days; otherwise individual site fees apply (though this is not strictly enforced). The same opening hours (8am to 8pm April to October, 8.30am to 3pm November to March) apply for all of these sites, but it pays to double-check as hours fluctuate from year to year. Enter the sites free on the first Sunday of the month (except for July, August and September) and on certain holidays.

After all the buildings on the Acropolis were reduced to ashes by the Persians on the eve of the Battle of Salamis (480 BC), Pericles set about his ambitious rebuilding program. He transformed the Acropolis into a city of temples, which has come to be regarded as the zenith of classical Greek achievement.

Ravages inflicted upon them during the years of foreign occupation, pilfering by foreign archaeologists, inept renovations following Independence, visitors' footsteps, earthquakes and, more recently, acid rain and pollution have all taken their toll on the surviving monuments. The worst blow was in 1687 when the Venetians attacked the Turks, opening fire on the Acropolis and causing an explosion in the Parthenon, where the Turks were storing gunpowder, damaging all the buildings.

Major restoration programs are continuing and many of the original sculptures have been moved to the Acropolis Museum and replaced with casts. The Acropolis became a World Heritage-listed site in 1987.

Beulé Gate & Monument of Agrippa

Once inside the site, a little way along the path on your left you will see the Beulé Gate, named after the French archaeologist Ernest Beulé, who uncovered it in 1852. The 8m pedestal on the left, halfway up the zigzagging ramp leading to the Propylaea, was once topped by the Monument of Agrippa, a bronze statue of the Roman general riding a chariot, erected in 27 BC to commemorate victory in the Panathenaic Games.

Propylaea

The Propylaea formed the monumental entrance to the Acropolis. Built by Mnesicles between 437 BC and 432 BC, its architectural brilliance ranks with that of the Parthenon. It consists of a central hall with two wings on either side. Each section had a gate, and in ancient times these five gates were the only entrances to the 'upper city'. The middle gate (which was the largest) opened onto the Panathenaic Way. The imposing western portico of the Propylaea consisted of six double columns, Doric on the outside and Ionic on the inside. The fourth column along has been restored. The ceiling of the central hall was painted with gold stars on a dark-blue background. The northern wing was used as a *pinakothiki* (art gallery) and the southern wing was the antechamber to the Temple of Athena Nike.

The Propylaea is aligned with the Parthenon – the earliest example of a building designed in relation to another. It remained intact until the 13th century, when various occupiers started adding to it. It was badly damaged in the 17th century when a lightning strike set off an explosion in another Turkish gunpowder store. Archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann paid for the removal of one of its appendages – a Frankish tower – in the 19th century. Reconstruction took place between 1909 and 1917, and again after WWII.

Temple of Athena Nike

The exquisitely proportioned small Temple of Athena Nike stands on a platform perched atop the steep southwest edge of the Acropolis, to the right of the Propylaea. The temple was dismantled piece by piece in 2003 in a controversial move to restore it offsite and is now resplendent after its painstaking reassembly. The Turks also took it apart in 1686 and put a huge cannon on the platform. It was carefully reconstructed between 1836 and 1842, but was taken apart again 60 years later because the platform was crumbling.

Designed by Kallikrates, the temple was built of Pentelic marble between 427 BC and 424 BC. The building is almost square, with four graceful Ionic columns at either end. Only fragments remain of the frieze, which had scenes from mythology, the Battle of Plataea (479 BC) and Athenians fighting Boeotians and Persians. Parts of the frieze are in the Acropolis Museum, as are some relief sculptures, including the beautiful depiction of Athena Nike fastening her sandal. The temple housed a wooden statue of Athena.

PANATHENIAC PROCESSION

The biggest event in ancient Athens was the Panathenaic Procession, the climax of the Panathenaia Festival held to venerate the goddess Athena. Colourful scenes of the Procession are depicted in the 160m Parthenon frieze in the Acropolis Museum.

There were actually two festivals: the Lesser Panathenaic Festival took place annually on Athena's birthday, but the Great Panathenaic Festival was held on every fourth anniversary of the goddess's birth.

The Great Panathenaic Festival began with dancing, followed by athletic, dramatic and musical contests. On the final day, the Panathenaic Procession began at Keramikos, led by men carrying animals sacrificed to Athena, followed by maidens carrying *rhytons* (horn-shaped drinking vessels) and musicians playing a fanfare for the girls of noble birth who held aloft the sacred *peplos* (a glorious saffron-coloured shawl). The Panathenaic Way, which cuts across the middle of the Acropolis, was the route taken by the procession. The *peplos* was placed on the statue of Athena Polias in the Erechtheion in the festival's grand finale.

Statue of Athena Promachos

Continuing ahead along the Panathenaic Way you will see, to your left, the foundations of pedestals for the statues that once lined the path, including one that held Pheidias' 9m-high statue of Athena Promachos (*promachos* means 'champion'). Symbolising Athenian invincibility against the Persians, the helmeted goddess held a shield in her left hand and a spear in her right. The statue was carted off to Constantinople by Emperor Theodosius in AD 426. By 1204 it had lost its spear, so the hand appeared to be gesturing. This led the inhabitants to believe that the statue had beckoned the Crusaders to the city, so they smashed it to pieces.

Parthenon

The Parthenon is the monument that more than any other epitomises the glory of Ancient Greece. *Parthenon* means 'virgin's apartment' and it is dedicated to Athena Parthenos, the goddess embodying the power and prestige of the city. The largest Doric temple ever completed in Greece, and the only one built completely of Pentelic marble (apart from the wood in its roof), it took 15 years to complete.

Built on the highest part of the Acropolis, the Parthenon had a dual purpose – to house the great statue of Athena commissioned by Pericles, and to serve as the new treasury. It was built on the site of at least four earlier temples dedicated to Athena. It was designed by Iktinos and Kallikrates to be the pre-eminent monument of the Acropolis and was completed in time for the Great Panathenaic Festival of 438 BC.

The temple consisted of eight fluted Doric columns at either end and 17 on each side. To achieve perfect form, its lines were ingeniously curved to create an optical illusion – the foundations are slightly concave and the columns are slightly convex to make both

look straight. Supervised by Pheidias, the sculptors Agoracritos and Alcamenes worked on the architectural sculptures of the Parthenon, including the pediments, frieze and metopes, which were brightly coloured and gilded.

The metopes on the eastern side depicted the Olympian gods fighting the giants, and on the western side they showed Theseus leading the Athenian youths into battle against the Amazons. The southern metopes illustrated the contest of the Lapiths and Centaurs at a marriage feast, while the northern ones depicted the sacking of Troy. Much of the frieze, depicting the Panathenaic Procession was damaged in the explosion of 1687 or later defaced by the Christians, but the greatest existing part (over 75m) consists of the controversial Parthenon Marbles, taken by Lord Elgin and now in the British Museum in London. The British government continues to ignore campaigns for their return.

The ceiling of the Parthenon, like that of the Propylaia, was painted blue and gilded with stars. At the eastern end was the holy cella (inner room of a temple), into which only a few privileged initiates could enter.

Here stood the statue for which the temple was built – the Athena Polias (Athena of the City), considered one of the wonders of the ancient world. Designed by Pheidias and completed in 432 BC, it was gold plated over an inner wooden frame and stood almost 12m high on its pedestal. The face, hands and feet were made of ivory, and the eyes were fashioned from jewels. Clad in a long gold dress with the head of Medusa carved in ivory on her breast, the goddess held a statuette of Nike (the goddess of victory) in her right hand, and in her left a spear with a serpent at its base. On top of her helmet was a sphinx with griffins in relief at either side.

In AD 426 the statue was taken to Constantinople, where it disappeared. There is a Roman copy (the Athena Varvakeion) in the National Archaeological Museum.

[Erechtheion](#)

Although the Parthenon was the most impressive monument of the Acropolis, it was more of a showpiece than a sanctuary. That role fell to the Erechtheion, built on the part of the Acropolis held most sacred, where Poseidon struck the ground with his trident, and where Athena produced the olive tree (see boxed text, [Click here](#)). Named after Erechtheus, a mythical king of Athens, the temple housed the cults of Athena, Poseidon and Erechtheus.

The Erechtheion is immediately recognisable by the six larger-than-life maiden columns that support its southern portico, the Caryatids (so called because they were modelled on women from Karyai, modern-day Karyes, in Lakonia). Those you see are plaster casts. The originals (except for one removed by Lord Elgin, and now in the British Museum) are in the Acropolis Museum.

The Erechtheion was part of Pericles' plan, but the project was postponed after the outbreak of the Peloponnesian Wars. Work did not start until 421 BC, eight years after his death, and was completed around 406 BC.

Architecturally, it is the most unusual monument of the Acropolis, a supreme example of Ionic architecture ingeniously built on several levels to counteract the uneven bedrock.

The main temple is divided into two cellae – one dedicated to Athena, the other to Poseidon – representing a reconciliation of the two deities after their contest. In Athena's cella stood an olive-wood statue of Athena Polias holding a shield adorned with a gorgon's head. It was this statue on which the sacred *peplos* was placed at the culmination of the Great Panathenaic Festival.

The northern porch consists of six Ionic columns; on the floor are the fissures supposedly left by the thunderbolt sent by Zeus to kill King Erechtheus. To the south of here was the Cecropion – King Cecrops' burial place.

The Erechtheion was the last public building erected on the Acropolis in antiquity,

except for a small temple of Rome and Augustus, no longer in existence.

Old Acropolis Museum

With the treasures of the Acropolis safely ensconced in the new Acropolis Museum down the hill, plans for the old museum include an exhibition about the 30-year Acropolis restoration program, as well as of engravings, photographs and artefacts found on its slopes.

SOUTH SLOPE OF THE ACROPOLIS

Theatre of Dionysos ANCIENT SITE

(210 322 4625; *Dionysiou Areopagitou*; admission €2, free with Acropolis Pass; 8am-8pm Apr-Oct, 8.30am-3pm Nov-Mar; Akropoli) The importance of theatre in the Athenian city state can be gauged from the dimensions of the enormous Theatre of Dionysos on the southeastern slope of the Acropolis.

The first theatre on this site was a timber structure erected sometime during the 6th century BC, after the tyrant Peisistratos introduced the Festival of the Great Dionysia. Everyone attended the contests, where men clad in goatskins sang and danced, followed by feasting and revelry.

During the golden age in the 5th century BC, the annual festival was one of the state's major events. Politicians would sponsor dramas by writers such as Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, with some light relief provided by the bawdy comedies of Aristophanes. People came from all over Attica, with their expenses met by the state. The theatre was reconstructed in stone and marble by Lycurgus between 342 BC and 326 BC, with a seating capacity of 17,000 spread over 64 tiers, of which about 20 survive. Apart from the front row, the seats were built of Piraeus limestone and were occupied by ordinary citizens, although women were confined to the back rows. The front row's 67 thrones, built of Pentelic marble, were reserved for festival officials and important priests. The grandest was reserved for the Priest of Dionysos, who sat shaded from the sun under a canopy. His seat can be identified by well-preserved lion-claw feet at either side. In Roman times, the theatre was also used for state events and ceremonies, as well as for performances.

The reliefs at the rear of the stage, mostly of headless figures, depict the exploits of Dionysos and date from the 2nd century BC. The two hefty, hunched-up guys who still have their heads are *selini*, worshippers of the mythical Selinos, the debauched father of the satyrs, whose favourite pastime was charging up mountains with his oversized phallus in lecherous pursuit of nymphs.

ANCIENT PROMENADE

The once traffic-choked streets around Athens' historic centre have been transformed into a spectacular 3km pedestrian promenade connecting the city's most significant ancient sites. Locals and tourists alike come out in force for an evening *volta* (walk) along the stunning heritage trail – one of Europe's longest pedestrian precincts – under the floodlit Acropolis.

The grand promenade starts at Dionysiou Areopagitou, opposite the Temple of Olympian Zeus, and continues along the southern foothills of the Acropolis, all the way to the Ancient Agora, branching off from Thisio to Keramikos and Gazi, and north along Adrianou to Monastiraki and Plaka.

Asclepion & Stoa of Eumenes RUINS

Directly above the Theatre of Dionysos, steps lead to the Asclepion, a temple which was built around a sacred spring. The worship of Asclepius, the physician son of Apollo, began in Epidavros and was introduced to Athens in 429 BC at a time when plague was sweeping the city: people sought cures here.

Beneath the Asclepion is the Stoa of Eumenes, a colonnade built by Eumenes II, King of Pergamum (197–159 BC), as a shelter and promenade for theatre audiences.

Odeon of Herodes Atticus HISTORIC BUILDING, ANCIENT SITE

The path continues west from the Asclepion to the Odeon of Herodes Atticus, built in AD 161 by wealthy Roman Herodes Atticus in memory of his wife Regilla. It was excavated in 1857–58 and completely restored between 1950 and 1961. Performances of drama, music and dance are held here during the Athens Festival ().

Panagia Hrysospiliotissa ANCIENT SITE

Above the Theatre of Dionysos, an indistinct rock-strewn path leads to a grotto in the cliff face. In 320 BC Thrasyllus turned the grotto into a temple dedicated to Dionysos. The tiny Panagia Hrysospiliotissa (Chapel of Our Lady of the Cavern) is now a poignant little place with old pictures and icons on the walls. Above the chapel are two Ionic columns, the remains of Thrasyllus' temple. It is closed to visitors except for on its nameday.

NORTH OF THE ACROPOLIS

Ancient Agora LANDMARK, RUINS

(Market 210 321 0185; Adrianou; adult/child €4/2, free with Acropolis pass; 8am-8pm Apr-Oct, 8.30am-3pm Nov-Mar, museum closed 8-11am Mon; Monastiraki)

The heart of ancient Athens was the Agora, the lively, crowded focal point of administrative, commercial, political and social activity. Socrates expounded his philosophy here, and in AD 49 St Paul came here to win converts to Christianity. First developed as a public site in the 6th century BC, the Agora was devastated by the Persians in 480 BC, but a new one was built in its place almost immediately. It was flourishing by Pericles' time and continued to do so until AD 267, when it was destroyed by the Herulians, a Gothic tribe from Scandinavia. The Turks built a residential quarter on the site, but this was demolished by archaeologists after Independence and later excavated to classical and, in parts, neolithic levels.

Ancient Agora

Sights

- 1 Altar of the Twelve GodsB2
- 2 [Church of the Holy Apostles](#)B2
- 3 EntranceA2
- 4 MetroönB2
- 5 Middle StoaA2
- 6 Mosaic Showing Reconstruction of AgoraB2
- 7 [New Bouleuterion](#)B2
- 8 Odeon of AgrippaB2
- 9 Plan of SiteB2
- 10 SewerB2
- 11 [Stoa of Attalos & Agora Museum](#)B2
- 12 [Stoa of Basileios](#)B2
- 13 Stoa of the GiantsB2
- 14 [Stoa of Zeus Eleutherios](#)B2
- 15 [Stoa Poikile](#)B2
- 16 Temple of ApolloA2

17 Temple of Ares B2

18 [Temple of Hephaestus](#) B2

19 [Tholos](#) B2

The site today is a lush, refreshing break from congested city streets, and is dotted with beautiful monuments. There are a number of entrances, but the most convenient is the northern entrance from Adrianou.

VIRTUAL AGORA

Get a fascinating glimpse of life in the Ancient Agora with an interactive virtual-reality trip at Hellenic Cosmos ([Click here](#)). The 45-minute show at the high-tech Tholos dome theatre spans various periods of history, from classical to Roman times, giving unique insight into the cultural and political life of ancient Athens.

[Stoa of Attalos](#)

A stoa is a covered walkway or portico, and the Stoa of Attalos served as the first-ever shopping arcade. Built by its namesake King Attalos II of Pergamum (159–138 BC), this majestic two-storey stoa has 45 Doric columns on the ground floor and Ionic columns on the upper gallery. People gathered here every four years to watch the Panathenaic Procession.

The stoa was authentically reconstructed between 1953 and 1956 by the American School of Archaeology, though the facade was left unpainted in natural Pentelic marble (it was originally painted red and blue).

The excellent Agora Museum, inside the stoa, is a good place to start to make sense of the site. The museum has a model of the Agora as well as a collection of finds from the site.

[Temple of Hephaestus](#)

The best-preserved Doric temple in Greece, this gem on the western edge of the Agora was dedicated to Hephaestus, god of the forge, and was surrounded by foundries and metalwork shops. It was one of the first buildings of Pericles' rebuilding program. Built in 449 BC by Iktinos, one of the architects of the Parthenon, it has 34 columns and a frieze on the eastern side depicting nine of the Twelve Labours of Heracles. In AD 1300 it was converted into the Church of Agios Georgios. The last service was held in 1834 in honour of King Otto's arrival in Athens.

To the northeast of the temple are the foundations of the Stoa of Zeus Eleutherios, one of the places where Socrates expounded his philosophy. Further north are the foundations of the Stoa of Basileios and the Stoa Poikile (Painted Stoa). The Stoa Poikile was so called because of its murals, which were painted by the leading artists of the day and depicted mythological and historical battles. To the southeast of the Temple of Hephaestus was the New Bouleuterion (Council House), where the Senate (originally created by Solon) met, while the heads of government met to the south at the circular Tholos.

[Church of the Holy Apostles](#)

This charming little church, near the southern entrance, was built in the early 10th century to commemorate St Paul's teaching in the Agora. Between 1954 and 1957 it was stripped of its 19th-century additions and restored to its original form. It contains some fine Byzantine frescoes.

[Roman Agora & Tower of the Winds](#) RUINS

(210 324 5220; cnr Pelopida & Eolou; adult/child €2/1, free with Acropolis pass; 8am-8pm Apr-Oct, 8.30am-3pm Nov-Mar; Monastiraki) Entrance to the Roman Agora is through the well-preserved Gate of Athena Archegetis, which is flanked by four Doric columns. It was erected sometime during the 1st century AD and financed by

Julius Caesar.

The rest of the Roman Agora is hard to make sense of. To the right of the entrance are the foundations of a 1st-century public latrine. In the southeast area are the foundations of a propylon and a row of shops.

The well-preserved Tower of the Winds was built in the 1st century BC by a Syrian astronomer named Andronicus. The octagonal monument of Pentelic marble is an ingenious construction that functioned as a sundial, weather vane, water clock and compass. Each side represents a point of the compass, and has a relief of a figure floating through the air, which depicts the wind associated with that particular point. Beneath each of the reliefs are the faint markings of sundials. The weather vane, which disappeared long ago, was a bronze Triton that revolved on top of the tower. The Turks allowed dervishes to use the tower.

Hadrian's Library RUINS

(admission €2; Monastiraki) To the north of the Roman Agora is this vast 2nd-century-AD library, the largest structure erected by Hadrian. It included a cloistered courtyard bordered by 100 columns and there was a pool in the centre. As well as books, the building housed music and lecture rooms and a theatre.

Keramikos ANCIENT SITE

(210 346 3552; Ermou 148, Keramikos; adult/child incl museum €2/free, free with Acropolis pass; 8am-8pm Apr-Oct, 8.30am-3pm Nov-Mar; Thisio) The city's cemetery from the 12th century BC to Roman times, Keramikos was originally a settlement for potters who were attracted by the clay on the banks of the River Iridanos. Because of frequent flooding, the area was ultimately converted to a cemetery. Rediscovered in 1861 during the construction of Pireos St, Keramikos is now a lush, tranquil site with a fine museum.

Sacred & Dipylon Gates

Once inside, head for the small knoll ahead to the right, where you'll find a plan of the site. A path leads down to the right from the knoll to the remains of the city wall built by Themistocles in 479 BC, and rebuilt by Konon in 394 BC. The wall is broken by the foundations of two gates; tiny signs mark each one.

The first, the Sacred Gate, spanned the Sacred Way and was the one by which pilgrims from Eleusis entered the city during the annual Eleusian procession. The second, the Dipylon Gate, to the northeast of the Sacred Gate, was the city's main entrance and where the Panathenaic Procession began. It was also where the city's prostitutes gathered to offer their services to jaded travellers.

From a platform outside the Dipylon Gate, Pericles gave his famous speech extolling the virtues of Athens and honouring those who died in the first year of the Peloponnesian Wars.

Between the Sacred and Dipylon Gates are the foundations of the Pompeion, used as a dressing room for participants in the Panathenaic Procession.

Street of Tombs

Leading off the Sacred Way to the left as you head away from the city is the Street of Tombs. This avenue was reserved for the tombs of Athens' most prominent citizens. The surviving stelae (grave slabs) are now in the National Archaeological Museum, and what you see are mostly replicas. The astonishing array of funerary monuments, and their bas reliefs, warrant close examination.

Ordinary citizens were buried in the areas bordering the Street of Tombs. One well-preserved stele (up the stone steps on the northern side) shows a little girl with her pet dog. The site's largest stele is that of sisters Demetria and Pamphile.

Archaeological Museum of Keramikos

The small but excellent Keramikos museum was established by its benefactor, Gustav

Oberlaender, a German-American stocking manufacturer. It contains remarkable stelae and sculptures from the site, as well as a good collection of vases and terracotta figurines.

Syntagma, Plaka & Monastiraki

Top Sights

[Acropolis](#) B6

[Ancient Agora](#) A3

A2

[Odeon of Herodes Atticus](#) B6

[Plateia Syntagmatos](#) H2

[Roman Agora](#) C4

Sights

1 [Agios Nikolaos Rangavas](#) D5

2 [Areopagus Hill](#) A5

3 [Cathedral](#) E3

4 [Centre of Folk Art & Tradition](#) F5

5 [Church of Agia Ekaterini](#) F6

6 [Church of Agios Eleftherios](#) E3

7 [Church of Kapnikarea](#) D2

8 [Church of Sotira Lykodimou](#) G4

9 [Greek Folk Art Museum](#) F5

10 [Greek Folk Art Museum: Man & Tools](#) B4

11 [Hadrian's Library](#) B3

12 F5

- 13 [Jewish Museum](#) G5
- 14 [Kanellopoulos Museum](#) B5
- 15 [Lysikrates Monument](#) E6
- 16 F4
- 17 [Museum of Greek Popular Instruments](#) C3
- 18 [Museum of Traditional Greek Ceramics](#) B2
- 19 [National Gardens](#) H4
- 20 [National Historical Museum](#) G1
- 21 [Numismatic Museum](#) H1
- 22 [Roman Baths](#) G5
- 23 [Six DOGS](#) C1
- 24 [Taf](#) A2
- 25 [Tower of the Winds](#) C4
- 26 [Turkish Baths](#) C4
- 27 [Zappieo Gardens](#) G6

Activities, Courses & Tours

- 28 G2
- 29 G4
- 30 G3

Sleeping

- 31 F4
- 32 F4
- 33 D3
- 34 G3
- 35 F2
- 36 B1
- 37 F3
- 38 F4
- 39 F1
- 40 H2
- 41 F3
- 42 E6
- 43 F3
- 44 E2
- 45 NEWG4
- 46 G4
- 47 D2
- 48 F5
- 49 C1

Eating

- 50 G2
- 51 A2
- 52 E2
- 53 F5
- 54 D1
- 55 G3
- 56 E3
- 57 A2
- 58 D4
- 59 F4
- 60 D4
- 61 E1
- 62 G3
- 63 F5

Drinking

- 64 G1
- 65 E1
- 66 E1

- 67 D1
- 68 E6
- 69 G1
- 70 C1
- 71 D4
- 72 G1
- 73 F1
- 74 H1

Entertainment

- 75 E5
- 76 D4
- 77 D4
- 78 H1
- 79 F6

Shopping

- 80 F4
- 81 C2
- 82 F4
- 83 G3
- 84 A2
- 85 B1
- 86 A2
- 87 G2

SOUTHEAST OF THE ACROPOLIS

Temple of Olympian Zeus LANDMARK, RUINS

(210 922 6330; adult/child €2/free, free with Acropolis pass; 8am-8pm Apr-Oct, 8.30am-3pm Nov-Mar; Syntagma) You can't miss this striking marvel, smack in the centre of Athens. It is the largest temple in Greece and was begun in the 6th century BC by Peisistratos, but was abandoned for lack of funds. Various other leaders had stabs at completing it, but it was left to Hadrian to complete the work in AD 131. In total, it took more than 700 years to build.

The temple is impressive for the sheer size of its 104 Corinthian columns (17m high with a base diameter of 1.7m), of which 15 remain – the fallen column was blown down in a gale in 1852. Hadrian put a colossal statue of Zeus in the cella and, in typically immodest fashion, placed an equally large one of himself next to it.

Hadrian's Arch MONUMENT

(cnr Leoforos Vasilissis Olgas & Leoforos Vasilissis Amalias; Syntagma) The Roman emperor Hadrian had a great affection for Athens. Although he did his fair share of spiriting its classical artwork to Rome, he also embellished the city with many monuments influenced by classical architecture. His arch is a lofty monument of Pentelic marble that stands where busy Leoforos Vasilissis Olgas and Leoforos Vasilissis Amalias meet. Hadrian erected it in AD 132, probably to commemorate the consecration of the Temple of Olympian Zeus. The inscriptions show that it was also intended as a dividing point between the ancient and Roman city. The northwest frieze reads, 'This is Athens, the Ancient city of Theseus', while the southeast frieze states, 'This is the city of Hadrian, and not of Theseus'.

Panathenaic Stadium HISTORIC BUILDING, ANCIENT SITE

(Pangrati; Akropoli) The grand Panathenaic Stadium lies between two pine-covered hills between the neighbourhoods of Mets and Pangrati. It was originally built in the 4th century BC as a venue for the Panathenaic athletic contests. It is said that at Hadrian's

inauguration in AD 120, a thousand wild animals were sacrificed in the arena. Later, the seats were rebuilt in Pentelic marble by Herodes Atticus.

After hundreds of years of disuse, the stadium was completely restored in 1895 by wealthy Greek benefactor Georgios Averof to host the first modern Olympic Games the following year. It is a faithful replica of the original Panathenaic Stadium, comprising seats of Pentelic marble for 70,000 spectators, a running track and a central area for field events. It made a stunning backdrop to the archery competition and the marathon finish during the 2004 Olympics. It is occasionally used for concerts and public events, and the annual Athens marathon finishes here.

Roman Baths RUINS

(*Syntagma*) Excavation work to create a ventilation shaft for the metro uncovered the well-preserved ruins of a large Roman bath complex. The baths, which extend into the National Gardens, were established near the Ilissos river after the Herulian raids in the 3rd century AD; they were destroyed and repaired again in the 5th or 6th century.

Byzantine Athens

Very little remnant Byzantine architecture exists in Athens. By the time of the split in the Roman Empire, Athens had shrunk to little more than a provincial town. The most important Byzantine building is the World Heritage-listed, 11th-century Moni Dafniou at Dafni, 10km northwest of Athens, which remains closed since it was damaged in the 1999 earthquake. One of the oldest churches in Athens is the 10th-century Church of the Holy Apostles in the Ancient Agora.

Most of the following churches don't open set hours.

Church of Agios Eleftherios CHURCH

(*Little Metropolis; Plateia Mitropoleos, Plaka; Monastiraki*) This 12th-century church is considered one of the city's finest. It is built partly of Pentelic marble and decorated with an external frieze of symbolic beasts in bas relief. Originally dedicated to the Panagia Gorgoepikoos (meaning 'Virgin swift to answer prayers'), it was once the city's cathedral, but now stands in the shadows of the much larger new Cathedral

Church of Kapnikarea CHURCH

(*Ermou, Monastiraki; 8am-2pm Tue, Thu & Fri; Monastiraki*) This small 11th-century structure stands smack in the middle of the Ermou shopping strip. It was saved from the bulldozers and restored by Athens University. Its dome is supported by four large Roman columns.

Church of Agii Theodori CHURCH

(*cnr Dragatsaniou & Agion Theodoron, Syntagma; Panepistimio*) This 11th-century church behind Plateia Klafthmonos has a tiled dome and walls decorated with a pretty terracotta frieze of animals and plants.

Agios Nikolaos Rangavas CHURCH

(*cnr Prytaniou & Epiharmou, Plaka; Akropoli*) This lovely 11th-century church was part of the palace of the Rangavas family, who counted among them Michael I, emperor of Byzantium. The church bell was the first installed in Athens after liberation from the Turks (who banned them), and was the first to ring in 1833 to announce the freedom of Athens.

Church of Sotira Lykodimou CHURCH

(*Plateia Rallou Manou, Plaka; Syntagma*) Now the Russian Orthodox Cathedral, this unique 11th-century church is the only octagonal Byzantine church and has an imposing dome.

Other churches worth seeing are the 11th- to 12th-century Church of Agia Ekaterini in Plaka near the choregic Lysikrates Monument, and the 15th-century Church of Agios Dimitrios Loumbardiaris ([Click here](#)) on Filopappou Hill. The lovely Byzantine monastery, Moni Kaisarianis ([Click here](#)), is also worth a visit.

Neoclassical Athens

Athens boasts a large number of fine neoclassical buildings dating from the period after Independence. Foremost are the celebrated neoclassical trilogy on Panepistimiou, halfway between Omonia and Syntagma.

The centrepiece is the splendid Athens University (*Panepistimio*), designed by the Danish architect Christian Hansen and completed in 1864. It still serves as the university's administrative headquarters. Next door, the Athens Academy was designed by Hansen's brother, Theophile, and completed in 1885. The Ionian-style entrance mimics the eastern entrance to the Erechtheion. Neither is open to the public.

The trilogy is completed by the National Library (*210 338 2541;; Panepistimiou 32, Syntagma; admission free; 9am-8pm Mon-Thu, 9am-2pm Fri & Sat; Panepistimio*). Its main feature is the corridor leading to the reading room, which is flanked by a row of Doric columns influenced by the Temple of Hephaestus in the Ancient Agora.

Museums & Galleries

Acropolis Museum ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM

(*210 900 0901;; Dionysiou Areopagitou 15, Akropoli; 8am-8pm Tue-Sun, to 10pm Fri; admission €5; ; Akropoli*) The long-awaited Acropolis Museum opened with much fanfare in 2009 in the southern foothills of the Acropolis. Ten times larger than the former on-site museum, the imposing modernist building brings together the surviving treasures of the Acropolis, including items formerly held in other museums or storage, as well as pieces returned from foreign museums. While the collection covers the Archaic and Roman periods, the emphasis is on the Acropolis of the 5th century BC, considered the apotheosis of Greece's artistic achievement.

Designed by US-based architect Bernard Tschumi, with Greek architect Michael Photiadis, the €130-million museum cleverly showcases layers of history, floating above the ruins and with the Acropolis visible above, thus allowing visitors to see the masterpieces in context.

Beneath the entrance you can see the ruins of an ancient Athenian neighbourhood, which have been cleverly incorporated into the museum design after being uncovered during excavations.

Finds from the slopes of the Acropolis are on display in the first gallery, which has an ascending glass floor that emulates the climb up to the sacred hill, while allowing glimpses of the ruins below. Exhibits include painted vases and votive offerings from the sanctuaries where gods were worshipped, and more recent objects found in excavations of the settlement, including two clay statues of Nike at the entrance.

Bathed in natural light, the 1st-floor Archaic Gallery is a veritable forest of statues, mostly votive offerings to Athena. These include stunning examples of 6th-century *kore* (maiden), statues of young women in draped clothing and elaborate braids, usually carrying a pomegranate, wreath or bird. Most were recovered from a pit on the Acropolis, where the Athenians buried them after the Battle of Salamis.

The 570-BC youth bearing a calf is one of the rare male statues found. There are also

bronze figurines and finds from temples predating the Parthenon, which were destroyed by the Persians, including wonderful pedimental sculptures from earlier temples, such as Heracles slaying the Lernaian Hydra and a lioness devouring a bull.

The museum's crowning glory is the top-floor Parthenon Gallery, a glass atrium built in alignment with the temple, and a virtual replica of the cella of the Parthenon, which can be seen from the gallery. It showcases the temple's sculptures, metopes and 160m frieze, which for the first time in more than 200 years is shown in sequence as one narrative about the Panathenaic Procession (see boxed text,). The Procession starts at the southwest corner of the temple, with two groups splitting off and meeting on the east side for the delivery of the *peplos* to Athena. Interspersed between the golden-hued originals are stark white plaster replicas of the missing pieces – the controversial Parthenon Marbles hacked off by Lord Elgin in 1801 and later sold to the British Museum (more than half the frieze is in Britain). The sight makes a compelling case for their reunification.

Other museum highlights include five Caryatids, the maiden columns that held up the Erechtheion (the sixth is in the British Museum), and a giant floral *akrotirion* (a decorative element placed on the brick at the end of a gable of a classical building) that once crowned the southern ridge of the Parthenon pediment. Don't miss the movie describing the history of the Acropolis.

The restaurant has superb views (and is surprisingly good value) and there's a fine museum shop.

National Archaeological Museum ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM

(210 821 7717;; 28 Oktovriou-Patision 44, Exarhia; adult/child €7/free; 1.30-8pm Mon, 8am-8pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 8.30am-3pm Nov-Mar; Viktoria) One of the world's most important museums, the National Archaeological Museum houses the finest collection of Greek antiquities. Treasures include exquisite sculptures, pottery, jewellery, frescoes and artefacts found throughout Greece, dating from the neolithic era to classical periods.

Housed in an imposing 19th-century neoclassical building, the museum has been totally overhauled since it was damaged in the 1999 earthquake. The final galleries opened in 2009, bringing to light previously unseen collections. The exhibits are displayed largely thematically and are beautifully presented.

With 10,000 sq metres of exhibition space, it could take several visits to appreciate the museum's vast holdings, but it is possible to see the highlights in a half-day.

Ahead of you as you enter the museum is the prehistoric collection, showcasing some of the most important pieces of Mycenaean, neolithic and Cycladic art.

The fabulous collection of Mycenaean antiquities (Gallery 4) is the museum's *tour de force*. The first cabinet holds the celebrated Mask of Agamemnon, unearthed at Mycenae by Heinrich Schliemann, along with key finds from Grave Circle A, including bronze daggers with intricate representations of the hunt. The exquisite Vaphio gold cups, with scenes of men taming wild bulls, are regarded as among the finest surviving examples of Mycenaean art. They were found in a *tholos* (Mycenaean tomb shaped like a beehive) at Vaphio, near Sparta.

The Cycladic collection in Gallery 6 includes the superb figurines of the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC that inspired artists such as Picasso.

Backtrack and enter the galleries to the left of the entrance, which house the oldest and most significant pieces of the sculpture collection. Galleries 7 to 13 exhibit fine examples of Archaic *kouroi* (male statues) dating from the 7th century BC to 480 BC, including the colossal 600 BC Sounion Kouros (Room 8), found at the Temple of Poseidon in Sounion. Made of Naxian marble, the statue was a votive offering to Poseidon and stood before his temple.

Gallery 15 is dominated by the 460-BC bronze statue of Zeus or Poseidon, found in the sea off Evia, which depicts one of the gods (no one really knows which) with his arms outstretched and holding a thunderbolt or trident in his right hand.

In Gallery 21 you will see the striking 2nd-century-BC statue of a horse and young rider, recovered from a shipwreck off Cape Artemision in Evia. Opposite the horse is the lesser-known statue of Aphrodite, showing a demure nude Aphrodite struggling to hold her draped gown over herself.

From Gallery 21, head left and up the stairs to the museum's other big crowd puller, the spectacular Minoan frescoes from Santorini (Thira). The frescoes – the *Boxing Children*, the *Spring* wall painting showing red lilies and a pair of swallows kissing in midair, and the *Antelopes* – were uncovered in the prehistoric settlement of Akrotiri, which was buried by a volcanic eruption in the late 16th century BC. The Thira Gallery also has videos showing the 1926 volcanic eruption, the Akrotiri excavation and preservation work.

Also on the 1st floor is the superb pottery collection, which traces the development of pottery from the Bronze Age through the Protogeometric and Geometric periods, to the emergence of the famous Attic black-figured pottery of the 6th century BC, and the red-figured pottery from the late 5th to early 4th centuries BC. Other uniquely Athenian vessels are the Attic White Lekythoi, slender vases depicting scenes at tombs.

In the centre of Gallery 56 are six Panathenaic amphorae, presented to the winners of the Panathenaic Games. Each amphora (vase-shaped ceramic container) contained oil from the sacred olive trees of Athens and victors might have received up to 140 of them. They are painted with scenes from the relevant sport (in this case wrestling) on one side and an armed Athena Promachos on the other.

Also on the 1st floor are several galleries exhibiting Hellenistic pottery, the Cypriot antiquities collection and a stunning array of gold jewellery, including intricate wreaths, as well as galleries showcasing the Vlastos-Serpieris and Stathatos private collections. The terracotta collection includes 2nd-century-BC winged figurines of Nike and Eros and theatre masks. The two-room Egyptian gallery presents the best of the museum's significant collection, including mummies, Fayum portraits and bronze figurines.

Heading back to the ground floor, turn right into Gallery 36 for the bronze collection. The larger-than-life sized, 2nd-century-BC statue of the Lady of Kalymnon in Gallery 39, wearing a long draped tunic, was found in bad shape by a fisherman off the island of Kalymno in 1994.

Many of the smaller bronzes are masterpieces from the leading bronzesmithing workshops of Ancient Greece. The 200-BC statue of Athena Varvakeion is the most famous copy – much reduced in size – of the statue of Athena Polias by Pheidias that once stood in the Parthenon.

There's a basement gift shop and cafe with a pleasant garden courtyard.

The museum is a 10-minute walk from Viktoria metro station, or catch trolleybus 2, 4, 5, 9 or 11 from outside St Denis Cathedral on Panepistimiou and get off at the Polytechnio stop.

Benaki Museum CULTURAL MUSEUM

(210 367 1000;; Koumbari 1, cnr Leoforos Vasilissis Sofias, Kolonaki; adult/child €6/free, free Thu; 9am-5pm Mon, Wed, Fri & Sat, 9am-midnight Thu, 9am-3pm Sun;

Syntagma) Greece's finest private museum contains the vast collection of Antonis Benakis, accumulated during 35 years of avid collecting in Europe and Asia. In 1931 he turned the family house into a museum and presented it to the Greek nation. The collection includes Bronze Age finds from Mycenae and Thessaly; works by El Greco; ecclesiastical furniture brought from Asia Minor; pottery, copper, silver and woodwork from Egypt, Asia Minor and Mesopotamia; and a stunning collection of Greek regional

costumes.

The museum has expanded into several branches to house its vast and diverse collections and is a major player in the city's arts scene. They host a full schedule of rotating exhibitions.

The Benaki Museum Pireos Annexe (210 345 3111; *Pireos 138, cnr Andronikou, Rouf; admission €5; 10am-6pm Wed, Thu & Sun, 10am-10pm Fri & Sat, closed Aug; Keramikos*) hosts regular visual arts, cultural and historical exhibitions as well as major international shows. The impressive former industrial building has a cafe and excellent gift shop.

Museum of Islamic Art CULTURAL MUSEUM

(210 325 1311; *cnr Agion Asomaton 22 & Dipylou 12, Keramikos; adult/child €5/free, free Thu; 9am-3pm Tue & Thu-Sun, 9am-9pm Wed; Thisio*) Athens' Museum of Islamic Art showcases one of the world's most significant collections of Islamic art, the bulk of which was assembled by Antonis Benakis in the 19th century. Housed in two restored neoclassical mansions near Keramikos, the museum exhibits more than 8000 items covering the 12th to 19th centuries, including weavings, carvings, prayer carpets, tiles and ceramics. On the 3rd floor is a 17th-century reception room with an inlaid marble floor from a Cairo mansion. A very pleasant rooftop cafe overlooks Keramikos and you can see part of the Themistoklean wall in the basement.

Museum of Cycladic Art ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM

(210 722 8321;; *Neofytou Douka 4, cnr Leoforos Vasilissis Sofias, Kolonaki; adult/child €7/free; 10am-5pm Mon, Wed, Fri & Sat, 10am-8pm Thu, 11am-5pm Sun; Evangelismos*) This private museum houses an outstanding collection of Cycladic art second in importance only to that displayed at the National Archaeological Museum. The 1st-floor Cycladic collection, dating from 3000 BC to 2000 BC, includes the marble figurines that inspired many 20th-century artists, like Picasso and Modigliani, with their simplicity and purity of form. The rest of the museum features Greek and Cypriot art dating from 2000 BC to the 4th century AD, while the 4th-floor exhibition, *Scenes from Daily Life in Antiquity*, includes artefacts and films depicting life in Ancient Greece. The adjacent 19th-century mansion hosts temporary art exhibitions.

Byzantine & Christian Museum RELIGIOUS MUSEUM

(210 721 1027;; *Leoforos Vasilissis Sofias 22, Kolonaki; adult/child €4/free; 8am-8pm Tue-Sun May-Oct, 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun Nov-Apr; Evangelismos*) This outstanding museum presents a priceless collection of Christian art, dating from the 3rd to 20th centuries. Thematic snapshots of the Byzantine and post-Byzantine world – a part of Greek history that is often ignored in favour of its ancient past – are exceptionally presented in the expansive multilevel underground galleries. The collection includes icons, frescoes, sculptures, textiles, manuscripts, vestments and mosaics. The museum is housed in the grounds of the former Villa Ilissia, an urban oasis recently transformed into a culture park, with an open-air amphitheatre, outdoor exhibitions and ancient ruins, including the Peisistratos aqueduct and the adjacent site of Aristotle's Lyceum .

ARTS EXPLOSION

Recent years have brought a burgeoning of the arts scene in Athens. Even as the city struggles with other aspects of political or social life, Greece's musicians, performing artists and visual artists remain hard at work and a new breed of multi-use gallery has sprung up to host all of the disciplines. Some feel like museums, others more like nightclubs, and for others it just depends on what time of day it is.

Theocharakis Foundation for the Fine Arts & Music (210 361 1206;; *Leoforos Vasilissis Sofias 9, Kolonaki; adult/child €6/free; 10am-6pm Mon, Wed & Fri-Sun, 10am-10pm Thu; Syntagma*) This excellent centre, in a restored neoclassical building, has three levels of exhibition space featuring local and international 20th- and 21st-century artists, a theatre, an art shop and a

pleasant cafe. Music performances are held between September and May.

Taf (*The Art Foundation; 210 323 8757;; Normanou 5, Monastiraki; 1pm-midnight; Monastiraki*) The submerged central courtyard cafe at Taf, surrounded by 1870s crumbling brick buildings, fills with an eclectic young crowd. The rest functions as an art, music and theatre space where performances and screenings are often free.

Six DOGS (*210 321 0510;; Avramiotou 6, Monastiraki; Monastiraki*) Six degrees of separation, indeed. The rustic rear garden courtyard here is the place for quiet chats with coffee and drinks, while the bar jams the lane to the front at night...theatre and art too.

Onassis Cultural Centre (*210 924 9090;; Leoforos Syngrou 109, Neos Kosmos; Syngrou-Fix*) The multimillion euro visual and performing arts centre hosts big-name productions and installations. It's 1.5km southwest of the Syngrou-Fix metro station.

Bios (*; Pireos 84, Gazi; Thisio*) In an industrial Bauhaus building near Gazi, this avant-garde multilevel warren has a bar, live performances, art and new-media exhibitions, a basement club, a tiny arthouse cinema and a roof garden.

Technopolis (*210 346 7322; Pireos 100, Gazi; Keramikos*) The superbly converted Athens gasworks complex presents multimedia exhibitions, concerts and special events.

National Art Gallery ART MUSEUM

(*210 723 5857;; Leoforos Vasileos Konstantinou 50, Kolonaki; adult/child €6.50/free; 9am-3pm Mon & Wed-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun; Evangelismos*) Greece's national art museum presents a rich collection of Greek art spanning four centuries from the post-Byzantine period. The newer wing houses its permanent collection and traces the key art movements chronologically. The 1st floor includes the post-Byzantine period, the gallery's prized El Greco paintings, including *The Crucifixion* and *Symphony of the Angels*, and works from the Ionian period until 1900. The 2nd floor holds leading 20th-century artists, including Parthenis, Moralis, Maleas and Lytras. The gallery also has works by European masters, including paintings by Picasso, and hosts major international exhibitions.

The significant sculpture collection is housed 8km southeast at the National Sculpture Gallery (*Glyptotheque; 210 770 9855; Army Park, Katehaki; adult/child €6/free; 9am-3pm Mon & Wed-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun; Katehaki*) .

National Museum of Contemporary Art ART MUSEUM

(*210 924 2111;; Leoforos Vas Georgiou B 17-19, Kolonaki, enter from Rigilis; adult/child €3/free; 11am-7pm Tue, Wed & Fri-Sun, 11am-10pm Thu; Evangelismos*) Housed in a temporary gallery at the Athens Conservatory, the museum shows rotating exhibitions of Greek and international contemporary art. Exhibitions include paintings, installations, photography, video and new media, as well as experimental architecture. The museum will eventually move to the old Fix brewery on Leoforos Syngrou.

ANGELO PLESSAS: ARTIST

'Athens has developed a very international arts scene', says artist Angelo Plessas, an avant-garde web/performance artist now based in Athens after four years in New York. 'If you are a Greek artist you don't need to move abroad...any more. Everything has changed. We have the Biennial, the Museum of Contemporary Art, we have the big collections here.'

'Artists who come here from abroad comment that Athens is fresh and lots of things are happening all the time...Athens has a good energy and that's the most important thing for an artist. People here are passionate and that's good in terms of creativity and discussion.'

Art Events

- » Art-Athina () International contemporary art fair in May.
- » Athens Biennial () Every two years from June to October.
- » ReMap () Parallel event to the Biennial, exhibiting in abandoned buildings.

Art Galleries

Get a full list of galleries and art spaces at; alternatively, pick up an *Athens Contemporary Art Map* at galleries and cafes around town.

- » AMP (210 325 1881;; Epikourou 26, cnr Korinis, Psyri; noon-6pm Tue-Fri, noon-4pm Sat)
- » Athinai (210 348 0000;; Kastorias 36, Gazi; 9am-9pm)
- » Bernier-Eliades (210 341 3935;; Eptachalkou 11, Thisio; 10.30am-8pm Tue-Fri, noon-4pm Sat)
- » Breeder (210 331 7527;; Iasonos 45, Metaxourghio; noon-6pm Tue & Sat, noon-8pm Wed-Fri)
- » Rebecca Camhi Gallery (210 523 3049;; Leonidou 9, Metaxourghio; by appointment)

Herakleidon Museum ART MUSEUM

(210 346 1981;; Herakleidon 16, Thisio; adult/child €6/free; 1-9pm Tue-Sat & 11am-7pm Sun; Thisio) This private museum showcases process in art, seeking to illustrate an artist's progression in a body of work. Exhibitions in the restored neoclassical mansion have included the works of Munch, Greek artists and contemporary international artists. The permanent collection includes works by MC Escher.

Kanellopoulos Museum ANTIQUITIES MUSEUM

(210 321 2313; Theorias 12, cnr Panos, Plaka; adult/child €2/free; 8am-3pm Tue-Sun; Monastiraki) This excellent museum, in a 19th-century mansion on the northern slope of the Acropolis, reopened in 2010 after renovations that doubled its size. It houses the Kanellopoulos family's extensive collection, donated to the state in 1976. The collection includes jewellery, clay and stone vases and figurines, weapons, Byzantine icons, bronzes and *objets d'art*.

Greek Folk Art Museum CULTURAL MUSEUM

(210 322 9031; Kydathineon 17, Plaka; adult/child €2/free; 9am-2.30pm Tue-Sun; Syntagma) A superb collection of secular and religious folk art, mainly from the 18th and 19th centuries, is housed in this museum. The 1st floor has embroidery, pottery, weaving and puppets, while the 2nd floor has a reconstructed traditional village house with paintings by Theophilos. Greek traditional costumes are displayed on the upper levels.

The museum also has an annexe in Plaka called the Greek Folk Art Museum: Man & Tools (210 321 4972; Panos 22, Plaka; Monastiraki), dedicated to men and tools; and a fine exhibition of ceramics at the Museum of Traditional Greek Ceramics (210 324 2066; Areos 1, Monastiraki; Monastiraki) at the old mosque in Monastiraki.

National Historical Museum HISTORY MUSEUM

(210 323 7617;; Stadiou 13, Syntagma; adult/child €3/free, free Sun; 9am-2pm Tue-Sun; Syntagma) Specialising in memorabilia from the War of Independence, this museum has Byron's helmet and sword, a series of paintings depicting events leading up to the war, Byzantine and medieval exhibits, and a collection of photographs and royal portraits. The museum is housed in the old Parliament building at Plateia Kolokotroni, where Prime Minister Theodoros Deligiannis was assassinated on the steps in 1905.

Psyrri, Omonia & Exarhia

Top Sights

D5

Sights

1 [AMP](#) B4

2 [Athens Academy](#) G5

3 [Athens University](#) G4

4 [Church of Agii Theodori](#) E5

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Activities, Courses & Tours

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Sleeping

9 D2

10 D3

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12 D4

13 C6

14 D6

15 G1

16 E1

Eating

17C5

18 E6
19 H1
20 D5
21 B6
22 B7
23 H2
24 D5
25 D5
26 H1
27 C6
28 B5
29 H1

Drinking

30 H1
31 H3
32 B6
33 H1
34 F6
35 G1
36 D4
37 G1
38 B6
39 B6
40 H1

Entertainment

41 G1
42 F6
43 F5
44 F5
45 F5
46 F3
47 G1
48 G3
49 B6
50 D5
51 F4

Shopping

52 F4
53 G6
54 E2
55 H3
56 E5
57 F5

Numismatic Museum COIN MUSEUM

(210 363 2057;; *Panepistimiou 12, Syntagma; adult/child €3/free; 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun; Syntagma*) This magnificent neoclassical mansion is worth a visit, even if you have little interest in coins. The museum comprises 400,000 coins from Ancient Greek, Hellenic, Roman and Byzantine times. The building was once the home of the celebrated archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann. The lovely shady cafe in the gardens is a little oasis.

FREE MUSEUMS

Museum of Greek Popular Instruments (210 325 4119; *Diogenous 1-3, Plaka; 10am-2pm Tue & Thu-Sun, noon-6pm Wed; Monastiraki*) Displays and recordings of a wide selection of traditional instruments and costumes, including those of the great masters of Greek music. Concerts are held in the courtyard on weeknights in summer. A restored *hammam*

in the gift shop is one of the few surviving private Turkish baths in Athens.

Epigraphical Museum (210 821 7637; *Tositsa 1, Exarhia*; 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun; *Viktoria*) The most significant collection of Greek inscriptions on a veritable library of stone tablets next to the National Archaeological Museum.

Centre of Folk Art & Tradition (210 324 3987; *Hatzimihali Angelikis 6, Plaka*; 9am-1pm & 5-9pm Tue-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat & Sun; *Syntagma*) Stunning Plaka mansion with interesting periodic exhibitions.

Maria Callas Museum (210 346 1589; *Technopolis, Pireos 100, Gazi*; 10am-3pm Mon-Fri; *Keramikos*) Dedicated to the revered opera diva and includes letters and unpublished photographs, personal mementos, books and videos.

City of Athens Museum MUNICIPAL MUSEUM

(210 323 1397;; *Paparigopoulou 7, Syntagma*; adult/child €3/free; 9am-4pm Mon & Wed-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat & Sun; *Panepistimio*) Housed in two interconnected historic buildings, including the palace where King Otto lived between 1830 and 1846, this museum contains an extensive collection of royal furniture, antiques, paintings and personal mementos, as well as a model of 1842 Athens and a massive painting showing Athens before the Venetian destruction in 1687. The 2nd-floor gallery hosts temporary exhibitions.

Jewish Museum CULTURAL MUSEUM

(210 322 5582;; *Nikis 39, Plaka*; adult/child €6/free; 9am-2.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sun; *Syntagma*) This museum traces the history of the Jewish community in Greece back to the 3rd century BC through an impressive collection of documents and religious and folk art. It includes a small reconstruction of a synagogue.

Turkish Baths BATHHOUSE

(210 324 4340; *Kyrristou 8, Plaka*; admission €2; 9am-2.30pm Wed-Mon; *Monastiraki*) This beautifully refurbished 17th-century bathhouse is the only surviving public bathhouse in Athens and one of the few remnants of Ottoman times. A helpful free audio tour takes you back to the bathhouse days.

War Museum MILITARY MUSEUM

(210 725 2975;; *Rizari 2, cnr Leoforos Vasilissis Sofias, Kolonaki*; admission €2; 9am-2pm Tue-Sun; *Evangelismos*) This relic of the junta years is an architectural statement of the times, and displays weapons, maps, armour and models from the Mycenaean civilisation to the present day.

Hills of Athens

The Athens basin is surrounded by mountains, bounded to the north by Mt Parnitha, the northeast by Mt Pendeli, the west by Mt Egaleo and the east by Mt Ymittos. Downtown Athens is dominated by the much smaller hills of Lykavittos (277m) and the Acropolis (156m).

Lykavittos Hill LANDMARK, PARK

(*Evangelismos*) Lykavittos means 'Hill of Wolves' and derives from ancient times when the hill was surrounded by countryside and its pine-covered slopes were inhabited by wolves. Today the hill rises out of a sea of concrete to offer the finest panoramas of the city, the Attic basin, the surrounding mountains, and the islands of Salamina and Aegina – the dreaded *nefos* (pollution haze) permitting. A path leads to the summit from the top of Loukianou. Alternatively, take the funicular railway (210 721 0701; return €6; 9am-3am, half-hourly), referred to as the *teleferik*, from the top of Ploutarhou in Kolonaki.

Perched on the summit is the little Chapel of Agios Georgios, floodlit like a beacon over the city at night. The summit cafe and upmarket restaurant Orizontes (210

722 7065; mains €23-38) have spectacular views. Open-air Lykavittos Theatre northeast of the summit, hosts concerts in summer.

Areopagus Hill LANDMARK, PARK

(*Monastiraki*) This rocky outcrop below the Acropolis overlooks the Ancient Agora, and is a popular place for lovers and tourists to take in the views. According to mythology, it was here that Ares was tried by the council of the gods for the murder of Halirrhothios, son of Poseidon. The council accepted his defence of justifiable deicide (the act of killing a god) on the grounds that he was protecting his daughter, Alcippe, from unwanted advances.

The hill became the place where murder, treason and corruption trials were heard before the Council of the Areopagus. In AD 51, St Paul delivered his famous 'Sermon to an Unknown God' from this hill and gained his first Athenian convert, Dionysos, who became patron saint of the city.

To get to the top, climb the worn, slippery marble steps cut into the rock (opposite the main entrance to the Acropolis), or take the newer stairs.

Filopappou Hill LANDMARK, PARK

(*Akropoli*) Also called the Hill of the Muses, Filopappou is identifiable to the southwest of the Acropolis by the Monument of Filopappos at its summit. The monument was built between 114 and 116 in honour of Julius Antiochus Filopappos, who was a prominent Roman consul and administrator.

The pine-clad slopes are a pleasant place for a stroll, and offer good views of the plain and mountains of Attica and of the Saronic Gulf, and some of the best vantage points for photographing the Acropolis. Small paths weave all over the hill, but the paved path to the top starts near the *periptero* (kiosk) on Dionysiou Areopagitou. After 250m, the path passes the Church of Agios Dimitrios Loumbardiaris, which contains fine frescoes.

Hill of the Pnyx LANDMARK, PARK

(*Thisio*) North of Filopappou, this rocky hill was the meeting place of the Democratic Assembly in the 5th century BC, where the great orators Aristides, Demosthenes, Pericles and Themistocles addressed assemblies. This less visited site offers great views over Athens and a peaceful walk.

Hill of the Nymphs LANDMARK, PARK

(*Thisio*) Northwest of Hill of the Pnyx, this hill is home to the old Athens observatory built in 1842.

Parks & Gardens

The area around Syntagma and the historic centre is surprisingly green, but the rest of Athens is sadly lacking in parks and green spaces. The best walks are around the base of the Acropolis and around Filopappou Hill and the Hill of the Pnyx.

National Gardens PARK, GARDEN

(*entrances on Leoforos Vasilissis Sofias & Leoforos Vasilissis Amalias, Syntagma; 7am-dusk; Syntagma*) A delightful, shady refuge during summer, the National Gardens were formerly the royal gardens designed by Queen Amalia. There's also a large children's playground, a duck pond and a shady cafe.

Zappeio Gardens GARDEN

(; *entrances on Leoforos Vasilissis Amalias & Leoforos Vasilissis Olgas, Syntagma; Syntagma*) These gardens sit between the National Gardens and the Panathenaic Stadium and are laid out in a network of wide walkways around the grand Zappeio

Palace . The palace was built in the 1870s for the forerunner of the modern Olympics, with money donated by the wealthy Greek-Romanian benefactor Konstantinos Zappas. The Zappeio hosts conferences, events and exhibitions, and there's a pleasant cafe, restaurant and open-air Aigli cinema next door.

Other Attractions

Plateia Syntagmatos SQUARE, MONUMENT

(*Syntagma*; *Syntagma*) Athens' central square (Syntagma or Constitution Sq in English) is named for the constitution granted, after uprisings, by King Otto on 3 September 1843. Today, the square serves as a major transportation hub, the location of the seat of power and also, therefore, the epicenter of demonstrations and strikes. Surrounded by high-end hotels, banks and the parliament building (on the eastern, uphill side), the centre of the square is dominated by a marble fountain, the metro entrance and two cafes, prime spots for people watching. The western side of the square marks the beginning of one of Athens' main commercial districts, along pedestrianised Ermou.

Parliament

(*Plateia Syntagmatos, Syntagma*; *Syntagma*) Designed by the Bavarian architect Von Gartner and built between 1836 and 1842, Greece's Parliament was originally the royal palace. It was from the palace balcony that the *syntagma* (constitution) was declared on 3 September 1843, and in 1935 the palace became the seat of parliament. The royal family moved to a new palace, which became the presidential palace upon the abolition of the monarchy in 1974. Only the library is open to the public, though exhibitions are held in the Eleftherios Venizelos Hall.

Tomb of the Unknown Soldier

(*Plateia Syntagmatos, Syntagma*; *Syntagma*) This war memorial in the forecourt of the Parliament building is guarded by the city's famous statuesque *evzones*, the presidential guards whose uniform of short kilts and pom-pom shoes is based on the attire worn by the klephts (the mountain fighters of the War of Independence). The changing of the guard takes place every hour, while every Sunday at 11am the *evzones* perform an extended ceremony in full dress, accompanied by a military band.

Athens Olympic Complex NOTABLE BUILDING

(*210 683 4777;; Marousi; Irimi*) Crowned by the striking glass-and-steel roof designed by Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava, this showpiece stadium complex is where the main Olympic action took place in 2004. The vast site includes the futuristic, shimmering Wall of Nations and hosts major football (soccer) games, sporting events and concerts. There are guided tours for groups (minimum 15 people; per person €3) but independent travellers can wander around the site.

Moni Kaisarianis BYZANTINE MONASTERY

(*Monastery of Kaisariani; 210 723 6619; Mt Hymettos; adult/child €2/free; 8.30am-2.45pm Tue-Sun, grounds 8.30am-sunset Tue-Sun*) Nestled on the slopes of Mt Hymettos, 5km east of the city, the beautiful 11th-century Moni Kaisarianis is a peaceful sanctuary. The walled complex has a central court surrounded by a kitchen and dining rooms, the monks' cells and a bathhouse. The domed *katholikon* (main church) was built in the cruciform style atop foundations of an ancient temple. The dome is supported by four columns from the temple. Most of the well-preserved frescoes date back to the 17th and 18th centuries. On weekends the complex can swarm with picnickers. Take bus 224 from Plateia Kaningos (at the north end of Akadimias) to the terminus. From here it's about 30 minutes' walk to the monastery – or take a taxi.

Athens' First Cemetery CEMETERY

(*Anapafseos, Trivonianou, Mets; 7.30am-sunset; Syngrou-Fix*) This resting place

of many famous Greeks and philhellenes is a fascinating and peaceful spot to explore. Among the cemetery's famous residents is the archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann (1822–90), whose mausoleum is decorated with scenes from the Trojan War. Most of the tombstones and mausoleums are lavish in the extreme. Some are kitsch and sentimental; others are works of art created by the foremost 19th-century Greek sculptors, such as Halepas' *Sleeping Maiden* on the tomb of a young girl.

Hellenic Cosmos OFFBEAT SIGHTS

(212 254 0000;; Pireos 254, Tavros; per show adult €5-10, child €3-8, day pass adult/child €15/12; 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sun, closed 2 weeks mid-Aug; Kalithea) To put ruins and museums into perspective, take a virtual-reality trip to Ancient Greece at the futuristic Foundation for the Hellenic World, about 2km southwest of the city centre. The Tholos virtual-reality theatre takes you on an interactive tour of the Ancient Agora or allows you to get a feel for life in ancient Athens. The Kivotos time machine has 3D floor-to-ceiling screens with a live guide taking you through ancient Olympia and Miletus. Take bus 049 or 914 from Omonia, or the metro to Kalithea.

Planetarium PLANETARIUM

(210 946 9600;; Leoforos Syngrou 387, Palio Faliro; adult €6-8, child €4-5; 5.30-8.30pm Wed-Fri, 10.30am-8.30pm Sat & Sun, closed mid-Jul-late Aug) Athens boasts the world's largest and most technologically advanced digital planetarium. The 280-seat planetarium, with a 950-sq-metre hemispherical dome, offers 3D virtual trips to the galaxy, as well as IMAX movies and other high-tech shows. There is simultaneous narration in English (€1). The planetarium is part of the Eugenides Foundation, a progressive scientific and educational institution. Take the metro to Syngrou-Fix then bus 550 or B2 to the Onassio stop, and take the underpass across the road. Enter from Penteli.

START SYNTAGMA

FINISH SYNTAGMA

DISTANCE 5.5KM

DURATION ONE TO FOUR HOURS

Walking Tour: Central Athens

This walk rambles through some of the sites of central Athens and begins at the fountain in the middle of **Plateia Syntagmatos** . The square has been a favourite place for protests ever since the rally that led to the granting of a constitution on 3 September 1843, declared by King Otto from the balcony of the royal palace. In 1944 the first round of the civil war began here after police opened fire on a communist rally, while in 1954 it was the location of the first demonstration demanding the *enosis* (union) of Cyprus with Greece.

The historic Hotel Grande Bretagne, the most illustrious of Athens' hotels, was built in 1862 as a 60-room mansion for visiting dignitaries. It was converted into a hotel in 1872 and became the place where the crowned heads of Europe and eminent politicians stayed. The Nazis made it their headquarters during WWII, and in 1944 the hotel was the scene of an attempt to blow up Winston Churchill.

To the left of the metro entrance you can see a section of the ancient cemetery and the **Peisistratos aqueduct** , which was unearthed during metro excavations.

Take the metro underpass to go across to the Parliament, stopping en route at the upper hall of **Syntagma metro station** . Glass cases at the southern end of the hall display finds uncovered during construction, while the western wall has been preserved like a trench at an archaeological dig.

The underpass emerges to the right of the former royal palace, now the **Parliament** . In front of the Parliament, you will see the much-photographed *evzones*, the presidential guards. They stand sentinel under the striking Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, which depicts a slain soldier

and has inscriptions with excerpts from Pericles' epitaph. Time your visit to catch the changing of the guard, every hour on the hour.

Walk through the lush **National Gardens** and exit to the Zappeio Palace, which was used as the Olympic village in the second modern Olympics in Athens. Follow the path past the playground and go left until you see the crossing to the **Panathenaic Stadium**, where the first Olympic Games were held in 1896.

Crossing back towards the gardens, walk along their periphery until you approach the entrance to the striking **Temple of Olympian Zeus**, the largest temple ever built. Heading towards Plaka, on the corner ahead of you, teetering on the edge of the traffic, is **Hadrian's Arch**, the ornate gateway erected to mark the boundary of Hadrian's Athens.

Cross over Leoforos Vasilissis Amalias and head right towards Lysikratous, where you will make a left turn into Plaka. Ahead on your right you will see the ruins of a Roman monument in the forecourt of the 11th- to 12th-century **Church of Agia Ekaterini**.

Continuing ahead you reach the **Lysikrates Monument**. Built in 334 BC to commemorate a win in a choral festival, it is the earliest known monument using Corinthian capitals externally. The reliefs depict the battle between Dionysos and the Tyrrhenian pirates, whom the god had transformed into dolphins. It stands in what was once part of the Street of Tripods (Modern Tripodon), where winners of ancient dramatic and choral contests dedicated their tripod trophies to Dionysos. In the 18th century the monument was incorporated into the library of a French Capuchin convent, in which Lord Byron stayed in 1810–11 and wrote *Childe Harold*. The convent was destroyed by fire in 1890.

Facing the monument, turn left and then right into Epimenidou. At the top of the steps, turn right into Stratonos, which skirts the Acropolis. Just ahead you will see the **Church of St George of the Rock**, which marks the entry to the **Anafiotika quarter**. The picturesque maze of little whitewashed houses is the legacy of stonemasons from the small Cycladic island of Anafi, who were brought in to build the king's palace after Independence. It's a peaceful spot, with brightly painted olive-oil cans brimming with flowers in the tiny gardens in summer.

Following the narrow path that winds around the houses, hand-painted signs pointing to the Acropolis lead you to the tiny **Church of Agios Simeon**. It looks like a dead end but persevere and you will emerge at the Acropolis road. Turn right and then left into Prytaniou, veering right after 50m into Tholou. The yellow-ochre building at Tholou 5 is the **old Athens University**, built by the Venetians. The Turks used it as public offices and it housed Athens University from 1837 to 1841.

A few metres along, turn right on Klepsidras down some narrow steps that lead to the little **Klepsidra Café** at Thrasyvoulou 9, where you can have a rest or continue down to the ruins of the **Roman Agora**.

To the right of the Tower of the Winds on Kyrristou are the **Turkish Baths**, while the **Museum of Greek Popular Instruments**, just ahead on Diogenous, has one of Athens' only remaining private *hammams* (Turkish baths) in its gift shop. As you turn onto Pelopida you will see the gate of the Muslim Seminary, built in 1721 and destroyed in a fire in 1911, and the **Fethiye Mosque**, on the site of the Agora.

Follow the road around the Agora, then turn right into Peikilis and right again into Areos. Ahead on your right are the ruins of **Hadrian's Library**. Next to them is the **Museum of Traditional Greek Ceramics**, housed in the 1759 Mosque of Tzistarakis. After Independence it lost its minaret and was used as a prison.

You're now in Monastiraki, the colourful, chaotic square teeming with street vendors. To the left is **Monastiraki Flea Market**.

Turn right at the mosque into Pandrosou. This relic of the old Turkish bazaar is full of souvenir shops. The street is named after King Cecrops' daughter, Pandrosos, who was the first priestess of Athens. Pandrosou leads to the Athens Cathedral. The cathedral has little architectural merit, but next to it stands the smaller, more historically significant, 12th-century **Church of Agios Eleftherios**, known as the Little Metropolis. Just past this church, turn right into Agias Filotheis, which is lined with buildings belonging to the Greek Church. The mansion with the elaborate gold doors is the residence of the Archbishop of Greece.

Emerging at Adrianou, walk ahead and turn left at Hatzimihali Angelikis, where you can visit the free **Centre of Folk Art & Tradition** to check out a beautifully maintained Plaka mansion.

Cut through to busy Kydathineon's Plateia Filomousou Eterias, turn left and a little way along

you will come to the **Greek Folk Art Museum** .

Continue along Kydathineon and turn left into Nikis, heading all the way to Ermou, where you can turn left into Athens' main shopping drag, or right to return to Syntagma.

Beaches

Athens is the only European capital with beaches within easy distance of the city centre. Glyfada , about 17km southeast of Athens, marks the beginning of a stretch of coastline known as the Apollo Coast, which has a string of fine beaches and upmarket resorts running south to Cape Sounion. This is where Athenians cool off and where much of the summer nightlife takes place.

The better beaches are privately run and charge admission (€4 to €15 per adult). They're usually open between 8am and dusk, May to October (later during heatwaves), and have sun beds and umbrellas (additional charge in some places), changing rooms, children's playgrounds and cafes.

The flashiest and most exclusive summer playground is Astir Beach (210 890 1621;; *adult/child €15/8 Mon-Fri, €25/13 Sat & Sun*) , with water sports, shops and restaurants. You can even book online.

The following can be reached by tram and then buses from Glyfada or Voula:

Akti Tou Iliou (210 985 5169; *Alimo; adult/child €6/3 Mon-Fri, €8/4 Sat & Sun*)

Asteras Beach (210 894 1620;; *Glyfada; adult/child €6/3 Mon-Fri, €7/3 Sat & Sun*)

Yabanaki (210 897 2414;; *Varkiza; adult/child €7/4.50 Mon-Fri, €8/4.50 Sat & Sun*)

There are free beaches at Palio Faliro (Edem), Kavouri and Glyfada. There is also good (free) swimming at Shinias, Marathon and Vravrona in the north, though these take much longer to get to and are best reached by car.

You can swim year-round at Limni Vouliagmenis (210 896 2239; *Leoforos Vouliagmenis; adult/child €8/5; 7am-8pm*) , a part-saltwater/part-springwater lake whose temperature usually doesn't fall below 20°C, and which is known for its therapeutic mineral qualities. It is set dramatically against a huge jutting cliff, just off the coast, and has a quaint old-world atmosphere thanks to the regular clientele of elderly citizens dressed in bathing caps and towelling gowns.

Activities

Diving

Prices following include diving equipment.

Aegean Dive Centre (210 894 5409;; *Zamanou 53, cnr Pandoras, Glyfada; PADI certification from €390, day/night dives €35/100*) Organises dives between Vouliagmeni and Cape Sounion.

Planet Blue Dive Centre (229 202 6446;; *Velpex Factory, Lavrio; PADI certification from €300, dives €35-80*) Popular with seasoned divers, but caters to all levels at sites around Cape Sounion.

Skiing

The closest ski resorts to Athens are at Mt Parnassos in the northwest and Kalavryta in the Peloponnese. The season usually lasts from mid-January to late March. Day excursions to Parnassos and Kalavryta from Athens are organised by Trekking Hellas (210 331 0323;) and Klaoudatos (210 578 1880;)

Courses

Several programs offer intensive Greek-language courses for beginners and various proficiency levels. Most of the ones listed here run one- to 10-week immersion courses

(from €370 to €900) as well as conversation, business and grammar courses.

Athens Centre (210 701 2268;; *Arhimidous 48, Mets; Akropoli*)

Hellenic American Union (210 368 0900;; *Massalias 22, Kolonaki; Panepistimio*)

Hellenic Cultural Centre (210 523 8149;; *Halkokondyli 50, Omonia; Omonia*)

Tours

CitySightseeing Athens BUS TOURS

(210 922 0604;; Plateia Syntagmatos, Syntagma; adult/child €18/8; every 30min 9am-8pm; Syntagma) Open-top double-decker buses cruise around town on a 90-minute circuit starting at Syntagma. You can get on and off at 15 stops on a 24-hour ticket.

Athens Happy Train MINI-TRAIN TOURS

(210 725 5400;; Plateia Syntagmatos, Syntagma; adult/child €6/4; 9am-midnight; Syntagma) Mini-train tours, with stops including the Acropolis, Monastiraki and the Panathenaic Stadium. Tours take one hour if you don't get off, or you can get on and off over five hours. Trains leave from the top of Ermou every 30 minutes.

Trekking Hellas EXCURSIONS

(210 331 0323;; Rethymnou 12, Exarhia; Viktoria) Activities range from Athens walking tours (€22) to two-hour bike tours (€35) and bungee jumping in the Corinth Canal (€60).

Athens: Adventures TOURS

(210 922 4044;) Based at Athens Backpackers ([Click here](#)), offering a €5 Athens walking tour and daytrips to Nafplio and Delphi (€50 each).

Four main companies run almost identical, pricey air-conditioned city coach tours around Athens, as well as excursions to nearby sights:

CHAT (210 323 0827;; Xenofontos 9, Syntagma; Syntagma)

GO Tours (210 921 9555;; Athanasiou Diakou 20, Makrygianni; Akropoli)

Hop In Sightseeing (210 428 5500;; Syngrou 19, Makrygianni; Akropoli)

Key Tours (210 923 3166/266;; Kalirois 4, Makrygianni)

Tours include a half-day sightseeing tour of Athens (from €54), usually doing little more than pointing out all the major sights and stopping at the Acropolis; and an 'Athens by Night' tour (€62), which includes a taverna dinner in Plaka with a folk-dancing show.

They also run half-day trips to Ancient Corinth (€57) and Cape Sounion (€42); day tours to Delphi (€89), the Corinth Canal, Mycenae, Nafplio and Epidavros (similar prices); and cruises to Aegina, Poros and Hydra (including lunch €99). Hotels act as booking agents and often offer discounts.

If you're game, you can hire a bike or join a bike tour ().

ATHENS FOR CHILDREN

Athens is short on playgrounds but there is plenty to keep kids amused. The shady National Gardens () has a playground, duck pond and mini zoo. There is also a fully enclosed shady playground in the Zappeio Gardens (). At the War Museum (), kids can climb into the cockpit of a WWII plane and other aircraft in the courtyard.

The Hellenic Children's Museum (210 331 2995;; Kydathineon 14, Plaka; admission free; 10am-2pm Tue-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat & Sun; Syntagma) is more of a play centre, with a games room and a number of 'exhibits', such as a mock-up of a metro tunnel, for children to explore. Workshops range from baking to bubble-making. Parents must be on hand to supervise their children at all times.

The Museum of Greek Children's Art (210 331 2621;; Kodrou 9, Plaka; admission free; 10am-2pm Tue-Sat, 11am-2pm Sun, closed Aug; Syntagma) has a room set aside where children can let loose their creative energy, or learn about Ancient Greece.

Further afield, the enormous Allou Fun Park & Kidom (210 425 6999;; cnr Leoforos Kifisou & Petrou Rali, Renti; admission free, rides €2-4; 5pm-1am Mon-Fri, 10am-1am Sat & Sun) is Athens' biggest amusement park complex. Kidom is aimed at younger children. On Saturday and Sunday it runs a bus from Syntagma and the metro station at Faliro.

Attica Zoological Park (210 663 4724;; Yalou, Spata; adult/child €15/11; 9am-sunset) has an expanding collection of big cats, birds, reptiles and other animals, including a monkey forest and Cheetahland. The 19-hectare site is near the airport east of the city. Take bus 319 from

Doukissis Plakentias metro station or the shuttle (€5) from Plateia Syntagmatos (see the zoo's website).

You can always escape the heat and amuse the kids with a virtual-reality tour of Ancient Greece at the Hellenic Cosmos (), or explore the universe at the impressive Planetarium ().

Festivals & Events

Hellenic Festival PERFORMING ARTS

(; *late May–Oct*) Greece's premier cultural festivals, held annually under the auspices of the Hellenic Festival, feature a top line-up of local and international music, dance and theatre.

Major shows in the Athens Festival take place at the superb Odeon of Herodes Atticus (), one of the world's most historic venues, with the floodlit Acropolis as a backdrop. Patrons sit on cushions on the worn marble seats upon which Athenians have been entertained for centuries. The festival, which has been going strong for more than 50 years, presents a diverse program of international standing, ranging from ancient theatre and classical music to contemporary dance. Events are also held in various modern theatres and venues around town.

The Epidavros Festival presents local and international productions of Ancient Greek drama at the famous ancient Theatre of Epidavros in the seaside town of Epidavros in the Peloponnese, two hours drive west of Athens. Performances are held every Friday and Saturday night during July and August.

Also in Epidavros, the Musical July Festival takes place at the 3rd-century-BC 'small theatre', set among olive groves and pine trees. Performances are held on Friday and Saturday and range from Greek to classical music.

The festival program should be available in April on the festival website and at the Hellenic Festival Box Office (*210 327 2000; Arcade, Panepistimiou 39, Syntagma; 8.30am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat Jul & Aug; Panepistimio*). Book tickets online or by phone or purchase them on the day of the performance at the theatre box offices, but queues can be very long and performances sold out. There are half-price student discounts for most performances on production of an ISIC.

Special KTEL buses (*210 513 4588; return €20*) to Epidavros depart from Kifissos Terminal A on Friday and Saturday, returning after the show. Tickets can be bought a day ahead at the ticket booth in the forecourt of the Church of Agiou Konstantinou.

Rockwave Festival MUSIC

(*210 882 0426;; Jun-Jul*) The annual international Rockwave Festival has been growing in stature and popularity, and rock fans can expect to see some of the world's top acts – the 2011 line-up ranged from Editors, Cake and The Stranglers to Greek artist Yiannis Angelakas. Rockwave is held at Terra Vibe, a huge parkland venue on the outskirts of Athens in Malakassa, at the 37th kilometre on the Athens–Lamia Hwy. Tickets are available online from or from Ticket House (*210 360 8366;; Panepistimiou 42, Syntagma; Panepistimio*) in Athens. Special buses are organised and there is also a cheap camp site for ticketholders.

Technopolis ART, PERFORMING ARTS

(*210 346 7322; Pireos 100, Gazi; Keramikos*) During summer a range of festivals and cultural events take place at the former gasworks complex turned cultural centre.

European Jazz Festival MUSIC, DANCE

(; *May-Jun*) Over six days at the end of May/early June, run by the City of Athens, which also organises free concerts and music and dance performances across the city and the two-week International Dance Festival in July.

Synch Electronic Music & Digital Arts Festival MUSIC, ART

(210 628 6287;; Jun or Jul) A three-day international festival at Technopolis and other venues around town.

European Music Day MUSIC

(; Jun) Five days of free concerts and events in squares around town.

August Moon Festival MUSIC

(Aug) Every August on the night of the full moon, musical performances are held at key historic venues, including the Acropolis, the Roman Agora and other sites around Greece. Details are normally announced at the last minute.

Athens International Film Festival FILM

(210 606 1413;; Sep) Programs feature retrospectives, premiers and international art films and documentaries.

Greece's leading artists and international acts can be seen during two summer festivals held at stunning venues in former quarries: the Vyronas Festival (210 760 9340;; in Greek) held at the Theatro Vrahon in the suburb of Vyronas; and the Petras Festival (210 506 5400) in Petroupoli in western Athens. Programs and tickets for both are available from Metropolis Music stores, Public, and ticket agencies (see boxed text.). Summer concerts are also held at the Lykavittos Theatre and the Panathenaic Stadium.

WHAT'S ON IN ATHENS

For comprehensive events listings in English, with links to online ticket sales points, try the following:

- » Athens tourism site.
- » Arts and culture listings, in Greek.
- » Also has sports matches.
- » Rockwave and other festivals.
- » Range of events.

Sleeping

Accommodation in Athens improved markedly with the 2004 Olympics, and today there is a full range of options, though service is not always up to expectations.

Plaka is the most popular place for travellers and has a choice of accommodation across the price spectrum. Most of the high-end hotels are around Syntagma. Some excellent pensions and midrange hotels also dot the area south of the Acropolis, around the quiet neighbourhoods of Makrygianni and Koukaki.

Around Omonia some hotels have been upgraded, but there is still a general seediness (think drugs and prostitution) that detracts from the area, especially at night.

Athens is a noisy city that sleeps late, so we've mostly selected hotels in quiet areas, pedestrian precincts or side streets.

The best rooms in Athens fill up quickly in July and August, so it's wise to book ahead to avoid a fruitless walk in the heat. Prices quoted here are for the high season, but most places offer considerable discounts, especially in the low season, for longer stays and online. No smoking rules are often laxly enforced, if at all.

PLAKA & SYNTAGMA

NEW BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(210 628 4565;; Filellinon 16, Plaka; s/d from €150/160, ste €240; ; Syntagma) The swanky and chic NEW just opened smack in the middle of Athens. Whether you dig the groovy, top-designer Campana Brothers furniture or the pillow menu (tell 'em how you like it!), you'll find some sort of decadent treat here to tickle your fancy. Part of a renowned local design hotel group, NEW is the latest entry on the high-

end Athens scene.

Central Hotel BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(210 323 4357;; Apollonos 21, Plaka; s/d incl breakfast from €80/100; ; Syntagma) This stylish hotel has been tastefully decorated in light, contemporary tones. It has comfortable rooms with all the mod cons and good bathrooms. There is a lovely roof terrace with Acropolis views, a small spa and sun lounges. As its name suggests, Central Hotel is in a great location between Syntagma and Plaka.

Electra Palace LUXURY HOTEL €€€

(210 337 0000;; Navarhou Nikodimou 18, Plaka; s/d/ste incl breakfast from €160/180/295; ; Syntagma) Plaka's smartest hotel is one for the romantics. You can have breakfast under the Acropolis on your balcony (higher-end rooms), and dinner in the chic rooftop restaurant. Completely refurbished with classic elegance, the well-appointed rooms are buffered from the sounds of the city streets. There is a gym, an indoor swimming pool as well as a rooftop pool with Acropolis views.

Hotel Phaedra HOTEL €

(210 323 8461;; Herefontos 16, Plaka; s/d/tr €80/80/95; ; Akropoli) Many of the rooms at this small, family-run hotel have balconies overlooking a church or the Acropolis. The hotel is tastefully furnished, though room sizes vary from small to snug. Some rooms have private bathrooms across the hall. A great rooftop terrace, friendly staff and a good location make this one of the better deals in Plaka.

Niki Hotel HOTEL €€

(210 322 0913;; Nikis 27, Syntagma; s/d/tr incl breakfast €89/89/105; ; Syntagma) This small hotel bordering Plaka has undergone one of the more stylish makeovers in the area, with a contemporary design and furnishings. The rooms are well appointed and there is a two-level suite for families (€190), with balconies offering Acropolis views.

Hotel Grande Bretagne LUXURY HOTEL €€€

(210 333 0000;; Vasileos Georgiou 1, Syntagma; r/ste from €275/960; ; Syntagma) If you are wealthy or aspire to the best, the place to stay in Athens is – and always has been – the Hotel Grande Bretagne, right on the square in Syntagma. Built in 1862 to accommodate visiting heads of state, it ranks among the grand hotels of the world: no other hotel in Athens can boast such a rich history. Though its renovation is a few years distant, it still retains an old-world grandeur. There is a divine spa (), and the Acropolis-view rooftop restaurant and bar are worth a visit, even if you aren't a guest.

STUDIOS & APARTMENTS

For longer stays or if you're travelling with the family, a furnished studio or apartment may offer better value than some of the budget hotels.

Near the Acropolis, there are excellent comfortable, modern apartments in various configurations at Athens Studios (210 923 5811;; Veikou 3a, Makrygianni; apt incl breakfast €80-120; ; Akropoli) with daily cleaning.

In Psyri, Athens Style ([Click here](#)) has well-equipped studios (€75 to €115) on the upper level, with kitchenettes, flat-screen TVs, stylish modern bathrooms and great balconies with Acropolis views.

For a comfortable home away from home, book ahead for a superbly renovated, spacious apartment at EP16 (697 648 4135;; Epikourou 16, Psyri; apt €90-210, min 3-night stay; ; Thisio) , above a gem of an old garlic store. A spiral staircase (no lift) leads up to apartments decked out in contemporary designer furniture, with large kitchens and marble bathrooms. The massive roof garden with Acropolis views has sunbeds, a barbecue and a stocked-up beer fridge. In addition to this Psyri location, it has new apartments in Gazi.

Acropolis House Pension HOTEL €€

(210 322 2344;; Kodrou 6-8, Plaka; s/d/tr/q incl breakfast €70/87/114/136; ; Syntagma) This atmospheric family-run pension is in a beautifully preserved, 19th-

century house, which retains many original features and has lovely painted walls. There are discounts for stays of three days or more. Some rooms have private bathrooms across the hall (single/double €60/70).

Adonis Hotel HOTEL €€

(210 324 9737;; Kodrou 3, Plaka; s/d/tr incl breakfast €70/95/120; ; Syntagma) This comfortable (if bland) pension on a quiet pedestrian street in Plaka has basic, clean rooms with TVs. Bathrooms are small but have just been excellently renovated. Take in great Acropolis views from 4th-floor rooms and the rooftop garden where breakfast is served. No credit cards.

Adrian Hotel HOTEL €€

(210 322 1553;; Adrianou 74, Plaka; s/d/tr incl breakfast €105/120/147, s/d with view €130/155; ; Monastiraki) This tiny hotel right in the heart of Plaka serves breakfast on a lovely shady terrace with Acropolis views. The well-equipped rooms are pleasant if a bit worn. Third-floor rooms are the best, with large balconies overlooking the square.

Plaka Hotel HOTEL €€

210 322 2096;; Kapnikareas 7, cnr Mitropoleos, Plaka; s/d/tr incl breakfast €120/135/145; ; Monastiraki) It's hard to beat the Acropolis views from the rooftop garden at this refurbished hotel, which you also enjoy from the top-floor rooms. Tidy rooms have light timber floors and furniture, and satellite TV, though the bathrooms are on the small side.

Athens Cypria Hotel HOTEL €€

(210 323 8034;; Diomias 5, Syntagma; s/d €83/120; ; Syntagma) Tucked in a side street off Ermou, this small, family-friendly hotel is a little characterless, but it is modern and comfortable, with good facilities and a very handy location. Some rooms have balconies but no great view. There are family rooms (€142 to €210) and discounts for children.

Student & Travellers' Inn HOSTEL €

(210 324 4808;; Kydathineon 16, Plaka; dm €20-24, s/d/tr €55/63/80, d/tr without bathroom €58/74; ; Syntagma) Its location in the heart of Plaka makes this long-established hostel popular with visitors of all ages. There's a mix of very basic dorms and rooms, some with private bathroom and air-conditioning, though shared bathrooms are run-down and complaints about cleanliness common. It's got a pleasant, shady courtyard and a helpful travel service.

Hotel Hermes BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(210 323 5514;; Apollonos 19, Plaka; s/d/tr incl breakfast €120/145/165; ; Syntagma) Hermes is next to the Central Hotel, with similar amenities, but not quite as swishy.

Hotel Achilleas HOTEL €€€

(210 323 3197;; Leka 21, Syntagma; s/d/q incl breakfast €137/ 159/185; ; Syntagma) This conveniently located business-style hotel has a sleek lobby with marble checkerboard floors and well-appointed rooms, some of which open onto garden balconies.

Arethusa Hotel HOTEL €€

(210 322 9431;; Mitropoleos 6, cnr Nikis, Syntagma; d incl breakfast €85; ; Syntagma) Arethusa is a basic, central choice.

John's Place HOTEL €

(210 322 9719; Patrou 5, Plaka; s/d/tr without bathroom €35/50/75; ; Syntagma) John's offers no-frills budget accommodation in a small, old-style, family-run place. It's a bare-bones affair, but each room has a hand basin and some have air-conditioning. All bathrooms are basic and shared.

Thisio & Keramikos

Top Sights

B5

B2

C1

Sights

1A3

2 B3

3 B7

4 C7

5 B6

6B2

7A2

Sleeping

- 8 [Eridanus](#) B1
- 9 [Hotel Erechthion](#) C5
- 10 [Phidias Hotel](#) C5

Eating

- 11 [Filistron](#) C6
- 12 [Gevomai Kai Magevomai](#) B5
- 13 [Kuzina](#) D4
- 14 [To Steki tou Iliia](#) B3
- 15 [Varoulko](#) B1

Drinking

- Belafonte (see 18)
- 16 [James Joyce](#) D3
- 17 [Loop](#) C3
- 18 [Nixon Bar](#) A1
- 19 [Stavlos](#) B5

Entertainment

- 20 B1
- 21 [El Pecado](#) C2
- 22 [Thission](#) C7

Shopping

- 23 A3

MONASTIRAKI & THISIO

Magna Grecia BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(210 324 0314;; *Mitropoleos 54, Monastiraki; s €110, d €135-180 incl breakfast; ; Monastiraki*) This intimate boutique hotel, in a restored historic building opposite the cathedral, has magnificent Acropolis views from the front rooms and rooftop terrace. Each of the 12 individually decorated rooms with murals are named after Greek islands, and offer excellent amenities, including comfortable mattresses, DVD players and minibars. Staff are friendly and the hotel is dripping with character.

Hotel Cecil HOTEL €

(210 321 7079;; *Athinas 39, Monastiraki; s/d/tr incl breakfast €60/80/110; ; Monastiraki*) This charming old hotel on busy Athinas has beautiful high, moulded ceilings, polished timber floors and an original cage-style lift. The simple rooms are tastefully furnished, but don't have fridges. Two connecting rooms with a shared bathroom are ideal for families.

Hotel Erechthion HOTEL €

(210 345 9606;; *Flammarion 8, cnr Agias Marinas, Thisio; s/d/tr incl breakfast €40/70/100; ; Thisio*) Simple, clean rooms with TVs, refrigerators, veneer furniture and basic bathrooms are not the highlights here. Much more impressive are the fantastic Acropolis views from the balconies, the low price and the great neighbourhood.

Phidias Hotel HOTEL €€

(210 345 9511;; *Apostolou Pavlou 39, Thisio; s/d/tr incl breakfast €55/70/80; ; Thisio*) Smack dab midway along Thisio's grand pedestrianised promenade, this hotel and its friendly management offer straight-up, no-frills rooms in a great location.

Tempi Hotel HOTEL €

(210 321 3175;; *Eolou 29, Monastiraki; d/tr €64/78, s/d without bathroom €42/57; ; Monastiraki*) Location and affordability are the strengths of this older, family-run place on pedestrian Eolou, with front balconies overlooking the church on Plateia Agia

Irini, and side views of the Acropolis. Basic rooms have satellite TV, but the bathrooms are primitive. Top-floor rooms are small and quite a hike. There is a communal kitchen.

PSYRRI

Athens Style HOSTEL, APARTMENTS €

(210 322 5010;; *Agias Theklas 10, Psyrris; dm €21-25, s/d €51/75, apt €75-115; ; Monastiraki*) This bright and arty place has friendly staff, well-equipped studio apartments and hostel beds within walking distance to the metro, major sights and nightlife. Each dorm has lockers; some balconies have Acropolis views. Murals bedeck the reception and the cool basement lounge holds art exhibitions, a pool table, a home cinema and internet corner. The small Acropolis-view rooftop bar hosts lively evening happy hours.

Hotel Attalos HOTEL €€

(210 321 2801;; *Athinas 29, Psyrris; s/d/tr €70/85/99; ; Monastiraki*) Though decor has never been its strong point, this nonetheless comfortable hotel is very central. Its best feature remains the rooftop bar with wonderful views of the Acropolis. Rooms at the back have balconies (add €9) with Acropolis views.

GAZI

Eridanus BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€

(210 520 5360;; *Pireos 78, Gazi; r incl breakfast from €195; ; Keramikos*) After a late night partying in Gazi or nearby Psyrris, soak in your marble bathtub and lounge around in a fluffy white robe. Helpful staff cater to your every whim and the rooftop garden has Acropolis views, but Pireos St is noisy.

Top Sights

B3

[Technopolis](#) C2

Sights

1 D2

Eating

2 [Jamon](#) B2

3 [Kanella](#) C1

4 [Oina Perdamata](#) B3

5 [Sardelles](#) C2

6 [Skoufias](#) A3

Drinking

7 [45 Moires](#) C2

8 [A Liar Man](#) C1

9 [Gazaki](#) C2

10 [Hoxton](#) C2

11 [K44](#) B2

12 [Tapas](#) C2

Entertainment

13 [BIG](#) B1

14 [Blue Train](#) C1

15 [Greek Film Archive](#) C1

16 [Letom](#) B2

17 [NoizClub](#) C1

18 [S-cape](#) C1

19 [Sodade](#) C1

20 [Venue](#) B3

21 [Villa Mercedes](#) B3

OMONIA & EXARHIA

Hotel Exarchion HOTEL €

(210 380 0731;; *Themistokleous 55, Exarhia; s/d/tr incl breakfast €50/65/85;* ;
Omonia) Right in the heart of bohemian Exarhia, this straightforward but comfortable 1960s high-rise hotel offers clean, updated, well-equipped rooms, some with balconies. There's a rooftop cafe-bar and plenty of dining and entertainment options at your doorstep.

Fresh Hotel BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(210 524 8511;; *Sofokleous 26, cnr Klisthenous, Omonia; r/ste incl breakfast from €110/320;* ; Omonia) The first of the hip hotels to open in the gritty Omonia area, this is a cool place as long as you're happy to ignore the working girls in the streets outside. Once inside, seediness gives way to chic design and brightly coloured rooms with all the mod cons. The fantastic Acropolis-view rooftop, with pool, bar and restaurant, couldn't be further from the world below.

Baby Grand Hotel BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(210 325 0900;; *Athinas 65, Omonia; s/d incl breakfast from €92/100;* ;
Omonia) A reception desk created out of two Mini Coopers sets the tone for this fun hotel with original murals throughout. Individually decked-out rooms have iPod docking stations and designer furniture, plus anything from chandeliers to faux animal skins.

Melia BUSINESS HOTEL €€

(210 332 0100;; *Halkokondyli 14, cnr 28 Oktovriou-Patision, Omonia; d from €100;* ;
Omonia) Professional staff, sleek rooms and a roof-top Acropolis-view with bar-pool-jacuzzi make Melia a great hide-out. It's midway between Omonia and Exarhia.

Athens Easy Access Hostel HOSTEL €

(210 524 3211; *Satovrianidou 26, Omonia*; dm €14-18, d/tr/q per person €25/23/18, all incl breakfast; ; *Omonia*) Choose this basic backpacker hotel right behind Plateia Omonias (Omonia Sq) only if all the other hostels are full. The breakfast room becomes a happy-hour bar with cheap beer and meals.

MAKRYGIANNI & KOUKAKI

Athens Gate BUSINESS HOTEL €€

(210 923 8302;; *Leoforos Syngrou 10, Makrygianni*; r incl breakfast €110-185; ; *Akropoli*) With stunning views over the Temple of Olympian Zeus from the spacious front rooms, and a central (if busy) location, this totally refurbished hotel is a great find. The chic, stylish rooms are immaculate and have all the mod cons, staff are friendly and breakfast is served on the superb rooftop terrace with 360-degree Athens views.

Athens Backpackers HOSTEL €

(210 922 4044;; *Makri 12, Makrygianni*; dm incl breakfast €24-29; ; *Akropoli*) The popular rooftop bar with cheap drinks and Acropolis views is a major drawcard of this modern and friendly Australian-run backpacker favourite, right near the Acropolis metro. There's a barbecue in the courtyard, a well-stocked kitchen, and a busy social scene with film nights and bar crawls. The spotless six-bed dorms with private bathroom and lockers have bedding, but towels cost €2. The same management runs well-priced modern studios nearby (see boxed text.).

Herodion HOTEL €€€

(210 923 6832;; *Rovertou Galli 4, Makrygianni*; s/d/tr incl breakfast €155/170/210; ; *Akropoli*) This smart four-star hotel is geared towards the well-heeled traveller and businessperson. Rooms are small but decked out with all the trimmings and have super-comfortable beds. The rooftop spa and lounge have unbeatable Acropolis and museum views. Disabled access; substantial online discounts.

Hera Hotel BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(210 923 6682;; *Falirou 9, Makrygianni*; s/d from €110/130, ste from €250, incl breakfast; ; *Akropoli*) This elegant boutique hotel, a short walk from the Acropolis and Plaka, was totally rebuilt but the formal interior design is in keeping with the lovely neoclassical facade. There's lots of brass and timber, and stylish classic furnishings. The rooftop garden, restaurant and bar have spectacular views.

Marble House Pension PENSION €

(210 923 4058;; *Zini 35a, Koukaki*; s/d/tr €39/49/59, d/tr without bathroom €45/55; ; *Syngrou-Fix*) Tucked into a quiet cul-de-sac is one of Athens' best-value budget hotels. Rooms have been artfully updated, with wrought-iron beds, and bathrooms have just had a sleek marble make-over. All rooms have a fridge and ceiling fans and some have air-con (€9 extra). It is a fair walk from the tourist drag, but close to the metro.

Art Gallery Hotel PENSION €€

(210 923 8376;; *Erethiou 5, Koukaki*; s/d/tr/q from €70/90/ 115/135; ; *Syngrou-Fix*) Staying in this quaint, family-run place feels like staying in a home. Original furniture from the 1960s decorates the communal areas. Some rooms are a little small, but the upstairs balcony has a bit of an Acropolis view. A few cheaper rooms have shared bathrooms.

Philippos Hotel HOTEL €€

(210 922 3611;; *Mitseon 3, Makrygianni*; s/d/tr incl breakfast €110/138/171; ; *Akropoli*) Philippos offers small, well-appointed rooms near the Acropolis. The small double on the roof has a private terrace. Discounts online.

Hotel Tony HOTEL, APARTMENT €

(210 923 0561;; *Zaharitsa 26, Koukaki; s/d/tr €50/60/75; ; Syngrou-Fix*)

The clean, well-maintained rooms here all have fridges, TV and air-con (€9 extra). Hot water can be patchy. Tony also has roomy, well-equipped studios nearby (single/double/ triple €60/80/90), which are excellent for families or longer stays.

KOLONAKI & PANGRATI

Periscope BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(210 729 7200;; *Haritos 22, Kolonaki; s/d/ste incl breakfast from €126/140/210;*

; Evangelismos) Right in chic Kolonaki overlooking Lykavittos, Periscope is a chic hotel with industrial decor. Clever gadgets are sprinkled throughout including the lobby slide show, the sea-level measure on the stairs, and aerial shots of the city on the ceilings. Korres organic toiletries and the hip new restaurant, Pbox , add to the vibe. The penthouse's private rooftop spa has sensational views.

Kolonaki

Top Sights

B3
B3
A4
A4

Sights

1 C4
2 D4
3 C1
4 C1
5 C4
6 A3
7 D3

Activities, Courses & Tours

8 A1

Sleeping

9 [Periscope](#) C2

Eating

10 [Il Postino](#) A1

11 [Kavatza](#) C2

12 [Nice N' Easy](#) A1

13 [Oikeio](#) C2

14 C1

15 [Papadakis](#) B2

16 [Philippos](#) C2

Drinking

17 C2

18 [Da Capo](#) B3

19 [Doors](#) C3

20 [Filion](#) A2

21 [Mai Tai](#) D3

22 [Mommy](#) A1

23 [Petite Fleur](#) A2

24 [Rosebud](#) A1

Entertainment

25 [Dexameni](#) B2

[La Boom](#) (see 19)

Hilton HOTEL €€€

(210 728 1000;; *Leoforos Vasilissis Sofias 46, Ilissia; r/ste from €179/399;*
; *Evangelismos*) Popular with business travellers, Athens' Hilton has lashings of marble and bronze, enormous chandeliers and somewhat giddy designer carpets. The fine Milos restaurant, decadent top-floor Galaxy bar and a lovely pool round out the luxe.

Pagination Youth Hostel HOSTEL €

(210 751 9530;; *Damareos 75, Pangrati; dm €15;*) The dorms here are basic and dated, but it's a cheery enough place in a residential neighbourhood. Welcoming owner Yiannis is something of a philosopher, and guests add words of wisdom to the noticeboards. There's a communal kitchen, TV room, laundry and coin-operated hot showers (€0.50 for seven minutes). Take trolleybus 2 or 11 from Syntagma to the Filolaou stop on Frinis.

OTHER AREAS

Hostel Aphrodite HOSTEL €

(210 881 0589;; *Einardou 12, Stathmo Larisis; dm/d €15/46, d/tr/q per person*

without bathroom €21/18/16; ; Viktoria) It's not central, but this well-run hostel is a good budget option and the lively bar is a popular meeting spot for travellers. It has clean, good-sized dorms, some with private bathroom, as well as double rooms with and without private bathrooms – many with balconies. It's a 10-minute walk from the Larisis train and metro stations or five minutes from Viktoria.

Camping

There are no camping options in central Athens. The *Camping in Greece* booklet produced by EOT (Greek National Tourist Organisation) and list sites in the Attica region; most camp grounds near Athens offer basic facilities and are not generally up to European standards. Better camping options are further afield, at Shinias and Cape Sounion.

Athens Camping CAMPGROUND €

(210 581 4114;; Leoforos Athinon 198, Haidari; camp sites per adult/tent €8.50/5; year-round;) Though unattractive, the nearest campground to Athens (7km west of the city centre on the road to Corinth) has reasonable facilities.

Eating

Athens' vibrant restaurant scene is marked by a delightful culture of casual, convivial alfresco dining. Getting together to eat, drink and talk is the main source of entertainment for Greeks, so you are spoilt for choice.

The city's culinary offerings have burgeoned with a renaissance in Greek cuisine and the arrival of a diverse crop of fusion and high-style restaurants. A new generation of chefs draws inspiration from Greece's regional cuisine and local produce; this results in an interesting blend of culinary sophistication and grandma's home-style cooking.

Trendy nouveau-Greek restaurants compete alongside traditional tavernas, *ouzeries* (places that serve ouzo and light snacks) and quaint old-style *mayiria* (cook houses). Having said that, beware the places that put more effort into decor and attitude than into the food, then essentially charge you extra for average taverna fare. You may well find your most memorable meals served with minimum ambience.

It's hard to avoid eating in Plaka, especially if you are staying there, but the food is generally overpriced and ho-hum. The better choices are scattered around the city. Gazi has many modern tavernas which are convenient for lining your belly before a night out in the neighbourhood's clubs. Old-style eateries downtown cater to city workers and can be ambience-rich. In Monastiraki, the end of Mitropoleos is a souvlaki hub, with musicians adding to the area's bustling atmosphere. *Mezedhopoleia* (restaurants specialising in mezedhes) and more-upmarket restaurants can be found around Adrianou, along the rail line to Thisio and in Psyrri. Exarhia's popular eateries cater largely to locals, while chic Kolonaki has some of the best fine-dining options.

We've stuck largely to Central Athens and Greek or Mediterranean cuisine. Unless stated otherwise, all the restaurants listed are open daily for lunch and dinner. At high-end restaurants, reservations are essential.

PLAKA & SYNTAGMA

Tzitzikas & Mermingas TAVERNA €

(210 324 7607; Mitropoleos 12-14, Syntagma; mezedhes €6-11; Syntagma) Greek merchandise lines the walls of this cheery, modern *mezedhopoleio* that sits smack in the middle of Central Athens. It serves a tasty range of delicious and creative mezedhes (like the honey-drizzled, bacon-wrapped cheese) to a bustling crowd of locals.

Filema TAVERNA €

(210 325 0222; Romvis 16, Syntagma; mains €7.50-10, mezedhes €3.50-6.50; lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, noon-8pm Sun; Syntagma) This popular *mezedhopoleio* has two shopfronts and fills tables on both sides of the narrow street, which is a busy commercial area by day but a peaceful spot when the shops close. It has a great range of mezedhes such as plump *keftedhes* (small, tasty rissoles) and grilled sardines.

Paradosiako TAVERNA €

(210 321 4121; Voulis 44a, Plaka; mains €5-11; Syntagma) For great traditional fare, you can't beat this inconspicuous, no-frills taverna on the periphery of Plaka, with a few tables on the pavement. There's a basic menu but it's best to choose from the daily specials, which include fresh seafood like prawn saganaki. It fills up quickly with locals, so arrive early.

Doris TAVERNA €

(210 323 2671; Praxitelous 30, Syntagma; mains €4-9; 8am-6.30pm Mon-Sat; Panepistimio) This Athens institution started as a *galaktopoleio* (dairy store) in 1947 and became a traditional *mayirio* catering to city workers. Pink walls aside, the classic marble tables, historical photos and old-style waiters give it a yesteryear ambience. Choose from the trays of daily specials (the stewed chickpeas are excellent), as the printed English menu only has the basics. Finish off with the renowned *loukoumadhes* (ball-shaped doughnuts served with honey and cinnamon).

Mono FINE DINING €

(210 322 6711; Paleologou Venizelou 4, Plaka; mains €8-15; Mon-Sat; Monastiraki) This swishy taverna, on the outskirts of Plaka near the cathedral, is one of the new breed of restaurants serving refined contemporary Greek cuisine. Decor is subtle Greek chic with splashes of orange and fresh-cut flowers, there's a lovely courtyard, and the presentation and ambience are top rate.

Glykis TAVERNA €

(210 322 3925; Angelou Geronta 2, Plaka; mezedhes €5.50-6; 10.30am-1am; Akropoli) In a quiet corner of Plaka, this low-key *mezedhopoleio* with a shady courtyard is mostly frequented by students and locals. It has a tasty selection of mezedhes, including traditional dishes such as *briam* (oven-baked vegetable casserole) and cuttlefish in wine.

STREET FOOD

From vendors selling *koulouria* (fresh pretzel-style bread) and grilled corn or chestnuts, to the raft of fast-food offerings, there's no shortage of snacks on the run in Athens.

You can't go wrong with local *tiropites* (cheese pies) and their various permutations. Ariston (210 322 7626; Voulis 10, Syntagma; pies €1.40-2; 10am-4pm Mon-Fri; Syntagma) has been around since 1910, serving a great range of tasty, freshly baked pies with all manner of fillings.

Greece's favourite savoury snack is **souvlaki**, packing more punch for €2.50 than anything else. You can't miss the aroma wafting from the souvlaki hub at Monastiraki, but you'll find one of the best souvlaki joints in Athens nearby at tiny Kostas (210 323 2971; Plateia Agia Irini 2, Monastiraki; souvlaki €2; 5am-5pm; Monastiraki). In a pleasant square opposite Agia Irini church, Kostas churns out tasty pork souvlakia and kebabs, with its signature spicy tomato sauce.

Lena's Bio CAFE €

(210 324 1360; Nikis 11, Syntagma; salads & sandwiches €6-9; 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 8am-4pm Sat; Syntagma) A wholesome option with a delicious range of organic prepared salads, sandwiches and juices. If you can't snag a table, you can get take away.

Platanos TAVERNA €

(210 321 8734; Diogenous 4, Plaka; mains €7-12; Syntagma) This age-old Plaka taverna, with an antiquated menu in several badly translated languages, sits in a pleasant village-style square away from the main tourist drag. Dig into reliable home-style fare, such as chicken with okra, at tables under a giant plane tree. No credit cards.

Pure Bliss CAFE €

(210 325 0360;; Romvis 24a, Syntagma; items €3-9; 10am-1am Mon-Sat, 5-9pm Sun; ; Syntagma) Enjoy the laid-back vibe at one of the few places in Athens where you can get organic fair-trade coffee, exotic teas and soy products. There's a range of healthy salads, sandwiches, smoothies and mostly organic food, wine and cocktails.

Palia Taverna tou Psara TAVERNA, SEAFOOD €€

(210 321 8734; Eretheos 16, Plaka; mains €12-24; Akropoli) Away from the main hustle and bustle of Plaka, this taverna is a cut above the rest, which is why it fills the tables on the street, the terrace and the place next door. There is a choice of mezedhes but it is known as the best seafood taverna in Plaka (top fresh fish €65 per kilogram).

Vizantino TAVERNA €

(210 322 7368; Kydathineon 18, Plaka; mains €7-9; Akropoli) It's touristy in the extreme, but despite the touts, it is the best of the restaurants around Plateia Filomousou Eterias. Choose from the daily specials.

MONASTIRAKI & THISIO

Café Avyssia FINE DINING €€

(210 321 7047;; Kynetou 7, Monastiraki; mains €10-16; 11am-1am Tue-Sat, 11am-7pm Sun; Monastiraki) Hidden away on colourful Plateia Avyssiias, in the middle of the flea market, this bohemian *mezedhopoleio* gets top marks for atmosphere, food and friendly service. It specialises in regional Greek cuisine, from warm fava to eggplants baked with tomato and cheese, and has a great selection of ouzo, *raki* (Cretan firewater) and *tsipouro* (distilled spirit similar to ouzo but usually stronger). There is often acoustic live music, from Manos Hatzidakis to *rembetika* (blues). Snag fantastic Acropolis views from the bistro seats upstairs.

Kuzina TAVERNA €€

(210 324 0133;; Adrianou 9, Monastiraki; mains €12-25; Tue-Sun; Thisio) Light streams through the plate-glass windows here, warming the crowded tables in winter. Or eat outside on pedestrianised people-watching Adrianou in summer. The modern mood and music set the tone for inventive Greek fusion, like Cretan pappardelle or chicken with figs and sesame.

Gevomai Kai Magevomai TAVERNA €€

(210 345 2802;; Nileos 11, Thisio; mains €11-18; Thisio) Stroll off the pedestrian way to find this small corner taverna with marble-topped tables. Neighbourhood locals know it as one of the best for home-cooked, simple food with the freshest ingredients.

Filistron MEZEDHES €€

(210 346 7554; Apostolou Pavlou 23, Thisio; mezedhes €8-14; Tue-Sun; Thisio) It's wise to book a prized table on the rooftop terrace of this excellent *mezedhopoleio*, which enjoys breathtaking Acropolis and Lykavittos views. Specialising in regional cuisine, it has a great range of tasty mezedhes – try the grilled vegetables with haloumi (€11) or the Mytiline onions stuffed with rice and mince – and an extensive Greek wine list.

To Steki tou Ilia TAVERNA €

(210 345 8052; Eptachalkou 5, Thisio; chops per portion/kg €9/30; 8pm-late;

Thisio) You'll often see people waiting for a table at this *psistaria* (restaurant serving grilled food), famous for its tasty grilled lamb and pork chops. With tables under the trees on the quiet pedestrian strip opposite the church, it's a no-frills place with barrel wine and simple dips, chips and salads.

Ouzou Melathron TAVERNA €

(210 324 0716; *Agiou Filipou 10, cnr Astingos, Monastiraki*; *mezedhes* €5-7; *Monastiraki*) The famous *ouzerie* chain from Thessaloniki has been a hit since it opened right in the middle of the Monastiraki market place. It's a buzzing, unpretentious spot serving tasty *mezedhes* from an oversized menu with a good dose of whimsy (such as the transvestite lamb, which is actually chicken).

PSYRRI

Hytra FINE DINING €€€

(210 331 6767;; *Navarhou Apostoli 7, Psyrris*; *mains* €28-34; *dinner Tue-Sun*; *Thisio*) This tiny chute of a restaurant is decked out in oil paintings of bikes and motorcycles...Oh, yes, and has one Michelin star. One of Athens' haute-cuisine hideouts, Hytra serves up exquisitely presented Greek food with a modern twist. In high season, it moves to the Westin Athens, Astir Palace Beach Resort in coastal Vouliagmeni.

Ivis MEZEDHES €€

(210 323 2554; *Navarhou Apostoli 19, Psyrris*; *mezedhes* €4-10; *Thisio*) This cosy corner *mezedhopoleio*, with its bright, arty decor, has a small but delicious range of simple, freshly cooked *mezedhes*. Ask for the daily specials as there's only a rough Greek hand-written menu. A good ouzo selection lights things up.

Telis TAVERNA €

(210 324 2775; *Evrpidou 86, Psyrris*; *pork chops* €7; *8am-2am Mon-Sat*; *Thisio*) Telis has been slaving over the flame grill at this fluoro-lit, bare-walled, paper-tablecloth *psistaria*, cooking his famous pork chops, since 1978. There's nothing else on the menu – just meat, chips and Greek salad, washed down with rough house wine or beer.

Taverna tou Psyrris TAVERNA €

(210 321 4923; *Eshylou 12, Psyrris*; *mains* €6.50-9; *Monastiraki*) This age-old cheerful taverna just off Plateia Iroön turns out decent, no-frills, traditional food.

GAZI & ROUF

Skoufias TAVERNA €

(210 341 2252; *Vasiliou tou Megalou 50, Rouf*; *mains* €5-9; *9pm-late*; *Keramikos*) This gem of a taverna near the railway line is a little off the beaten track but is worth seeking out. The menu has Cretan influences and an eclectic selection of regional Greek cuisine, including dishes you won't find in any tourist joint, from superb rooster with ouzo to lamb *tsigariasto* (braised) with *horta* (wild greens), and potato salad with orange. Dine outside at tables opposite a church.

Varoulko FINE DINING €€€

(210 522 8400;; *Pireos 80, Keramikos*; *mains* €35-60; *from 8.30pm Mon-Sat*; *Thisio*) For a heady Greek dining experience, try the Michelin-starred combination of Acropolis views and delicious seafood by Lefteris Lazarou. Service can be spotty but the wine list and rooftop terrace are enviable.

Oina Perdamata TAVERNA €

(210 341 1461; *Vasiliou tou Megalou 10, Gazi; mains €6-9; Keramikos*) Unpretentious, fresh daily specials are the hallmark of this simple spot off busy Pireos street. Try staples like fried cod with garlic dip and roast vegetables, or pork stew, rabbit and rooster.

Kanella TAVERNA €

(210 347 6320; *Leoforos Konstantinoupoleos 70, Gazi; dishes €7-10; 1.30pm-late; Keramikos*) Home-made village-style bread, mismatched retro crockery and brown-paper tablecloths set the tone for this trendy, modern taverna serving regional Greek cuisine. Friendly staff serve daily specials such as lemon lamb with potatoes, and an excellent zucchini and avocado salad.

Sardelles TAVERNA, SEAFOOD €€

(210 347 8050; *Persefonis 15, Gazi; fish dishes €10-17; Keramikos*) Dig into simply cooked seafood mezedhes at tables outside, opposite the illuminated gasworks. Nice touches include fishmonger paper tablecloths and souvenir pots of basil. Try the grilled *thrapsalo* (squid) and excellent *taramasalata* (a thick purée of fish roe, potato, oil and lemon juice). Meat eaters can venture next door to its counterpart, Butcher Shop (210 341 3440; *Persefonis 19, Gazi; Keramikos*) .

Jamon TAPAS €

(210 346 4120;; *Dekeleon 15, cnr Orfeos, Gazi; tapas €1.75-7; from 11am*) Scrumptious tapas and paella (€10), served with Spanish wines and flare.

OMONIA & EXARHIA

The streets around the colourful and bustling Varvakios Agora (*Athens Central Market; Athinas, Omonia; Mon-Sat; Monastiraki*) are a sensory delight. The meat and fish market fills the historic building on the eastern side, and the fruit and vegetable market is across the road. The meat market might sound like a strange place to go for a meal, but the tavernas here, such as Papandreou (213 008 2297; *Aristogitonos 1; mains €7-8; 24hr*) , are an Athenian institution, turning out huge quantities of tasty, traditional fare. Clients range from hungry market workers to elegant couples emerging from nightclubs at 5am in search of a bowl of hangover-busting *patsas* (tripe soup).

Yiantes TAVERNA €€

(210 330 1369; *Valtetsiou 44, Exarhia; mains €12-18; Omonia*) This modern eatery with its white linen and freshcut flowers set in a lovely garden courtyard is upmarket for Exarhia, but the food is superb and made with largely organic produce. Try interesting greens such as *almirikia*, the perfectly grilled fish, or delicious mussels and calamari with saffron.

Diporto Agoras TAVERNA €

(210 321 1463; *cnr Theatrou & Sokratous, Omonia; plates €5-6; 8am-6pm Mon-Sat, closed 1-20 Aug; Monastiraki*) This quirky old taverna is one of the dining gems of Athens. There's no signage, only two doors leading to a rustic cellar where there's no menu, just a few dishes that haven't changed in years. The house speciality is *revythia* (chickpeas), usually followed by grilled fish and washed down with wine from one of the giant barrels lining the wall. The often-erratic service is part of the appeal.

Kimatothrafstis CAFE €

(213 030 8274; *Harilaou Trikoupi 49, Exarhia; small/large plate €3/6; 8am-11pm, closed dinner Sun; Omonia*) This great-value, bright and casual modern cafe with communal tables dishes out a range of home-style Greek cooking and alternative fare.

Choose from the buffet of the day's offerings. Plates come in two sizes: big or small.

Rozalia TAVERNA €

(210 330 2933; *Valtetsiou 58, Exarhia; mains €5-11; Omonia*) An old-style Exarhia favourite on a lively pedestrian strip, this family-run taverna serves grills and home-style fare such as *pastitsio* (layers of buttery macaroni and seasoned minced lamb). Large courtyard/garden fans spray water to keep you cool.

Food Company CAFE €

(210 380 5004; *Emmanuel Benaki 63-65, Exarhia; dishes €6-8; Omonia*) Grab a healthy salad, a heap of pasta or a price-fixed lunch (€9).

MAKRYGIANNI & KOUKAKI

Mani Mani TAVERNA €€

(210 921 8180;; *Falirou 10, Makrygianni; mains €9.50-16; 3pm-12.30am Tue-Thu, from 1pm Fri & Sat, 1-5.30pm Sun, closed Jul & Aug; Akropoli*) Forgo a view and head upstairs to the relaxing dining rooms of this delightful modern restaurant, which specialises in regional cuisine from Mani in the Peloponnese. The ravioli with Swiss chard, chervil and cheese, and the tangy Mani sausage with orange are standouts. It's great value and almost all starters and mains can be ordered as half serves (at half-price), allowing you to try a range of dishes.

Strofi FINE DINING €

(210 921 4130;; *Rovertou Galli 25, Makrygianni; mains €11-15; Akropoli*) Book ahead here for a Parthenon view from the rooftop of this exquisitely renovated townhouse. Food is simple Greek, but the setting with elegant white linen, burgundy walls, original art and sweet service elevate the experience to romantic levels.

Dionysos FINE DINING €€

(210 923 1939;; *Rovertou Galli 43, Makrygianni; mains €18-28; Akropoli*) Location, location, location. Eat here for the fantastic sweep of plate glass looking out onto the unblemished south slope of the Acropolis. Food is pricey but service is attentive...Date night?

KOLONAKI & PANGRATI

Spondi FINE DINING €€€

(210 752 0658; *Pironos 5, Pangrati; mains €35-50; 8pm-late*) Two Michelin-starred Spondi is consistently voted Athens' best restaurant, and the accolades are totally deserved. It offers Mediterranean haute cuisine, with heavy French influences, in a relaxed, chic setting in a charming old house. Choose from the menu or a range of set dinner and wine *prix fixes*. The restaurant has a lovely bougainvillea-draped garden. Popping the question? Come here (but book ahead, and take a cab – it's hard to reach on public transport).

Oikeio TAVERNA €€

(210 725 9216; *Ploutarhou 15, Kolonaki; specials €7-13; 1pm-2.30am Mon-Sat; Evangelismos*) With excellent home-style cooking, this modern taverna lives up to its name (meaning 'homey'). It's decorated like a cosy bistro on the inside, and tables on the pavement allow people watching without the normal Kolonaki bill. Pastas, salads and more international food are tasty, but try the *mayirefta* (ready-cooked meals) specials like the excellent stuffed zucchini. Book ahead, as it always fills up.

Il Postino ITALIAN €

(210 364 1414; *Grivaion 3, Kolonaki; pasta €8-12; Panepistimio*) Some consider

this the best down-home Italian food in Athens. In the mood for a plate of home-made gnocchi with pesto (€12) before a night out clubbing? Sneak into this little sidestreet and sup under old photos of Roma.

Philippos TAVERNA €

(210 721 6390; *Xenokratous 19, Kolonaki; mains 8-12; 1-5pm Mon-Sat, 8.30pm-midnight Mon-Fri; Evangelismos*) Why mess with what works? Philippos has been dishing out yummy Greek dishes since 1923...A chance for a little soul cooking, with white linen, in the heart of chic Kolonaki.

Alatsi CRETAN €€

(210 721 0501; *Vrasida 13, Ilissia; mains €12-16.50; Evangelismos*) Cretan food is in. Alatsi represents the new breed of trendy upscale restaurants, serving traditional Cretan cuisine, such as *gamopilafo* (wedding pilaf) with lamb or rare *stamnagathi* (wild greens), to fashionable Athenians. The food and service are excellent. Find it near the Hilton.

Cucina Povera MEDITERRANEAN €

(210 756 6008;; *Euforionos 13, Pangrati; mains €9-14; dinner Tue-Sat, brunch Sun*) Dishes can be occasionally (but not consistently) incandescent, like the salad with avocado, pear and goat cheese. The dining room embodies relaxed hipness, and the wine list rocks. Check its website for directions.

Kavatza TAVERNA €

(210 724 1862; *Spefsipou 10, Kolonaki; mains €4-8; Evangelismos*) Straight, value-for-money Greek dishes.

Nice N' Easy CAFE €

(210 361 7201; *Omirou 60, cnr Skoufa, Kolonaki; sandwiches €5-10; lunch & dinner daily, breakfast Sat & Sun; Panepistimio*) Dig into organic, fresh sandwiches, salads and brunch treats like *huevos rancheros* beneath images of Louis Armstrong and Marilyn Monroe.

Papadakis SEAFOOD €€

(210 360 8621; *Fokylidou 15, Kolonaki; mains €18-38; Mon-Sat*) This understatedly chic restaurant specialises in creative seafood, like stewed octopus with honey and sweet wine, *salatouri* (fish salad) and sea salad (a type of green seaweed/sea asparagus). Service can be snooty.

Drinking

Cafes

One Athenian (and Greek) favoured pastime is going for a coffee. Athens' ubiquitous and inevitably packed cafes have Europe's most expensive coffee (between €3 and €5). You're essentially hiring the chair, but can linger for hours. Museums like the Benaki, Acropolis Museum and Theocharakis Foundation also have lovely cafes.

KOLONAKI

Da Capo CAFE

(*Tsakalof 1; Syntagma*) Da Capo anchors the cafes on the main square and is *the* place to be seen. It's self-serve if you can find a table.

Filion CAFE

(*Skoufa 34; Syntagma*) Despite its unassuming decor, Filion consistently attracts the intellectual set: artists, writers and filmmakers.

Petite Fleur CAFE

(*Omirou 44; Panepistimio*) Petite Fleur serves up large mugs of hot chocolate and speciality cappuccinos in a quiet, almost-Parisian ambience.

THISIO

Cafes along the pedestrian promenade Apostolou Pavlou in Thisio have great Acropolis views.

Stavlos CAFE

(*Iraklidon 10; Thisio*) Stavlos can thump with a disco beat and a youngish crowd. Coffees are strong and some of the outdoor tables have Acropolis views.

SYNTAGMA, PLAKA & MONASTIRAKI

A cafe-thick area in Monastiraki is Adrianou, along the Ancient Agora, where young people fill the shady tables.

Melina CAFE

(*Lysiou 22, Plaka; Akropoli*) An ode to the great Merkouri, Melina offers charm and intimacy out of the hectic centre.

Zonar's CAFE

(*Voukourestiou 9, cnr Panepistimiou, Syntagma; Syntagma*) Pricey Zonar's dates from the 1920s and creates excellent pastries.

EXHARIA

Ginger Ale CAFE, BAR

(*Themistokleous 80, Omonia*) Dip back in time to a '50s veneered coffee shop cum rocking nightspot. Sip espresso by day and catch a rotating line-up of live acts by night.

Floral CAFE, BOOKSHOP

(*Themistokleous 80, Omonia*) Floral is sleekly modern with grey-toned images of retro life and you guessed it: flowers on the walls. Locals come to buy books, chat and people watch.

Bars

In Athens many daytime cafes and restaurants turn into bars and clubs at night. Expect bars to begin filling after 11pm and stay open till late. Every neighbourhood has drinking holes, but the hot spots migrate routinely. Right now, Gazi has the most action, while Kolonaki steadfastly attracts the trendier set. The Galaxy bar atop the Hilton offers panoramic views (and has equally sky-high prices). Some multi-use arts spaces (see Arts Explosion) also have vibrant bars. With the current strapped financial climate in Athens, watch your back, wherever you go.

GAZI

Get off the metro at Keramikos and you'll be smack in the middle of the thriving Gazi scene. You will need to catch a cab when the metro stops running in the wee hours. Whatever you do, don't try to drive: parking is a nightmare.

Hoxton BAR

(*Voutadon 42; Keramikos*) Join the hip, artsy crowd for shoulder-to-shoulder hobnobbing amid original art, iron beams and leather sofas.

A Liar Man BAR

(*Sofroniou 2; Keramikos*) Nearby, A Liar Man still drips with cool, but has a more hushed vibe.

Gazaki BAR

(*Triptolemou 31; Keramikos*) This Gazi trailblazer opened before the neighbourhood had become *the* place to be. Friendly locals crowd the great rooftop bar.

Tapas BAR

(*Triptolemou 31; Keramikos*) Dig into yummy tapas while you sip delish cocktails to soothing beats. There's also a balcony.

45 Moires BAR

(*lakhou 18, cnr Voutadon; Keramikos*) Go deep into hard rock and enjoy terrace views of Gazi's neon-lit chimneys and the Acropolis.

Nixon Bar BAR

(*Agisilaou 61b; Thisio*) More chic than most, Nixon Bar serves up food and cocktails and sits next door to swinging Belafonte.

K44 BAR

(*Konstantinoupoleos 44; Keramikos*) K44 hosts a constantly changing schedule of some of the city's hottest parties, bands and DJs, and is frequented by loads of pretty young things.

KOLONAKI

Kolonaki has two main strips of bars: the first is at the top end of Skoufa; or join the crowds squeezing into the tiny bars on Haritos.

Mai Tai BAR

(*Ploutarhou 18; Evangelismos*) Join Kolonaki's best dressed as they pack into this narrow bar and spill out into the street beyond. It's a place to see and be seen.

City BAR

(*Haritos 43; Evangelismos*) One of the best bars on hopping Haritos, City makes an excellent *mastiha* cocktail.

Rosebud BAR

(*Omirou 60, cnr Skoufa; Panepistimiou*) Kolonaki professionals and chicsters cram this straight-up cocktail bar.

Mommy BAR

(*Delfon 4; Panepistimiou*) Further along and tucked way back in a side street, Mommy is popular for English-speaking locals and its weekly '80s night.

Circus BAR

(*Navarinou 11; Panepistimiou*) Presided over by a Ganesh-style wire elephant, Circus has relaxed coffees by day and cocktails by night.

Doors BAR

(*Karneadou 25-29; Evangelismos*) Drop in for some dinner theatre on weekdays, and drinks every night. Doors is next to La Boom, an '80s disco that moves to Agios Kosmas (near Akrotiri) in summer.

PSYRRI

Psyrrri surged then hit a small decline, but some anchors remain.

Second Skin BAR

(; *Plateia Agion Anargyron 5*; *Thisio*) Athens' premier Goth-Industrial venue holds torture garden parties and the like.

Fidelio BAR

(*Oygou 2*; *Thisio*) A mainstream crowd enjoys the retractable roof.

Thirio BAR

(*Lepenioutou 1*; *Thisio*) Popular and packed, the lilliputian warren alternates warm stone and bright murals.

SYNTAGMA & PLAKA

Funky bars have also popped up in obscure alleys and formerly deserted streets in Central Athens.

Seven Jokers BAR

(*Voulis 7, Syntagma*; *Syntagma*) Lively and central Seven Jokers anchors the party block, also shared by spacious 42 around the corner, for cocktails in wood-panelled splendour.

Baba Au Rum BAR

(*Klitiou 6, Syntagma*; *Syntagma*) Around the corner from Bartessera, fab cocktail mixologists concoct the tippie of your dreams.

Bartessera BAR

(*Kolokotroni 25, Syntagma*; *Syntagma*) This cool bar-cafe with great music hides out at the end of a narrow arcade.

Brettos BAR

(*Kydathineon 41, Plaka*; *Akropoli*) You won't find any happening bars in Plaka, but Brettos is a delightful old bar and distillery, with a stunning wall of colourful bottles and huge barrels. Sample shots of its home brands of wine, ouzo, brandy and other spirits.

Booze BAR

(*Kolokotroni 57, Syntagma*; *Syntagma*) This gay-friendly, multi-use, all-day bar has an arts focus, with gallery spaces in the basement. But don't forget the nightclub upstairs.

Gin Joint BAR

(*Lada 1, Syntagma*; *Syntagma*) They call it Gin Joint for a reason: sample 60 gins or other fancy beverages, some with historical notes on their origin.

Galaxy Bar BAR

(*Stadiou 10, Syntagma*; *closed Sun*; *Syntagma*) Not to be confused with the Hilton's sky bar, this sweet little wood-panelled place has a homey saloon feel.

Toy BAR

(*Karytsi 10, Syntagma*; *Syntagma*) Thirty-somethings gather at this old favourite for coffee by day and glam cocktails by night.

MONASTIRAKI

In Monastiraki, multi-use spaces like Taf and Six DOGS (see) morph from gallery to cafe to hip-happening bar, spilling into the streets at night.

James Joyce PUB

(*210 323 5055*; *Astingos 12*; *mains €9-14*; *Monastiraki*) The Guinness is free flowing at this Irish pub with decent food, live music and loads of travellers and expats.

THISIO

The string of cafes and bars along Thisio's pedestrianised Iraklidon draws 'em in.

Loop BAR

(*Plateia Agion Asomaton 3*; *Thisio*) Folks gather in a semi-industrial area to rock out to top DJs.

EXARHIA & OMONIA

Exarhia is a good bet for youthful, lively bars on Plateia Exarhion, and the cheap bar precinct on nearby Mesolongiou is popular with students and anarchists. Omonia at night is especially dangerous these days.

Vox BAR

(*Themistokleous 80, Exarhia; Omonia*) Vox is a good place to start on the square – linger over coffee during the day, or join the crowd of liquoring locals at night.

Alexandrino BAR

(*Emmanuel Benaki 69, Exarhia; Omonia*) Imagine a small, French bistro with excellent wines and cocktails.

Blue Fox BAR

(*Asklipiou 91, Exarhia; Omonia*) You might not expect this in Athens, but Blue Fox is great for '50s-era swing and rockabilly complete with Vespas and poodle skirts.

Tralala BAR

(*Asklipiou 45, Exarhia; Omonia*) Actors frequent cool Tralala with its original artwork, lively owners and gregarious atmosphere.

Mo Better BAR

(*Kollekti 32, cnr Themistokleous, Exarhia; Omonia*) Tickle your ears with classic rock in a neoclassical building.

Higgs BAR

(*Efpolidos 4, Omonia; Omonia*) This old *kafeneio* (coffee house) morphed into an alternative bar that cranks up the music at night, with tables overlooking Plateia Kotzia.

MAKRYGIANNI

Duende BAR

(*Tziraion 2; Akropoli*) This intimate pub feels almost like a Parisian brasserie and is tucked away on a quiet sidestreet.

Tiki BAR

(; *Falirou 15; Akropoli*) What's life without a good tiki bar?

Sports Club BAR

(*Veikou 3a; Akropoli*) Americanos, Americanos, Americanos! You'll find a solid collection of them here at this bar run by the proprietors of Athens Backpackers.

Entertainment

English-language entertainment information appears daily in the *Kathimerini* supplement in the *International Herald Tribune*; *Athens News* and *Athens Plus* also have listings. Check out entertainment websites (see boxed text, [Click here](#)) for events and concerts around town.

Athens' thriving multi-use spaces (see boxed text) host all manner of goings-on.

Nightclubs

Athens famous nightlife heats up after midnight. Vibrant bars and dance clubs suit all types and musical tastes, from the latest dance beats to indie pop-rock, plus the classic Greek *bouzoukia* or *skyladika* (literally 'dog houses', a mocking term for second-rate places with crooning singers). Admission usually ranges from €10 to €15 and includes one drink. Most top clubs close in summer or move to outdoor venues by the beach.

Venue CLUB

(*210 341 1410;; Pireos 130, Rouf; Sep-May; Keramikos*) Arguably the city's biggest dance club with the biggest dance parties by the world's biggest DJs. The three-stage dance floor jumps.

Letom CLUB

(699 224 0000; Dekeleon 26, Gazi; Keramikos) Late-night clubbers flock to dance parties at this trendy club, with its giant mirrorball elephant, top line-up of international and local DJs, and gay-friendly, hip young crowd.

El Pecado CLUB

(210 324 4049;; Tournavitou 11, Psyrri; closed Jun-Sep; Thisio) A good bet for dancing the night away...They literally ring a church bell to fire up the 30-something crowd. In summer it moves beachside to Glyfada.

Villa Mercedes CLUB

(210 342 2886;; Tzaferi 11, cnr Andronikou, Keramikos; Keramikos) For an ultraswanky evening, have dinner at this unashamedly pretentious but undeniably chic club and stay on for a cocktail and dance. Pleasant outdoor seating. Bookings recommended.

Vitrine CLUB

(210 924 2444;; Markou Mousourou 1, Mets; Oct-Jun; Akropoli) A firm favourite among downtown nightspots, with Acropolis and city views from the top.

SUMMER CLUBS

Athens has some excellent open-air venues, but in summer much of the city's serious nightlife moves to glamorous, massive seafront clubs. Many are on the tram route, which runs to 2.30am on Friday and Saturday. If you book for dinner you don't pay cover; otherwise admission usually ranges from €10 to €20, and includes one drink. Glam up to ensure you get in.

Akrotiri CLUB

(210 985 9147;; Vasileos Georgiou B 5, Agios Kosmas) This massive, top beach club holds 3000, in bars, a restaurant and lounges over different levels. Jamming party nights bring top resident and visiting DJs. Pool parties rock during the day.

Balux CLUB

(210 894 1620;; Leoforos Poseidonos 58, Glyfada) This glamorous club-restaurant-lounge right on the beach must be seen to be believed, with its poolside chaises, four-poster beds with flowing nets, and night-time line-up of top DJs next door at Akanthus (210 968 0800;).

Island CLUB

(210 965 3563;; Varkiza, 27th km, Athens-Sounion road) Dreamy classic summer club-restaurant on the seaside with superb island decor.

GAY & LESBIAN ATHENS

For the most part Athens' gay and lesbian scene is relatively low-key, though the Athens Pride () march, held in June, has been an annual event since 2005, with celebrations centred on Plateia Klafthmonos. Check out, or a copy of the *Greek Gay Guide* booklet at *periptera* (newspaper kiosks).

For nightlife, a new breed of gay and gay-friendly clubs have opened around town, mostly in Makrygianni, Psyrri, Gazi, Metaxourghio and Exarhia.

In Gazi, tiny, sleek Sodade (210 346 8657;; Triptolemou 10) is super-fun for dancing. S-cape (210 341 1003;; Megalou Alexandrou 139) stays packed with the younger crowd. Women go to NoizClub (210 342 4771;; Evmolpidon 41, cnr Konstantinoupoleos) . Blue Train (210 346 0677;; Leoforos Konstantinoupoleos) , along the railway line, has a club upstairs, while BIG (694 628 2845;; Falesias 12) is the hub of Athens' lively bear scene.

In Monastiraki, welcoming, all-day hang-out Magaze (210 324 3740; Eolou 33) has Acropolis views from the pavement tables and becomes a lively bar after sunset.

Makrygianni has the veteran Granazi (210 924 4185;; *Lembesi 20*) and the busy, three-level Lamda Club (210 942 4202; *Lembesi 15, cnr Leoforos Syngrou*), which is not for the faint of heart.

In Metaxourghio, the cafe-bar-restaurant Mirovolos (210 522 8806; *Giatrakou 12*) is a popular lesbian spot. In Koukai, the drag show at Koukles (694 755 7443;; *Zan Moreas 32*) rocks.

The popular gay beach, Limanakia, is below the rocky coves near Varkiza. Take the tram or A2/E2 express bus to Glyfada, then take bus 115 or 116 to the Limnakia B stop.

Live Music

ROCK

Athens has a healthy rock-music scene and many European tours stop here. In summer check Rockwave ([Click here](#)) and other festival schedules.

Gagarin 205 Club ROCK

(; *Liosion 205, Thymarakia; Agios Nikolaos*) Friday and Saturday night gigs feature leading rock and underground bands. Advance tickets at Ticket House (210 360 8366;; *Panepistimiou 42, Syntagma; Panepistimio*).

AN Club ROCK, POP

(210 330 5056;; *Solomou 13-15, Exarhia; Omonia*) A small spot for lesser-known international and local rock bands.

Mike's Irish Bar ROCK, WORLD MUSIC

(210 777 6797;; *Sinopsis 6, Ambelokipi; Ambelokipi*) A long-time favourite of the expatriate community, with live music most nights.

Fuzz ECLECTIC

(; *Pireos 209, Tavros; Akropoli*) Fuzz jams with international acts like the Wailers or Gypsy punk band Gogol Bordello.

JAZZ & WORLD MUSIC

Eclectic bands fill small clubs around Athens (normally closed in July and August). Cover charges vary.

Half Note Jazz Club JAZZ

(210 921 3310;; *Trivonianou 17, Mets; Akropoli*) Athens' stylish, principal and most serious jazz venue hosts an array of international musicians. Near Athens' cemetery.

Alavastro Café LIVE MUSIC

(210 756 0102; *Damareos 78, Pangrati*) A mix of modern jazz, ethnic and quality Greek music in a casual, intimate setting.

Small Music Theatre LIVE MUSIC

(210 924 5644; *Veïkou 33, Koukaki; Syngrou-Fix*) Offers an interesting assortment of bands, often jazz and fusion.

Palenque LATIN

(210 775 2360;; *Farandaton 41, Ambelokipi; Ambelokipi*) A slice of Havana in Athens; international artists, salsa parties and flamenco shows.

GREEK MUSIC

Athens is where you can see some of the best *rembetika* (Greek blues) in intimate, evocative venues. Most close from May to September, so in summer try live-music tavernas around Plaka and Psyri (which also has merry Sunday afternoons). Most sets include a combination of *rembetika* and *laïka* (urban popular music). Performances start at around 11.30pm; most places do not have a cover charge, but drinks can be expensive. There's also live music most nights and on weekends at Café Avyssinia ([Click here](#)).

High-end bouzoukia shows change each year and are expensive extravaganzas, like a circus for grown-ups; check listings for what's on.

Stoa Athanaton REMBETIKA CLUB

(210 321 4362; Sofokleous 19, Omonia; 3-6pm & midnight-6am Mon-Sat, closed Jun-Sep; Omonia) This legendary club occupies a hall above the central meat market. Popular for classic *rembetika* and *laika* from a respected band of musicians, it often starts from mid-afternoon. Access is by a lift in the arcade.

Perivoli Tou Ouranou REMBETIKA CLUB

(210 323 5517; Lysikratous 19, Plaka; 9pm-late Thu-Sun, closed Jul-Sep; Akropoli) A favourite rustic, old-style Plaka music haunt with dinner (mains €18 to €29) and *laika* and *rembetika*.

Kavouras REMBETIKA CLUB

(210 381 0202; Themistokleous 64, Exarhia; 11pm-late Thu-Sat, closed Jul & Aug; Omonia) Above Exarhia's popular souvlaki joint, this lively club usually plays until dawn for a student crowd.

Palea Plakiotiki Taverna Stamatopoulos MUSIC TAVERNA

(210 322 8722; Lyssiou 26, Plaka; 7pm-2am Mon-Sat, 11am-2am Sun; Monastiraki) This Plaka institution with live music nightly fills up late with locals; arrive early for a table.

Mostrou MUSIC TAVERNA

(210 322 5558; Mnisikleous 22, cnr Lyssiou, Plaka; 9pm-late Thu-Sun; Monastiraki) Popular full-sized stage and dance floor; in summer, there's more sedate live music on the terrace.

Paliogramfono MUSIC TAVERNA

(210 323 1409; Navarhou Apostoli 8, Psyri; Thisio) Decent food; one of Psyri's many music tavernas.

Cinemas

Athenians are avid cinema-goers. Most cinemas show recent releases in the original language with Greek subtitles. In summer Athenians prefer outdoor cinemas (see boxed text [Click here](#)). Admission is €7 to €8. There is also an IMAX theatre at the Planetarium (). The Greek Film Archive (*Tainiothiki tis Ellados*; Iera Odos 48, Gazi; *Keramikos*) screens special series.

The following cinemas are in central Athens:

Apollon & Attikon (210 323 6811; Stadiou 19, Syntagma; *Panepistimio*)

Astor (210 323 1297; Stadiou 28, Syntagma; *Panepistimio*)

Asty (210 322 1925; Korai 4, Syntagma; *Panepistimio*)

Ideal (210 382 6720; Panepistimiou 46, Omonia; *Omonia*)

SUMMER CINEMA

One of the delights of hot summer nights in Athens is the enduring tradition of open-air cinema, where you can watch the latest Hollywood or art house flick under moonlight. Many refurbished original outdoor cinemas are still operating in gardens and on rooftops around Athens, with modern sound systems.

The most historic outdoor cinema is Aigli (210 336 9369; *Zappeio Gardens, Syntagma; Syntagma*) in the verdant Zappeio Gardens, where you can watch a movie in style with a glass of wine.

Kolonaki's Dexameni (210 362 3942; *Plateia Dexameni, Kolonaki; Evangelismos*) is in a peaceful square.

Try to nab a seat with Acropolis views on the rooftop of Plaka's Cine Paris (210 322 0721; *Kydathineon 22, Plaka; Akropoli*), or meander around the foothills of the Acropolis to Thission (210 342 0864; *Apostolou Pavlou 7, Thisio; Thisio*).

Classical Music & Opera

In summer the main cultural happening is the Hellenic Festival ([Click here](#)) with stagings at the historic Odeon of Herodes Atticus and other venues.

Megaron Mousikis PERFORMING ARTS

(*Athens Concert Hall*; 210 728 2333;; *Kokkali 1, cnr Leoforos Vasilissis Sofias, Ilissia*; box office 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat; *Megaro Mousikis*) The city's state-of-the-art concert hall presents a rich winter program of operas and concerts featuring world-class international and Greek performers. Its Mediterranean-Italian restaurant, Fuga (210 724 2979), is home to Michelin-starred chef Andrea Berton.

Greek National Opera OPERA

(*Ethniki Lyriki Skini*; 210 360 0180;) The season runs from November to June. Performances are usually held at the Olympia Theatre (210 361 2461; *Akadimias 59, Exarhia*; *Panepistimio*) or the Odeon of Herodes Atticus in summer.

Theatre & Dance

Athens has more theatres than any city in Europe but, as you'd expect, most performances are in Greek. Theatre buffs may enjoy a performance of an old favourite if they know the play well enough.

National Theatre THEATRE

(210 522 3243;; *Agiou Konstantinou 22-24, Omonia*; *Omonia*) Performances of contemporary plays and ancient theatre happen in one of the city's finest neoclassical buildings. Also in venues around town, and in summer in ancient theatres across Greece, such as Epidavros.

Dora Stratou Dance Theatre TRADITIONAL DANCE

(210 921 4650;; *Filopappou Hill*; adult/child €15/5; performances 9.30pm Wed-Fri, 8.15pm Sat & Sun late May-mid-Sep; *Petralona*) Every summer this company performs its repertoire of folk dances from all over Greece at its open-air theatre on the western side of Filopappou Hill. Formed to preserve the country's folk culture, it has gained an international reputation for authenticity and professionalism. It also runs folk-dancing workshops in summer. The theatre is signposted from the western end of Dionysiou Areopagitou.

Pallas THEATRE

(210 321 3100;; *Voukourestiou 5, Syntagma*; *Syntagma*) One of Athen's premier theatres, the Pallas is centrally located and stages large productions, often in Greek.

Sport

The 2004 Olympics left a legacy of world-class stadiums, and Athens attracts occasional major international and European sporting events. The most popular sports are football and basketball. Fans should contact local sporting bodies directly for match information, or check the English-language press or.

SOCCER

Greece's top teams are Athens-based Panathinaikos and AEK, and Piraeus-based Olympiakos, all three of which are in the European Champions League. Big games take place at the Olympic Stadium in Marousi or the Karaiskaki Stadium in Piraeus, the country's best soccer stadium.

Generally, tickets can be bought on the day at the venue; some are available at. Check club websites or.

BASKETBALL

Top-name basketball games take place at the Peace & Friendship Stadium (210 489 3000; *Ethnarhou Makariou*; *Faliro*) in Palio Faliro.

Basketball receives little prematch publicity, so you'll need to ask a local or check the

website of the Hellenic Basketball Association () .

RUNNING

The annual Athens Marathon () is held in early November and finishes at the historic Panathenaic Stadium. More than 3000 runners from around the world tackle the 42km event, following the historic route run by Pheidippides in 490 BC from the battlefield at Marathon to Athens to deliver the news of victory against the Persians (before collapsing and dying from exhaustion).

Shopping

Central Athens is one big bustling shopping hub, with an eclectic mix of stores and specialist shopping strips. The central shopping street is Ermou, the pedestrian mall lined with mainstream fashion stores running from Syntagma to Monastiraki.

Top-brand international designers and jewellers are located around Syntagma, from the Attica department store past pedestrian Voukourestiou to the fashion boutiques of Kolonaki. Plaka and Monastiraki are rife with souvenir stores and streetwear. The main streets are Kydathineon and Adrianou. Big department stores dot Stadiou from Syntagma to Omonia. Kifisia and Glyfada also have excellent high-end shopping. Find a delectable array of food and spices at the colourful central market (), and all manner of housewares in the surrounding streets.

Monastiraki Flea Market MARKET

(*Adrianou, Monastiraki; daily; Monastiraki*) This traditional market has a festive atmosphere: permanent antiques and collectables shops are open all week, while the streets around the station and Adrianou fill with vendors selling jewellery, handicrafts and bric-a-brac.

Sunday Flea Market MARKET

(*Ermou, Thisio; dawn-2pm Sun; Thisio*) Peddlers fill the end of Ermou, towards Gazi; you can find some bargains, collectables and kitsch delights among the junk. Test your haggling skills.

To Pantopoleion FOOD & DRINK

(*210 323 4612; Sofokleous 1, Omonia; Syntagma*) Expansive store selling traditional food products from all over Greece: from Santorini capers to boutique olive oils, Cretan rusks, jars of goodies for edible souvenirs, and Greek wines and spirits.

Amorgos HANDICRAFTS

(*210 324 3836;; Kodrou 3, Plaka; Syntagma*) Charming store crammed with Greek folk art, trinkets, ceramics, embroidery and woodcarved furniture made by the owner.

Centre of Hellenic Tradition HANDICRAFTS

(*210 321 3023; Pandrosou 36, Plaka; Monastiraki*) Great examples of traditional ceramics, sculpture and handicrafts from all parts of Greece. Also an *ouzerie* and gallery.

Melissinos Art CLOTHING, ACCESSORIES

(*210 321 9247;; Agias Theklas 2, Psyrri; Monastiraki*) Pantelis Melissinos continues the sandal-making tradition of his famous poet/sandal-maker father Stavros, whose customers included the Beatles, Sophia Loren and Jackie Onassis. Pantelis' daughter runs excellent Olgianna Melissinos (*210 331 1925; Normanou 7, Monastiraki; Monastiraki*) with a wide range of leather goods. Can be made to order.

Xylouris MUSIC

(*210 322 2711;; Arcade, Panepistimiou 39, Panepistimio; Syntagma*) This music treasure trove is run by the son and widow of the Cretan legend Nikos Xylouris. Georgios is a font of music knowledge and can guide you through the comprehensive range of traditional and contemporary Greek music, including select and rare recordings, and eclectic world music. Also a branch at Museum of Greek Popular Instruments ().

John Samuelin MUSIC

(*210 321 2433;; Ifestou 36, Monastiraki; Monastiraki*) This central spot is jam-packed with Greek and other musical instruments.

Metropolis Music MUSIC

(*210 383 0804; Panepistimiou 64, Omonia; Omonia*) This major music store is

well stocked with Greek and international CDs and sells concert tickets.

Greece Is For Lovers SOUVENIRS

(210 924 5064;; *Karyatidon 13a, Makrygianni; Akropoli*) Browse the cheeky designer plays on Greek kitsch: from Corinthian column dumb-bells to crocheted iPod covers.

Compendium BOOKS

(210 322 1248; *Navarhou Nikodimou 5, cnr Nikis, Plaka; Syntagma*) Athens' main English-language bookstore also has a popular secondhand section.

Eleftheroudakis BOOKS

Syntagma (210 331 4180; *Panepistimiou 17; Syntagma*); Plaka (210 322 9388; *Nikis 20; Syntagma*) The seven-floor Syntagma store is the biggest bookshop in Athens, with a level dedicated to English-language books.

Anavasi BOOKS

(210 321 8104;; *Stoa Arsakiou 6a, Panepistimiou; Panepistimio*) This travel bookshop carries an extensive range of Greece maps, and walking and activity guides.

Road Editions BOOKS

(210 361 3242;; *Solonos 71, Kolonaki; Panepistimio*) Select from a wide range of travel literature and maps.

Public BOOKS

(210 324 6210; *Plateia Syntagmatos, Syntagma; ; Syntagma*) This multimedia behemoth includes computers, stationery and English-language books (3rd floor).

Information

Dangers & Annoyances

Crime has heightened in Athens with the onset of the financial crisis. Though violent street crime remains relatively rare, travellers should be alert on the streets, especially at night, and beware the traps listed here. Streets surrounding Omonia have become markedly seedier, with an increase in prostitutes and junkies; avoid the area, especially at night.

PICKPOCKETS Favourite hunting grounds are the metro, particularly the Piraeus–Kifisia line, and crowded streets around Omonia, Athinas and the Monastiraki Flea Market.

TAXI DRIVERS Athenian taxi drivers have an awful reputation for a reason. It is still a toss-up whether you get polite, honest service or a cheater. Beware: friendly ones can be the worst offenders. Most (but not all) rip-offs involve taxis picked up from ranks at the airport, train stations, bus terminals and particularly the port of Piraeus.

Some drivers don't turn on the meter and demand whatever they think they can get away with. Only negotiate a set fare if you have some idea of the cost. Otherwise, find another taxi. At Piraeus, avoid the drivers at the port exit asking if you need a taxi; hail one off the street.

In extreme cases, drivers have accelerated meters or switch them to night rate (tariff 2 lights up) during the day. Some will also add their tip to the price they quote. Check the extra charges for airport pick-ups and tolls, which are set and must be displayed in every taxi.

To protect yourself, record the taxi's number plates and ask for a receipt; they are obligated to provide one. If you have a dispute, call the police (100), insist the driver takes you to the local police station to sort it out, or take the driver and taxi's registration number and report them to the tourist police.

TAXI TOUTS Some taxi drivers work in league with overpriced, low-grade hotels around Omonia, though it's not widespread. The scam involves taxi drivers picking up late-night arrivals and persuading them that the hotel they want to go to is full, even if

they have a booking. The driver will pretend to phone the hotel, announce that it's full and suggest an alternative. Ask to speak to the hotel yourself, or simply insist on going to your hotel.

TRAVEL-AGENT SCAMS Some travel agents in the Plaka/Syntagma area employ touts to promote 'cheap' packages to the islands. Touts hang out at the bus and metro stops, hoping to find naive new arrivals, take them back to the agency and pressure them into buying outrageously overpriced packages. You will always be able to negotiate a better deal when you get to the island of your choice. If you are worried that everything will be full, select a place from this guide and make your own booking.

BAR SCAMS Bar scams target tourists in central Athens, particularly around Syntagma. One scam goes like this: friendly Greek approaches solo male traveller; friendly Greek reveals that he, too, is from out of town or does the old 'I have a cousin in Australia' routine and suggests they go to a bar for a drink. Before they know it women appear, more drinks are ordered and the conman disappears, leaving the traveller to pay an exorbitant bill. Smiles disappear and the atmosphere turns threatening. Other bars lure intoxicated males with talk of sex and present them with outrageous bills.

ADULTERATED DRINKS Some bars and clubs in Athens serve what are locally known as *bombes*, adulterated drinks diluted with cheap illegal imports or methanol-based spirit substitutes. They leave you feeling decidedly low the next day. To avoid the risk, drink beer and other bottled drinks or ask for a drink with a distinctive taste or a particular brand.

Emergency

ELPA road assistance (10400)

Police (100)

Police station Central (210 770 5711/17; *Leoforos Alexandras 173, Ambelokipi; Ambelokipi*); Syntagma (210 725 7000; *Plateia Syntagmatos, Syntagma; Syntagma*)

Tourist police (24hr 171, 210 920 0724; *Veikou 43-45, Koukaki; 8am-10pm; Syngrou-Fix*)

Visitor emergency assistance (112) Toll-free 24-hour service in English.

Internet Access

Most hotels have internet access and wi-fi. Free wireless hot spots are at Syntagma, Thisio, Gazi, Plateia Kotzia and the port of Piraeus.

Bits & Bytes Internet Café (210 382 2545; *Kapnikareas 19, Monastiraki; per hr €2.50; 24hr; Monastiraki*)

Cyberzone (210 520 3939; *Satovrianidou 7, Omonia; per hr €2; 24hr; Omonia*)

Ivis Internet (*Mitropoleos 3, Syntagma; per hr €3; 8am-midnight; Syntagma*)

Internet Resources

Arts and culture () Bilingual, including theatre, music and cinema listings.

Ministry of Culture () Museums, archaeological sites and cultural events.

Official visitor site () Athens Tourism and Economic Development Agency site with what's-on listings.

Short videos () Video snippets of life in Athens.

Left Luggage

Most hotels store luggage free for guests, although many simply pile bags in a hallway. Storage facilities are also at the airport and at Omonia, Monastiraki and Piraeus metro stations.

Pacific Travel Luggage Storage (210 324 1007; *Nikis 26, Syntagma; per day €2; 8am-8pm Mon-Sat; Syntagma*)

Media

Athens News () Fridays; entertainment listings.

Athens Plus () Weekly English news and entertainment newspaper; published Fridays by *Kathimerini* and online.

Insider () Monthly glossy magazine aimed at visitors and expats.

Kathimerini () *International Herald Tribune* publishes an eight-page English-language edition of this Greek daily, with news, arts, cinema listings and daily ferry schedules.

Odyssey () Bimonthly Greek diaspora magazine; handy annual summer guide to Athens.

Medical Services

Ambulance/first-aid advice (166)

Duty doctors & hospitals (1434, in Greek) Published in *Kathimerini* .

Pharmacies (1434, in Greek) Check pharmacy windows for details of the nearest duty pharmacy. There's a 24-hour pharmacy at the airport.

SOS Doctors (1016, 210 821 1888; 24hr) Pay service with English-speaking doctors.

Money

Major banks have branches around Syntagma, and ATMs blanket the city.

Eurochange Syntagma (210 331 2462; *Karageorgi Servias 2* ; 8am-9pm; *Syntagma*) ; Monastiraki (210 322 2657; *Areos 1*; *Monastiraki*) Exchanges travellers cheques and arranges money transfers.

National Bank of Greece (210 334 0500; *cnr Karageorgi Servias & Stadiou, Syntagma*; *Syntagma*) Has a 24-hour automated exchange machine.

Post

Parcel post office (*Stadiou 4, Syntagma*; 7.30am-2pm Mon-Fri; *Syntagma*) Bring parcels over 2kg here, unwrapped, for inspection.

Syntagma post office (*Plateia Syntagmatos, Syntagma*; 7.30am-8pm Mon-Fri, 7.30am-2pm Sat; *Syntagma*)

Telephone

Public phones allow international calls. Purchase phonecards at kiosks.

Tourist Information

EOT (*Greek National Tourist Organisation*; 210 331 0347/0716;; *Dionysiou Areopagitou 18-20, Makrygianni*; 9am-7pm; *Akropoli*) Free Athens map, public transport information and *Athens & Attica* booklet.

Getting There & Away

Tables following indicate approximate frequencies and starting prices, including tax.

Air

Modern **Eleftherios Venizelos International Airport** (*ATH*; ; 210 353 0000;) at Spata, 27km east of Athens, has a small archaeological museum above the check-in hall for passing time.

DOMESTIC FLIGHTS Average one-way fares range from €56 to €140, but vary dramatically depending on season; check for specials and book ahead if possible. See individual destination chapters' Getting There & Away sections for approximate frequencies and prices.

Olympic Air has flights to all islands with airports, and the more popular are also serviced by Aegean Airlines and Athens Airways.

Aegean Airlines (801 112 0000, 210 626 1000;; *Othonos 10, Syntagma*; *Syntagma*)

Athens Airways (801 801 4000, 210 669 6600;)

Olympic Air (801 801 0101, 210 926 4444;; *Filellinon 15, Syntagma*; *Syntagma*)

Sky Express (281 022 3500;) Cretan airline with flights around Greece.

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS For international services from Athens, see.

Boat

Most ferry, hydrofoil and high-speed catamaran services to the islands leave from Athens' massive port at Piraeus ([Click here](#)).

Some services for Evia and the Cyclades also depart from smaller ports at Rafina ([Click here](#)) and Lavrio ([Click here](#)).

Purchase tickets at booths on the quay next to each ferry, over the phone or online; also, travel agencies selling tickets surround each port.

Bus

Athens has two main intercity (IC) **KTEL** (14505;) bus stations, one 5km, and one 7km to the north of Omonia. Pick up timetables at the tourist office.

Kifissos Terminal A (210 512 4910; *Kifissou 100, Peristeri; Agios Antonios*) Buses to Thessaloniki, the Peloponnese, Ionian Islands, and western Greece like Igoumenitsa, Ioannina, Kastoria, and Edessa, among other destinations. Bus 051 goes to central Athens (junction of Zinonos and Menandrou, near Omonia) every 15 minutes from 5am to midnight. Taxis to Syntagma cost about €8.

Liossion Terminal B (210 831 7153; *Liossion 260, Thymarakia; Agios Nikolaos*) Buses to central and northern Greece, like Trikala (for Meteora), Delphi, Larissa, Thiva, Volos and other destinations. To get here take bus 024 from outside the main gate of the National Gardens on Amalias and ask to get off at Praktoria KTEL. Get off the bus at Liossion 260, turn right onto Gousiou and you'll see the terminal. There is no public transport here from 11.40pm to 5am; taxis to Syntagma cost about €8.

Mavromateon Terminal (210 880 8000, 210 822 5148; *cnr Leoforos Alexandras & 28 Oktovriou-Patision, Pedion Areos; Viktoria*) Buses for destinations in southern Attica leave from here, about 250m north of the National Archaeological Museum. Buses to Rafina, Lavrio and Marathon leave from the northern section of the Mavromateon terminal (just 150m to the north).

KEY BUSES FROM KIFISSOS TERMINAL A

DESTINATION	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Alexandroupoli	11hr	€71	1 daily
Corfu*	9½hr	€44.30	3 daily
Epidavros	2½hr	€12.50	3 daily
Ioannina	7hr	€39	7 daily
Igoumenitsa	7½hr	€44.50	4 daily
Ithaki*	7½hr	€39.70	2 daily
Kalavryta	3hr	€16.70	2 daily
Kefallonia*	7hr	€45	4 daily
Lefkada	5½hr	€33.80	4 daily
Monemvasia	6hr	€29.50	2 daily
Nafplio	2½hr	€13.10	hourly
Olympia	5½hr	€29.80	2 daily
Patra	3hr	€18.30	half-hourly
Thessaloniki	7hr	€42	12 daily
Zakynthos*	6hr	€34.60	4 daily

*includes ferry ticket

KEY BUSES FROM LIOSSION TERMINAL B

DESTINATION	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Agios Konstantinos	2½hr	€14.70	hourly
Delphi	3hr	€15.50	5 daily
Halkida	1¼hr	€6.90	half-hourly
Karpenisi	4½hr	€25	3 daily
Paralia Kymis	4½hr	€15.30	1 daily
Trikala	4½hr	€28	6 daily
Volos	4½hr	€25.10	11 daily

KEY BUSES FROM MAVROMATEON TERMINAL

DESTINATION	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Cape Sounion (coastal road)	1½hr	€6.50	half-hourly
Lavrio port	1½hr	€5.20	half-hourly
Marathon	1¼hr	€4.50	half-hourly
Rafina port	1hr	€3	half-hourly

Car & Motorcycle

Attiki Odos (Attiki Rd), Ethniki Odos (National Rd) and various ring roads facilitate getting in and out of Athens.

The top end of Leoforos Syngrou, near the Temple of Olympian Zeus, is dotted with car-rental firms. Local companies tend to offer better deals than the multinationals; do some bargaining. Expect to pay €45 per day, much less for three or more days.

Car and motorcycle rental companies:

Athens Airport Car Rentals (210 602 2002;; Spata)

Avis (210 322 4951; Leoforos Vasilissis Amalias 46, Makrygianni; Akropoli)

Budget (210 921 4771; Leoforos Syngrou 8, Makrygianni; Akropoli)

Europcar (210 921 1444; Leoforos Syngrou 25, Makrygianni; Akropoli)

Hertz (210 922 0102; Leoforos Syngrou 12, Makrygianni; Akropoli)

Kosmos (210 923 4695;; Leoforos Syngrou 9, Makrygianni; Akropoli)

Motorent (210 923 4939;; R overtou Galli 1, Makrygianni; Akropoli) From 50cc to 250cc (from €18 per day); must have motorcycle licence and nerves of steel.

Train

Intercity trains to central and northern Greece depart from the central **Larisis train station** about 1km northwest of Plateia Omonias.

For the Peloponnese, take the suburban rail to Kiato and change for other OSE services there, or check for available lines at the Larisis station.

Note: At the time of research, Athens' train system was in a state of flux due to the financial crisis. International trains are discontinued, and domestic schedules/fares should be confirmed at one of the **OSE Offices** (1110;; 24hr) Syntagma (210 362 4402/5; Sina 6, Syntagma; 8am-3pm Mon-Sat; Panepistimio); Omonia (210 529 7005; Karolou 1, Omonia; 8am-3pm Mon-Fri; Metaxourghio) . The chart following is only a loose guide.

DESTINATION	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Alexandroupoli	12¼hr	€39	2 daily (via Thessaloniki)
Alexandroupoli (IC)	11hr	€56	2 daily (via Thessaloniki)

Corinth (suburban rail)	1hr 20min	€6	13 daily
Kiato (suburban rail)*	1hr 40min	€8	13 daily
Kiato-Patra	2hr	€7.50	5 daily
Kiato-Patra (IC)	1hr 40min	€9	4 daily
Halkida	1½hr	€6.50	19 daily
Thessaloniki	6hr	€20	1 daily
Thessaloniki (IC)	5hr	€36	6 daily
Volos (IC)	5hr	€25	7 daily (via Larisa)

*from Kiato, change to regular or intercity (IC) services

Getting Around

To/From the Airport

The metro and suburban rail provide quick connections to central Athens. The bus is cheapest, though it takes longer. The suburban train also goes to Piraeus.

BUS

Express buses operate 24 hours between the airport and the city centre, Piraeus and KTEL bus terminals. At the airport, buy tickets (€5; not valid for other forms of public transport) at the booth near the stops.

Plateia Syntagmatos Bus X95, 60 to 90 minutes, every 30 minutes over 24hours. The Syntagma stop is on Othonos St; see.

Kifissos Terminal A bus station Bus X93, 60 minutes, every 30 minutes, 24 hrs.

Metro line 3 at Ethniki Amynta station Bus X94, 25 minutes, every 10 minutes, 7.30am to 11.30pm.

Piraeus Bus X96, 90 minutes, every 20 minutes, 24hrs. To Plateia Karaïskaki.

Kifisia Bus X92, about 45 minutes, every 45 minutes, 24hrs.

Metro line 2 at Dafni station Bus X97, one hour, every 30 minutes, 24hrs.

METRO

Metro line 3 goes to the airport. Some trains terminate early at Doukissis Plakentias, where you get out and wait till an airport train (displayed on the train and platform screen) comes along.

Trains run every 30 minutes, leaving Monastiraki between 5.50am and midnight, and the airport between 5.30am and 11.30pm.

Airport tickets costs €8 per adult or €14 return (return valid 48 hours). The fare for two or more passengers is €7 each, so purchase tickets together (same with suburban rail). Tickets are valid for all forms of public transport for 90 minutes (revalidate your ticket on final mode of transport to show it's the same journey).

SUBURBAN RAIL

Take the suburban rail (one hour, same price as the metro but return ticket is valid for a month) from central Athens (Larisis) station then change trains for the airport at Ano Liosia, or Nerantziotissa (on metro line 1). The metro also connects at Doukissis Plakentias (line 3). Trains to the airport run from 6am to midnight; trains from the airport to Athens run from 5.10am to 11.30pm; trains run every 15 minutes from Nerantziotissa. Suburban rail also goes from the airport to Piraeus (change trains at Nerantziotissa) and Kiato in the Peloponnese (via Corinth).

TAXI

Prepare to argue about the fare ([Click here](#)). Check that the meter is set to the correct tariff and add airport surcharge (€3.77), toll (€2.70) and €0.38 for each bag over 10kg.

Total fares vary depending on traffic; expect from €30 to €50 from the airport to the city centre, and €30 to Piraeus. Both trips should take about an hour, longer with heavy traffic.

Olympic Air offers an online taxi prebooking service.

Bicycle

Even experienced cyclists might find Athens' drivers a challenge. Day rental costs €12 to €15.

Acropolis Bikes (210 324 5793;; Aristidou 10-12, Omonia; Panepistimio)

Funky Rides (211 710 9366;; Dimitrakopoulou 1, Koukaki; Akropoli)

Car & Motorcycle

Athens' notorious traffic congestion, confusing signposting, impatient/erratic drivers and one-way streets in the centre make for occasionally nightmarish driving.

Drivers have a cavalier attitude towards road laws and parking restrictions. Contrary to what you see, parking is actually illegal alongside kerbs marked with yellow lines, on pavements and in pedestrian malls. Paid parking areas require tickets available from kiosks.

For rental agencies, see.

Public Transport

Athens has an extensive and inexpensive integrated public transport network of buses, metro, trolleybuses and trams. Pick up maps and timetables at the EOT tourist office, the airport and train stations, **Athens Urban Transport Organisation (OASA; 185;; Metsovou 15, Exarhia/Mouseio; 6.30am-11.30pm Mon-Fri, 7.30am-10.30pm Sat & Sun)**, or from its website.

TICKETS Tickets good for 90 minutes (€1.40), a 24-hour travel pass (€4) and a weekly ticket (€14) are valid for all forms of public transport except for airport services.

Bus/trolleybus-only tickets (€1.20) cannot be used on the metro. Children under six travel free; people under 18 and over 65 pay half-fare. Buy tickets in metro stations or transport kiosks or most *periptera*. Validate the ticket in the machine as you board your transport of choice.

TRAVEL PASS

For short-stay visitors, the 24-hour travel pass (€4) and one week ticket (€14) allow unlimited travel on all public transport inside Athens, excluding the airport services.

BUS & TROLLEYBUS

Blue-and-white local express buses, regular buses and electric trolleybuses operate every 15 minutes from 5am to midnight. The free OASA map shows most routes.

PIRAEUS BUSES These operate 24 hourly (every 20 minutes from 6am to midnight, then hourly):

From Syntagma Bus 040, on the corner of Syntagma and Filellinon (see). To Akti Xaveriou.

From Omonia Bus 049, at the Omonia end of Athinas. To Plateia Themistokleous.

METRO

The metro works well and posted maps are self-explanatory (icons and English translations), though sometimes sections close for upgrades. Trains operate from 5am to midnight (every four minutes during peak periods and every 10 minutes off peak); on Friday and Saturday lines 2 and 3 run until 2am. Get information at [mtr](#) or [mtr](#) and for line 1 at [mtr](#). All stations have wheelchair access.

Line 1 (Green) The old Kifisia–Piraeus line is known as the *llektriko* and travels slower than the others and above ground. Transfer at Omonia and Attiki for line 2; Monastiraki for line 3 and Nerantziotissa for suburban rail. The hourly all-night bus service (bus 500 Piraeus–Kifisia) follows this route, with bus stops located outside the train stations.

Line 2 (Red) Runs from Agios Antonios in the northwest to Agios Dimitrios in the southeast. Attiki and Omonia connect with line 1, Syntagma connects with line 3.

Line 3 (Blue) Runs northeast from Egaleo to Doukissis Plakentias, with the airport train continuing from there. Transfer for line 1 at Monastiraki and line 2 at Syntagma.

TRAIN

Fast **suburban rail** ([1110](#);) links Athens with the airport, Piraeus, the outer

regions and the northern Peloponnese. It connects to the metro at Larisis, Doukissis Plakentias and Nerantziotissa stations, and goes from the airport to Kiato (1¾ hour, €14).

TRAM

Athens' **tram** () offers a slow, scenic coastal journey to Faliro and Voula, via Glyfada. Trams run from Syntagma to Faliro (45 minutes), Syntagma to Voula (one hour) and Faliro to Voula from 5.30am to 1am Sunday to Thursday (every 10 minutes), and from 5.30am to 2.30am on Friday and Saturday (every 40 minutes).

The Syntagma terminus is on Leoforos Vasilissis Amalias, opposite the National Gardens, with ticket vending machines on platforms.

Taxi

Despite the large number of yellow taxis, it can be tricky getting one, especially during rush hour. Thrust your arm out vigorously...And you still you may have to shout your destination to the driver to see if he or she is interested. Make sure the meter is on. If they pick you up while already carrying passengers, the fare is not shared: each person pays the fare on the meter minus any diversions to drop others (note what it's at when you get in). Short trips around Central Athens cost around €5. For information on taxi scams, see.

» flag fall €1.16

» ports, train and bus station surcharge €1.05

» airport surcharge €3.77

» day rate (tariff 1 on the meter) €0.66 per kilometre

» night rate (tariff 2 on the meter) €1.16 per kilometre (midnight to 5am)

» baggage €0.38 per item over 10kg

» holiday tariff (Easter and Christmas) €1

» minimum fare €3.10.

Booking a radio taxi costs €1.88 extra.

Athina 1 (210 921 2800)

Enotita (801 115 1000)

Ikaros (210 515 2800)

Kosmos (18300)

Parthenon (210 532 3000)

ATHENS PORTS

Piraeus Πειραιάς

POP 178,570

The highlights of Greece's main port and ferry hub, Piraeus, are the otherworldly rows of ferries, ships and hydrofoils filling its seemingly endless quays. Piraeus, 10km southwest of central Athens, is the biggest port in the Mediterranean (with more than 20 million passengers passing through annually), the hub of the Aegean ferry network, the centre of Greece's maritime trade and the base for its large merchant navy. While technically a separate city, these days Piraeus virtually melds into the urban sprawl of Athens.

Central Piraeus is not a place where visitors choose to linger because it's congested with traffic. Beyond its shipping offices, banks and public buildings, you find a jumble of pedestrian precincts, shopping strips and rather grungy areas. The most attractive quarter lies to the east around Zea Marina and touristy Mikrolimano harbour, which is lined with cafes, restaurants, bars and nightclubs.

History

Piraeus has been the port of Athens since classical times, when Themistocles

transferred his Athenian fleet from the exposed port of Phaleron (modern Faliro) to the security of Piraeus. After his victory over the Persians at the Battle of Salamis in 480 BC, Themistocles fortified Piraeus' three natural harbours. In 445 BC Pericles extended these fortifying walls to Athens and Phaleron. The Long Walls, as they were known, were destroyed as one of the peace conditions imposed by the Spartans at the end of the Peloponnesian Wars, but were rebuilt in 394 BC.

Piraeus was a flourishing commercial centre during the classical age, but by Roman times it had been overtaken by Rhodes, Delos and Alexandria. During medieval and Turkish times, it diminished into a tiny fishing village, and by the time Greece became independent it was home to fewer than 20 people.

Its resurgence began in 1834 when Athens became the capital of independent Greece, and by the beginning of the 20th century it had superseded the island of Syros as Greece's principal port. In 1923 its population swelled with the arrival of 100,000 Greek refugees from Turkey. Piraeus developed a seedy but somewhat romantic appeal with its bordellos, hashish dens and *rembetika* music – as vividly portrayed in the film *Never on Sunday* (1960).

Sights

Piraeus Archaeological Museum MUSEUM

(210 452 1598; Harilaou Trikoupi 31; admission €3; 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun) The museum's star attraction is the magnificent statue of Apollo, the *Piraeus Kouros*, the larger-than-life, oldest hollow bronze statue yet found. It dates from about 520 BC and was discovered in Piraeus, buried in rubble, in 1959. Other important finds from the area include fine tomb reliefs from the 4th to 2nd centuries BC.

Piraeus

Top Sights

[Piraeus Archaeological Museum](#) D4

Sleeping

[1_Hotel Triton](#) D2

[2Piraeus Dream Hotel](#)D3

[3_Piraeus Theoxenia](#) D2

Eating

[4_General Market](#) D2

[5_Mandragoras](#) D2

[6Piraiikon Supermarket](#)D2

[7_Rakadiko](#) D2

Drinking

[8_Flying Pig Pub](#) C4

Shopping

[9_Piraeus Flea Market](#) D1

Transport

[10Bus 040 to Syntagma](#)D2

- 11 Bus 049 to Omonia D2
- 12 Bus Station C2
- 13 Bus X96 to Airport C2
- 14 Catamarans & Hydrofoils to the Peloponnese & Saronic Gulf D2
- 15 Free Shuttle Bus to Gates E1 to E3 C1
- 16 Gate E1 – Ferries to the Dodecanese A2
- 17 Gate E2 – Ferries to Crete & Northeastern Aegean Islands B2
- 18 Gate E3 B1
- 19 Gate E4 – Ferries to Crete B1
- 20 Gate E5 C1
- 21 Gate E7 – Ferries to the Western & Central Cyclades C1
- 22 Gate E7 - Catamarans/Ferries for the Western Cyclades C1
- 23 Gate E8 – Ferries to the Saronic Gulf Islands C2
- 24 Gate E9 – Ferries to the Cyclades D2
- 25 Gate E9 – Ferries to the Cyclades & Northeastern Aegean Islands (Samos & Icaria) C3
- 26 Gate E10 C3
- 27 Gate E11 B4
- 28 Gate E12 A4
- 29 International Ferries C4

Hellenic Maritime Museum MUSEUM

(210 451 6264; Akti Themistokleous, Plateia Freatidas, Zea Marina; admission €3; 8.30am-1pm Tue-Sun) Greece's maritime history comes to life with models of ancient and modern ships, seascapes by leading 19th- and 20th-century Greek painters, guns, flags and maps, and part of a submarine.

Museum of the Electric Railway MUSEUM

(210 414 7552; 9am-2pm & 5-8pm) Inside the Piraeus metro station and the end of the platform you will find a museum dedicated to the history, development and operation of the electric railway.

Sleeping

If you're catching an early ferry you can stay in Piraeus instead of central Athens, but many hotels around Megas Limin (Great Harbour) are shabby and aimed at sailors and clandestine liaisons. Don't sleep out: Piraeus is probably one of the most dangerous places in Greece to do so.

Piraeus Theoxenia LUXURY HOTEL €€€

(210 411 2550;; Karaoli Dimitriou 23; s & d €89-139, tr €156;) Piraeus' swanky, central hotel with plump bathrobes and satellite TV; get the best deals online.

Hotel Triton HOTEL €€

(210 417 3457;; Tsamadou 8; s/d/tr incl breakfast €55/70/80;) This refurbished hotel with sleek executive-style rooms is a treat compared to the usual run-down joints in Piraeus. Some rooms overlook the bustling market square.

Piraeus Dream Hotel BUSINESS HOTEL €€

(210 411 0555;; Filonos 79-81; s/d/tr incl breakfast €55/65/85;) With quiet rooms starting on the 4th floor, this renovated hotel about 500m from the station has good facilities, including laptop and PlayStation rental, and serves a big American breakfast.

Eating & Drinking

The Great Harbour is backed by lots of gritty cafes, restaurants and fast-food joints;

better food and surroundings hide away in the backstreets or further afield around Mikrolimano harbour, Zea Marina and along the waterfront promenade at Freatida.

Rakadiko TAVERNA €

(210 417 8470; *Stoa Kouvelou, Karaoli Dimitriou 5; mains €12-20; lunch & dinner Tue-Sat*) Dine, quietly, under grapevines on mezedhes from all over Greece. Live *rembetika* on weekends.

Mandragoras DELICATESSEN €

(210 417 2961; *Gounari 14; 7.30am-4pm Mon, Wed & Sat, to 8pm Tue, Thu & Fri*) In the heart of the central food market you'll come across this superb delicatessen that offers a fine selection of gourmet cheeses, ready-made mezedhes, spices, olive oils and preserved foods.

Margaro SEAFOOD €€

(210 451 4226; *Hatzikiriakou 126; mains €25-28; lunch daily, dinner Mon-Sat*) This long-time local favourite is known for its fresh crayfish, eaten in a giant pile.

Plous Podilatou SEAFOOD €€

(210 413 7910;; *Akti Koumoundourou 42, Mikrolimano; mains €12-20*) This modern restaurant in Mikrolimano has a Mediterranean menu, with an emphasis on well-prepared fresh fish and seafood.

General Market MARKET €

(*Dimosthenous; 6am-4pm Mon-Fri*) The open-air street market on Dimosthenous sells a broad range of food and bric-a-brac.

Piraikon SUPERMARKET €

(*Ippokratous 1; 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-4pm Sat*) This basic supermarket is convenient for provisioning for longer trips.

Flying Pig Pub PUB

(210 429 5344; *Filonos 31*) Run by a friendly Greek-Australian, this popular bar has a large range of beers. It also serves wholesome food, including a generous English breakfast.

Shopping

Piraeus' thriving commercial centre is concentrated around the pedestrian strip along Sotiros Dios.

Piraeus Flea Market MARKET

(*cnr Alipedou & Skylitsi Omiridou; 7am-4pm Sun*) This bustling Sunday market rivals its famous Athens counterpart. Venders flog almost anything and nearby stores sell jewellery, ceramics and antiques.

Information

There are luggage lockers at the metro station (€3 for 24 hours).

INTERNET ACCESS Free wi-fi around the port.

MONEY ATMs and money changers line the Great Harbour.

Emporiki Bank (*cnr Antistaseos & Makras Stoas*) Has a 24-hour ATM.

National Bank of Greece (*cnr Antistaseos & Tsamadou*)

POST **Post office** (*cnr Tsamadou & Filonos; 7.30am-8pm Mon-Fri, 7.30am-2pm Sat*)

Getting There & Away

The metro and suburban rail lines from Athens terminate at the northeastern corner of the Great Harbour on Akti Kalimassioti. Most ferry departure points are a short walk over the footbridge from here. A left turn out of the metro station leads 250m to Plateia Karaïskaki, the terminus for airport buses.

Bus

See for info on Athens buses. The X96 Piraeus–Athens Airport Express (€5) leaves from the southwestern corner of Plateia Karaïskaki and also stops on Kalimassioti. See for bus services from Athens to the rest of Greece.

Metro

The fastest and most convenient link between the Great Harbour and Athens is the metro (€1.40, 30 minutes, every 10 minutes, 5am to midnight), near the ferries at the northern end of Akti Kalimassioti. Take extra care as the section between Piraeus and Monastiraki is notorious for pickpockets.

Suburban Rail

Piraeus is also connected to the suburban rail (see [Click here](#)), whose terminus is located opposite the metro station. To get to the airport or the Peloponnese, you need to change trains at Nerantziotissa.

Getting Around

The port is massive and a free shuttle bus runs regularly along the quay from the metro station (see signposted maps).

The city of Piraeus has its own network of buses. The services likely to interest travellers are buses 904 and 905 between Zea Marina and the metro station.

Rafina Ρ αφήνα

Rafina, on Attica's east coast, is Athens' main fishing port and the second-most important port for passenger ferries. The port is far smaller than Piraeus and less confusing – and fares are about 20% cheaper – but it does take an hour on the bus to get here.

Rafina port police (229 402 2300) occupies a kiosk near the quay.

Getting There & Away

BUS Frequent buses run from Athens to Rafina (€3, one hour) between 5.45am and 10.30pm, departing Athens' Mavromateon bus terminal ([Click here](#)).

BOAT Rafina Port Authority (229 402 8888) has information on ferries.

BOAT SERVICES FROM RAFINA

DESTINATION	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Andros	2hr	€15	4 daily
Evia (Marmari)	1hr	€7	2 daily
Ios*	4hr	€53-56	5 weekly
Mykonos	4½hr	€22.50	2-3 daily
Mykonos*	2hr 10min	€52.50-56.50	4-5 daily
Naxos*	3hr	€52.50-56.50	1 daily
Paros*	3hr	€52.80	1 daily
Santorini (Thira)*	4¾hr	€58-62	1 daily
Tinos*	1¾hr	€49-54.50	4-5 daily
Tinos	4hr	€20.50	4 daily

*high-speed services

BOAT SERVICES FROM PIRAEUS

Piraeus is the busiest port in Greece, with a bewildering array of departures, including daily service to all island groups, except the Ionians (see Patra and Igoumenitsa) and the Sporades (see Rafina and Lavrio). Departure docks are indicated on [this page](#) but always double-check with the ticketing agent.

Note that there are two departure points for Crete at Piraeus port: ferries for Iraklio leave from the western end of Akti Kondyli, but ferries for other Cretan ports occasionally dock there as well, or in other places.

Tickets

All ferry companies have online timetables and booths on the quays. Ferry schedules are reduced in April, May and October, and are radically cut in winter, especially to smaller islands. You can buy tickets online ([this page](#) or companies' websites) or phone the agents directly. See [Transport](#) for specific ferry companies and the [Getting There & Away](#) sections for each island's agents. Or contact the **Piraeus Port Authority** ([this page](#) 1441;) for information.

To Crete

DESTINATION	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Iraklio	8hr	€37	2 daily
Iraklio*	6½hr	€36	daily
Kissamos-Kastelli	12hr	€26	2 weekly
Sitia	16½hr	€33.30	1 weekly
Souda (Hania)	8½hr	€36	daily
Souda (Hania)*	7¼hr	€27.50	daily

*high-speed services

To the Cyclades

DESTINATION	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Amorgos*	8hr	€57	1 daily
Amorgos	11hr	€31-34.50	weekly
Anafi	11hr 20min	€31	3 weekly
Donousa	7hr 10min	€31	4 weekly
Folegandros*	3¼hr	€56.20	1-3 daily
Folegandros	7¼hr	€30	4 weekly
Ios	7hr	€32.50	4-5 daily
Ios*	3hr 20min	€53-56	3 daily
Iraklia	7hr 20min	€31	1-2 daily
Kimolos	8½hr	€26	5 weekly
Kimolos*	3¾hr	€52	3 weekly
Koufonisia	8hr	€31	1-2 daily
Koufonisia*	7hr 20min	€57	1 daily
Kythnos	3hr 10min	€19.50	1-2 daily
Milos	7hr 20min	€34	1-2 daily

Milos*	2½hr	€53-50	2-3 daily
Mykonos	5¼hr	€31.50	2 daily
Mykonos*	3hr	€50-54.50	3 daily
Naxos	5¼hr	€31	4-5 daily
Naxos*	3¾hr	€48-52	3 daily
Paros	4¼hr	€29-30	4 daily
Paros*	3hr	€46-50	6 daily
Santorini (Thira)	9hr	€33-34.50	4-5 daily
Santorini (Thira)*	5¼hr	€58-61.50	3 daily
Schinousa	7½hr	€31	1-2 daily
Serifos	5hr	€22.50	2 daily
Serifos*	2hr	€42.50	2 daily
Sifnos	5¼hr	€31	5 daily
Sifnos*	3hr	€48	3 daily

DESTINATION	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Sikinos	8hr 25min	€31	4 weekly
Syros	4hr	€27	4 daily
Syros*	2½hr	€42.50-45	3 daily
Tinos	4½hr	€29	1 daily
Tinos*	4hr	€48-51	3 daily

*high-speed services

To the Dodecanese

DESTINATION	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Astypalea	10hr	€34	5 weekly
Kalymnos	13hr	€48	3 weekly
Karpathos	17hr	€41	2 weekly
Kasos	19hr	€37	3 weekly
Kos	10hr	€48	1 daily
Leros	8hr	€39	3 weekly
Nisyros	18hr	€47	2 weekly
Patmos	7hr	€37	4 weekly
Rhodes	13hr	€59	1 daily
Symi via Rhodes	15hr	€48	2 weekly
Tilos	19½hr	€48	2 weekly

To the Northeastern Aegean Islands

DESTINATION	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Chios*	6-9hr	€32	1 daily
Fourni*	5½hr	€37	2 weekly
Ikaria (Agios Kirykos)*	5hr	€37	2 weekly
Lesvos (Mytilini Town)	8½-13hr	€35	1 daily
Samos (Vathy)	7-13hr	€48.50	3-4 weekly

*high-speed services

To the Saronic Gulf Islands

DESTINATION	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Aegina	1hr 10min	€9.50	hourly
Aegina*	40min	€13.50	hourly
Angistri	1½hr	€10.50	2-3 daily
Angistri*	55min	€13.50	6 daily
Hydra*	1-2hr	€25.50	7-8 daily
Poros	2½hr	€12.80	2-3 daily
Poros*	1hr	€22.50	5-6 daily
Spetses*	2hr 10min	€35	5-6 daily

*high-speed services

To the Peloponnese

DESTINATION	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Ermioni*	1¾-2¼hr	€29.50	3-4 daily
Methana	2hr	€11.30	2-3 daily
Monemvasia	5¼hr	€20	2 weekly
Porto Heli*	2-3hr	€36	3 daily

*high-speed services

To the Ionian Islands

DESTINATION	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Kythira	6½hr	€24	2 weekly

Lavrio Λαύριο

Lavrio, an industrial town on the coast 60km southeast of Athens, is the port for ferries to Kea and Kythnos and high-season catamarans to the western Cyclades. It is scheduled to become a major container port, with a rail link to Athens. In antiquity, it was an important mining town. The silver mines here funded the great classical building boom in Athens and helped build the fleet that defeated the Persians. Some of the

underground shafts and mining galleries are still visible. Lavrio has also become a windsurfing spot.

The town has a small Archaeological Museum (229 202 2817; *Sepieri*; admission €2; 10am-3pm Tue-Sun) and a Mineralogical Museum (229 302 6270; *Iroön Polytehniou*; admission €1.20; 10am-noon Wed, Sat & Sun) .

Lavrio has many fish tavernas and *ouzeries*, as well as a great fish market.

Getting There & Away

BUS Buses to Lavrio (€5.20, 1½ hours, every 30 minutes) run from the Mavromateon terminal in Athens ([Click here](#)).

BOAT Lavrio Port Authority (229 202 5249) has ferry information. Destinations:

Kea (Tzia) 50 minutes, €10.40, three to five daily

Kythnos Two hours, €12, two daily

Limnos 9½ to 14 hours, €27, two weekly

AROUND ATHENS

Greater Athens and Piraeus account for the bulk of the population of the prefecture of Attica. The plain of Attica, an agricultural and wine-growing region with several large population centres, has some fine beaches, particularly along the Apollo Coast and at Shinias, near Marathon.

Until the 7th century, Attica was home to a number of smaller kingdoms, such as those at Eleusis (Elefsina), Ramnous and Brauron (Vravrona). The remains of these cities continue to be among the region's main attractions, although they pale alongside the superb Temple of Poseidon at Cape Sounion.

Many of these places can be reached by regular city buses; others can be reached by KTEL services from the Mavromateon terminal ([Click here](#)).

Cape Sounion Ακρωτήριο Σούνιο

Temple of Poseidon LANDMARK, RUINS

(229 203 9363; *adult/child €4/free; 9.30am-8pm*) The Ancient Greeks certainly knew how to choose a site for a temple. Nowhere is this more evident than at Cape Sounion, 70km south of Athens, where the Temple of Poseidon stands on a craggy spur that plunges 65m down to the sea. Built in 444 BC at the same time as the Parthenon, it is constructed of local marble from Agrileza, and its slender columns, of which 16 remain, are Doric. It is thought that the temple of Poseidon was built by Iktinos, the architect of the Temple of Hephaestus in Athens' Ancient Agora.

The temple looks gleaming white when viewed from the sea and you can make it out from a long distance: it gave great comfort to sailors in ancient times who knew they were nearly home when they saw the first glimpse of white. The views from the temple are equally impressive: on a clear day you can see Kea, Kythnos and Serifos to the southeast, and Aegina and the Peloponnese to the west. The site also contains scant remains of a propylaeum, a fortified tower and, to the northeast, a 6th-century temple to Athena.

Visit early in the morning before the tourist buses arrive, or head there for the sunset if

you wish to indulge the sentiments of Byron's lines from *Don Juan* :

'Place me on Sunium's marbled steep, Where nothing save the waves and I, May hear our mutual murmurs sweep.'

Byron was so impressed by Sounion that he carved his name on one of the columns; sadly, many other not-so-famous travellers have followed suit.

There are a couple of tavernas just below the site if you have time to combine your visit to the temple with some lunch and a swim.

Getting There & Away

Buses take both inland and more-scenic coastal routes to Cape Sounion from Athens. Coastal buses (€6.50, 1½ hours) leave Athens half-hourly (fewer in the evening) from the Mavromateon terminal ([Click here](#)). In Athens these buses also stop on Filellinon, on the corner of Xenofontos, 10 minutes later, but by this time they're usually very crowded.

Elefsina (Eleusis) Ελευσίνα

Ancient Eleusis RUINS

([210 554 6019](#); *adult/child €3/free*; *8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun*) These ruins lie unromantically surrounded by oil refineries and factories beside the industrial town of Elefsina, 22km west of Athens.

It's hard to imagine Eleusis in ancient times, but it nestled on the slopes of a low hill close to the shore of the Saronic Gulf, built around the Sanctuary of Demeter . The site dates to Mycenaean times, when the cult of Demeter, one of the most important cults in Ancient Greece, began. By classical times it was celebrated with a huge annual festival, which attracted thousands of pilgrims wanting to be initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries. They walked in procession from the Acropolis to Eleusis along the Sacred Way, which was lined with statues and votive monuments. Initiates were sworn to secrecy on punishment of death, and during the 1400 years that the sanctuary functioned, its secrets were never divulged. It was closed by the Roman emperor Theodosius in the 4th century AD.

The site's museum helps make some sense of the scattered ruins, with models of the old city.

From Athens, take bus A16 or B16 from Plateia Eleftherias (Koumoundourou), north of Monastiraki. Buses run every 20 minutes and take 30 minutes in middling traffic.

Mt Parnitha Πάρνηθα

The densely forested Mt Parnitha National Park () , about 25km north of Athens, is the highest mountain range surrounding the city and serves as the 'lungs' of Athens.

Tragically, more than 4200 hectares of century-old fir and pine forest was razed in the devastating six-day fires of 2007. The state has since tripled the area designated as national park and launched a major reforestation program, but it will take decades to recover.

Mt Parnitha comprises a number of smaller peaks, the highest of which is Karavola (1413m) – high enough to get snow in winter. The park is crisscrossed by numerous walking trails, is a popular hiking and mountain-biking destination, and has two shelters for hikers. Trails are marked on the *Road Editions* hiking map of the area. There are many caves and much wildlife, including red deer.

Most visitors access the park by cable car from the outer Athens suburb of Thrakomakedones, which drops you below the incongruous Regency Casino Mont Parnes ([210 242 1234](#); *24hr*) . The casino runs a free bus service once daily from Omonia, the Hilton and Piraeus. You can also get to the cable car station on bus 714 from the south end of Aharnon, near Plateia Omonias.

Marathon & Around Μαραθώνας

The plain surrounding the unremarkable, small town of Marathon, 42km northeast of Athens, is the site of one of the most celebrated battles in world history. In 490 BC an army of 9000 Greeks and 1000 Plataeans defeated the 25,000-strong Persian army, proving that the Persians were not invincible. The Greeks were indebted to the ingenious tactics of Miltiades, who altered the conventional battle formation so that there were fewer soldiers in the centre, but more in the wings. This lulled the Persians into thinking that the Greeks were going to be a pushover. They broke through in the centre but were then ambushed by the soldiers in the wings. At the end of the day, 6000 Persians and only 192 Greeks lay dead. The story goes that after the battle a runner was sent to Athens to announce the victory. After shouting, 'Enikesame!' ('We won!') he collapsed and died. This is the origin of today's marathon race.

Marathon Tomb MONUMENT

(229 405 5462; site & museum adult/child €3/free; 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun) Four kilometres before the town of Marathon, 350m from the Athens–Marathon road, sits this 10m-high tumulus or burial mound. In Ancient Greece, the bodies of those who died in battle were returned to their families for private burial, but as a sign of honour the 192 men who fell at Marathon were cremated and buried in this collective tomb. The site has a model of the battle and historical information.

Nearer to town, the excellent museum (229 405 5155) displays local discoveries from various periods, including neolithic pottery from the Cave of Pan and finds from the Tomb of the Athenians. New finds from the area include several well-preserved, larger-than-life statues from an Egyptian sanctuary. Next to the museum is one of the area's prehistoric grave circle sites, which has been preserved under a hangar-like shelter, with raised platforms and walkways. Another hangar on the way to the museum contains an early Helladic cemetery site.

Ramnous ANCIENT SITE

(229 406 3477; adult/child €2/free; 8.30am-3pm) The ruins of the ancient port of Ramnous lie about 10km northeast of Marathon. It's an evocative, overgrown and secluded site, standing on a picturesque plateau overlooking the sea. Among the ruins are the remains of the Doric Temple of Nemesis (435 BC), which once contained a huge statue of the goddess. Nemesis was the goddess of retribution and mother of Helen of Troy. There are also ruins of a smaller 6th-century temple dedicated to Themis, goddess of justice.

Another section of the site leads 1km down a picturesque track to the relatively well-preserved town fortress on the clifftop near the sea, with the remains of the city, a temple, a gymnasium and a theatre. Ramnous is well off the beaten track, and consequently one of Greece's least spoilt ancient sites. You'll need your own transport to get here.

Shinias BEACH

The long, sandy, pine-fringed beach at Shinias, southeast of Marathon, is the best in this part of Attica and very popular at weekends. Ramnous Camping (229 405 5855;; *Leoforos Marathonas 174, Nea Makri*; camp sites per adult/car/tent €7.50/3.50/7;

Apr-Oct) , about 1km from Shinias Beach, is the most pleasant campground in Attica, with sites nestled among shrubberies and trees. There's a minimarket, bar-restaurant, playground and laundry here, and tents for hire.

The bus to Marathon stops at the entrance to the camp ground and within walking distance of Shinias Beach.

Lake Marathon LANDMARK

About 8km west of Marathon, this massive dam was Athens' sole source of water until 1956. The dam wall, completed in 1926, is faced with the famous Pentelic marble that was used to build the Parthenon. It's an awesome sight, standing over 50m high and stretching more than 300m wide. You'll need your own transport to get here.

Getting There & Away

Hourly (half-hourly in the afternoon) buses depart from Athens' Mavromateon terminal to Marathon (€4.50, 1¼ hours). The tomb and museum are a short walk from bus stops (tell the driver where you want to get off). There are no buses to Lake Marathon.

Vravrona Βραυρώνα

Sanctuary of Artemis RUINS

(229 902 7020; *adult/child €3/free; 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun*) This site, originally a neolithic settlement, came to be revered by worshippers of Artemis, the goddess of the hunt and protector of women in childbirth and newborns. The current remains of the temple date from approximately 420 BC, though the remains of other structures predate that. At the time of research, the site was temporarily closed for restorations but the museum was open. It houses exceptional finds from the sanctuary and excavations in the area.

From Athens, take metro line 3 to Nomismatikopio, then bus 304 to Artemis (Vravrona). It's a 10-minute taxi ride from there, with a nice stretch of beach on the way.

Peania & Around Παιανία

Perhaps Peania's biggest claim to fame was as the birthplace of Greek statesman Demosthenes (384–322 BC). Today the area is known primarily for a remarkable cave and a fine art and culture museum.

Koutouki Cave LANDMARK

(210 664 2910;; *adult/child €5/free; 9am-3pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-2.30pm Sat & Sun*) Although the facilities here are run-down, this two-million-year-old cave is one of the finest in Greece, covering 3300 sq metres and containing stalagmites and stalactites. It is well lit and guided tours end with a quirky sound-and-light finale with classical music.

The cave is best visited by car. Buses 125 and 308 from outside Athens' Nomismatikopio metro station can take you as far as Peania, but it's a further 4.5km to the cave.

Vorres Museum MUSEUM

(210 664 2520;; *Parodos Diadohou Konstantinou 4, Peania; adult/child €4.40/free; 10am-2pm Sat & Sun*) This impressive 20th-century Greek art and folk museum is on the lovely 32-hectare estate that was the home of Ion Vorres. Vorres migrated to Canada as a young man but built his home here in 1963 and began collecting contemporary art, furniture, artefacts, textiles and historic objects from around Greece to preserve the national heritage.

Take bus 308 to Koropi-Peania from Athens' Nomismatikopio metro station.

Saronic Gulf Islands

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Why Go?

The Saronic Gulf Islands (Νησιά του Σαρωνικού) dot the waters nearest Athens and offer a fast track to Greek island life. As with all Greek islands, each of the Saronics has a unique feel and culture so you can hop between classical heritage, resort beaches, exquisite architecture and remote escapism.

Approachable Aegina is home to a spectacular Doric temple and ruined Byzantine village, while nearby pine-clad Angistri feels protected and peaceful outside of the booming midsummer months. Further south, Poros with its forested hinterland, curves only a few hundred metres from the Peloponnese. The Saronic showpiece, Hydra, is a gorgeous car-free island with a port of carefully preserved stone houses rising from a chic history-charged harbour. Deepest south of all, pine-scented Spetses also has a vibrant nautical history and pretty town architecture plus myriad aqua coves, only minutes from the Peloponnese.

When to Go

May The islands awaken after winter; come for flower-filled Easter.

Jun Celebrate Miaoulia in Hydra with sparkling waters and warm weather.

Sep The Saronics' secret season: skies clear, water refreshing and crowds thin.

Best Places to Eat

- » Aspros Gatos ([Click here](#))
- » Akrogialia ([Click here](#))
- » Leonidas & Panagiota ([Click here](#))
- » Elia ([Click here](#))

Best Places to Stay

- » Poseidonion Grand Hotel ([Click here](#))
- » Hydra Hotel ([Click here](#))
- » Rosy's Little Village ([Click here](#))
- » Hotel Miranda ([Click here](#))

Saronic Gulf Islands Highlights

Bounce between the gorgeous, hip-happening **Hydra** ([Click here](#)) port and the island's deserted trails and ubiquitous swimming rocks

Delve into Aegina's ancient history at the **Temple of Aphaia** and Byzantine **Paleohora** ([Click here](#))

Taste test your way through the top restaurants in **Spetses Town** ([Click here](#))

In the low season, get away from it all in sleepy **Angistri** ([Click here](#)) while the beaches are tranquil

Ride the ring-road of Spetses to sample its **small bays** ([Click here](#))

Trace deeply rooted history at some of the best **small museums** in Greece on Hydra ([Click here](#)) and Spetses ([Click here](#))

Explore the peaceful interior of **Poros** ([Click here](#))

AEGINA

POP 14,500

Beyond its bustling port, Aegina (*eh* -yi-nah; Αίγινα) has the seductive, easygoing character of a typical Greek island but with the added bonus of more than its fair share of prestigious ancient sites and museums. Weekending Athenians spice up the mix with laidback locals, and commuters who use the island like an Athens suburb. Unique Aegina treats include a special, and delicious, pistachio nut, the splendid 5th-century Temple of Aphaia and the magical Byzantine ruins called Paleohora.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Monthly *Saronic Magazine* () available on all the main islands, has partial coverage of what's on. Island websites have links to houses for rent, usually a good deal for larger groups. Useful regional sites:

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Aegina was the leading maritime power of the Saronic Gulf during the 7th century BC, when it grew wealthy through trade and political ascendancy. The island made a major contribution to the Greek victory over the Persian fleet at the Battle of Salamis in 480 BC. Despite this solidarity with the Athenian state, the latter invaded in 459 BC out of jealousy of Aegina's wealth and status and of its liaison with Sparta. Aegina never regained its glory, although in the early 19th century it played a bold part in the defeat of the Turks and was the temporary capital of a partly liberated Greece from 1827 to 1829.

Getting There & Away

Aegina's main port, Aegina Town, has ferries operated by **Hellenic Seaways** (22970 22945) , **Nova Ferries** (21041 26181) and *Agios Nektarios* and high-speeds operated by **Hellenic Seaways** (22970 26777) and **Aegean Flying Dolphins** (22970 25800) to/from Piraeus and Angistri. Some ferries continue on to Methana (in the Peloponnese) and Poros. Ferries dock at the large outer quay, hydrofoils at the smaller inner quay.

Aegina's smaller ports, Agia Marina and Souvala, have boats () to/from Piraeus in high season only.

No direct boats connect Aegina and Angistri with Hydra, Spetses, Ermione or Porto Heli; you need to go via Piraeus or Poros.

Even in winter, high-speeds from Piraeus get fully booked for weekends: book ahead. A local ferry, **Angistri Express** makes several trips daily in high season to Angistri's main port, Skala (€5, 20 minutes), and neighbouring Mylos (€5.20, 25 minutes). It leaves from midway along Aegina harbour; timetables are displayed.

Water taxis (22970 91387, 6972229720) to Angistri cost €45 one way, regardless of number of people.

BOAT SERVICES FROM AEGINA

DESTINATION	PORT	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Angistri (Skala)	Aegina Town	20min	€2.50	1 daily
Angistri (Skala)*	Aegina Town	10min	€5.50	6 daily
Methana	Aegina Town	40min	€5.70	2-3 daily
Piraeus	Aegina Town	1hr 10min	€9.50	hourly
Piraeus*	Aegina Town	40min	€13.50	hourly
Piraeus	Agia Marina	1hr	€9.50	3-4 daily
Piraeus	Souvala	1hr 35min	€9.50	3-4 daily
Poros	Aegina Town	1hr 50min	€8.60	2-3 daily

*high-speed services

Getting Around

BUS Buses from Aegina Town run frequently around the island (departure times displayed outside ticket office on Plateia Ethnegersias; you must buy tickets there).

Agia Marina (€2, 30 minutes), via Paleohora (€1.40, 15 minutes) and Temple of Aphaia (€1.70, 25 minutes)

Perdika (€1.80, 15 minutes)

Souvala (€1.40, 20 minutes)

CAR, MOTORCYCLE & BICYCLE Numerous hiring outfits; prices start from €20 per day for cars, €15 for a 50cc motorcycle and €8 for bicycles.

Sklavenas Rent A Car Aegina Town (22970 22892; Kazantzaki 5) On the road towards the Temple of Apollo. Agia Marina (22970 32871) Cars, jeeps, scooters, quads and bikes.

Karagiannis Travel (22970 28780; Kanari 2, Aegina Town)

TAXI 22970 22010

Aegina Town Αίγινα

POP 8905

The sparkling harbour of Aegina Town is backed by a buzzing promenade of people, motorbikes, cafes and restaurants. Nightlife vibrates along here, but as you wander back into the narrow town streets, with kids riding bikes and laundry strung from balconies, small-town Greek life takes over again.

The parallel streets Irioti and Rodi backing the harbour are crammed with shops of every kind and a few 19th-century neoclassical buildings intermix with whitewashed houses. Ancient Greece is represented by the impressive ruins of the Temple of Apollo, just north of the harbour.

Sights

Temple of Apollo RUINS

(22970 22637; adult/child €3/2; 8.30am-2.30pm Tue-Sun) On the hill of Coloni, northwest of the port, ruined walls, cisterns and broken pillars in honey-coloured stone are lorded over by a solitary surviving column. It's all that's left of a 5th-century-BC temple that was once part of an ancient acropolis. Buy tickets just below, at the informative Sanctuary Museum which displays artefacts from the temple with translations in English and German.

Folklore Museum MUSEUM
(22970 26401; S Rodi; 8.30am-2.30pm Wed-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat & Sun, also 5.30-8.30pm Fri & Sat) Peruse historic clothing, housewares and artwork recreating the mood of old-time island life.

Festivals & Events

Aegina Fistiki Fest () Mid-September. *Fistiki* means pistachio and this three-day brouhaha was inaugurated in 2009 to promote Aegina's famous PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) pistachio (*fistiki aeginis*) through live music, visual-arts events, trade fairs and culinary contests.

Sleeping

Book ahead, especially at weekends. Get deals on multiday stays. At the foot of the main quay a board listing accommodation has a telephone.

Rastoni HOTEL €€

(22970 27039;; *Metriti 31; s/d/tr incl breakfast €85/80/110;*) Each spacious room at this handsome hotel has individualised decor reflecting Asian and African themes. Balconies and the lovely garden look onto the Temple of Apollo. Generous breakfasts and friendly staff round out the experience. Find it in a residential neighbourhood a few minutes north of the harbour.

Fistikies Holiday Apartments APARTMENTS €€

(22970 23783;; *Logiotatidou 1; studio €110, 4-person apt €140;*) This complex of tidy family-friendly apartments was built in 2007 on the southern edge of town, inland from the football field. Spacious apartments have DVD players and terraces overlooking the pool.

Marianna Studios PENSION €

(22970 25650, 6945110697;; *Kiverniou 16-18; s/d €35/40;*) Simple, very basic rooms and very friendly owners create a top-notch budget choice. Some rooms have balconies or overlook a quiet, leafy garden alongside the interior courtyard. One has a kitchen (double/triple €45/50).

Electra Domatia PENSION €

(22970 26715, 6938726441;; *Leonardou Lada 25; s/d €45/50;*) There are no views from this small whitewashed pension, but rooms are impeccable and comfy in a quiet corner of the centre. It outclasses nearby hotels by a long way.

Aeginitiko Archontiko PENSION €€

(22970 24968;; *cnr Ag Nikolaou & Thomaiados; s/d/tr/ste €60/70/85/120;*) The rich character of this centrally located old mansion translates through period 19th-century features, a charming salon and courtyard and a splendid breakfast (€10). Rooms, however, are a bit cramped and worn, bathrooms are basic. Sea views from the rooftop terrace.

Eating

The sheaf of harbour-front restaurants make for lazy world-watching, but are not particularly good value, unless you hit the unvarnished *ouzeries* (place that serves ouzo and light snacks). Aegina's pistachio nuts are on sale everywhere (from €6 for 500g, depending on quality).

Ippocampus MEDITERRANEAN €

(22970 26504; *Akti Toti Hatzi 4; mains €7-12; lunch & dinner*) At the southern end of the harbour, the cool, plate-glass decor of this inventive restaurant complements its creative cuisine, which includes eggplant stuffed with shrimp, pistachio soup and fresh fish. Friendly owners know all about the island.

Elia MEDITERRANEAN €

(22975 00205; *Koumoundourou 4; mains €6-9; lunch & dinner, winter hrs reduced*) Burrow into the backstreets to find this excellent eatery popular with locals. Imaginative, fresh specialties include the pistachio pesto and *pitas* of the day.

Gelladakis MEZEDHES €

(22970 27308; *Pan Irioti 45*; dishes €6-12; lunch & dinner) Ensconced behind the noisy mid-harbour fish market, this vibrant joint and its immediate neighbour are always thronging with people tucking into hell-fired octopus or sardines, plus other classic *mezedhes* (appetisers).

Skotadis SEAFOOD €

(22970 24014; mains €7-12; lunch & dinner) Another favourite near the fish market for seafood *mezedhes*.

Simposio MEDITERRANEAN €

(22970 23818; *Pan Irioti & Neoptole mou*; mains €6-10; lunch & dinner) Meats and *mezedhes* in an elegant setting, with faux finished tables and evocative photographs of Aegina.

Tsias TAVERNA €

(22970 23529; *Dimokratias 47*; mains €6-9; lunch & dinner) Street-side eating at its best. Try shrimps with tomatoes and feta, or one of the daily specials.

Drinking & Entertainment

Music bars and cafes line the harbour; take your pick! In summer, Inn on the Beach opens for seaside cocktails on the harbour's south side.

Remvi CAFE, BAR

(*Dimokratias*) The popular music bar-cafe hops day and night.

International Corner BAR

(*S Rodi*) Get off the main strip. The gregarious owner takes requests, from Top 40 to fantastic Greek music. In a character-filled, wood-panelled bar-room.

Avli BAR

(22970 26438; *Pan Irioti 17*) Bubbles with activity in a covered garden; tunes from '60s to Greek. Vartan , across the road, chics it up.

Information

Aegina has no tourist office. Check **Karagiannis Travel** (22970 28780; *Kanari 2*) for car hire, tours and non-Aegina boats. Harbour-front banks have ATMs.

Hospital (22970 24489)

Port police (22970 22328) At entrance to the ferry quays.

Post office (*Plateia Ethnegersias*; 7.30am-2pm Mon-Fri)

Tourist police (22970 27777; *Leonardou Lada*) Just up a lane opposite the hydrofoil dock.

Around Aegina

Aegina is lush and wildflower laden in spring, and year-round offers some of the best archaic sites in the Saronic Gulf. The interior hills and mountains add drama to the small island, but beaches are not its strongest suit. The east-coast town of Agia Marina is the island's main package resort. It has a shallow-water beach that is ideal for families, but it's backed by a fairly crowded main drag and gets packed in summer. A few sandy beaches line the roadside between Aegina Town and Perdika, such as pleasant Marathonas .

Temple of Aphaia RUINS

(22970 32398; adult/child €4/free; 8am-6.30pm Apr-Oct, 8.30am-5.30pm Nov-Mar) The remains of this impressive temple stand proudly on a pine-covered hill with far-reaching views over the Saronic Gulf. It is the major ancient site of the Saronic Gulf Islands. Built in 480 BC, soon after the Battle of Salamis, it celebrates a local deity of pre-Hellenic times. The temple's pediments were originally decorated with splendid Trojan War sculptures, most of which were stolen in the 19th century and now decorate

Munich's Glyptothek. Panels throughout the site explain the formidable ruins and are translated into English.

Aphaia is 10km east of Aegina Town. Buses to Agia Marina stop (20 minutes); taxis cost about €12 one way. If relying on buses, remember that there may be several hours between services. It can be a hot hill top.

Paleohora RUINS

(Παλαιοχώρα) This enchanting remote hillside is dotted with the remains of a Byzantine village – mostly tiny churches that feel like peaceful havens. The ancient town of Paleohora was Aegina's capital from the 9th century through the medieval period and was only abandoned during the 1820s. Over 30 surviving churches and chapels punctuate the rocky heights of the original citadel, and several have been carefully refurbished in recent years. Many are open to visitors and are linked by a network of paths, carpeted with wildflowers in spring.

Paleohora is 6.5km east of Aegina Town near the enormous modern church, Moni Agiou Nektariou . Buses from Aegina Town to Agia Marina stop at the turn-off to Paleohora (10 minutes); taxis cost €8 one way.

Christos Capralos Museum MUSEUM

(22970 22001; Livadi; admission €2; 10am-2pm & 6-8pm Tue-Sun Jun-Oct, 10am-2pm Fri-Sun Nov-May) From 1963 until 1993 the acclaimed sculptor Christos Capralos (1909–93) lived and worked on Aegina during summer. His home and studio on the seacoast near Livadi, 1.5km north of Aegina Town, has been made into a museum displaying many of his fluid, powerful works. Monumental sculptures include the superb *Crucifixion Tableau* and the 40m-long *Pindus Frieze* , a powerful memorial to the Battle of Pindus, in which the Greek Army beat back an Italian advance in WWII.

Hellenic Wildlife Hospital WILDLIFE CENTRE

(Elliniko Kentro Perithalpsis Agrion Zoön; 22970 31338, 6973318845;; by appointment) The oldest and largest wildlife rehabilitation centre in Southern Europe annually treats anything from 3000 to 4500 wounded wild animals. You can visit the hospital, which lies amidst rugged hills about 10km southeast of Aegina Town and 1km east of Pahia Rahi on the road to Mt Oros. Admission is free, but donations can be made. Accommodation is provided for long-term volunteers.

Perdika Πέρδικα

The quaint fishing village of Perdika lies about 9km south of Aegina Town on the southern tip of the west coast and makes for a relaxed sojourn.

Perdika's harbour is very shallow so, for the best swimming, catch one of the regular *caïque* s (little boats, €4) to the little island of Moni , a few minutes offshore. Moni is a nature reserve and has a magical tree-lined beach and summertime cafe .

Tavernas line Perdika's raised harbour-front terrace. Sultry sunset relaxation makes way for summertime buzzing nightlife when late-night music bars rev into gear.

Sleeping & Eating

Perdika has accommodation and a plethora of seaside restaurants and cafes.

Angie Studios HOTEL, APARTMENTS €

(22970 61445;; Perdika; d €50-60;) A range of rooms and apartments overlook a central pool. Top-floor apartments in the newer building have some sea views.

Villa Rodanthos STUDIOS €

(22970 61400; dika; Perdika; r €50-65;) A gem of a place, not least because of its charming owner. Each room has its own colourful decor and a kitchen. Go 100m along the right-hand branch road that starts opposite the bus stop at the edge of town.

Miltos SEAFOOD, TAVERNA €

(22970 61051; *Perdika*; mains €12-15; lunch & dinner) The most locally popular of Perdika's seafood tavernas; known for the highest-quality seafood and no-nonsense Greek staples.

O Thanasis TAVERNA €

(22970 31348; *Portes*; mains €7-8; lunch & dinner, winter hrs reduced) A charming family welcomes you to a seafront blue and white terrace festooned with flower pots. Here you can dig into delicious Greek mains or fresh fish.

Ammos TAVERNA €

(22970 28160; *Marathonas*; mains €6-12; lunch & dinner) A beachside option offering excellent local dishes with an international flair.

Getting There & Away

Buses run every couple of hours to Perdika from Aegina Town (30 minutes); taxis cost €10 one way.

ANGISTRI

POP 700

Tiny Angistri lies a few kilometres off the west coast of Aegina and out of high season makes a rewarding day trip or a worthwhile longer escape.

Getting There & Away

Angistri is well served by ferries, especially in summer: fast hydrofoils and a car ferry come from Piraeus via Aegina. *Agistri Express* runs to and from Aegina several times daily, except Sunday in winter.

The **water taxi** (22970 91387, 6944535659, 6972229720) costs €45 one way between Aegina and Angistri, regardless of numbers.

BOAT SERVICES FROM ANGISTRI

DESTINATION	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Aegina*	10min	€5.50	6 daily
Aegina	20min	€2.50	2-3 daily
Piraeus*	55min	€13.50	6 daily (via Aegina)
Piraeus	1½hr	€10.50	2-3 daily (via Aegina)

*high-speed services

Getting Around

Several buses a day run from 6.30am to about 9pm during summer from Skala and Mylos to Limenaria and Dhragonera Beach. It's worth hiring a scooter (€15) or sturdy bike (€6) to explore the coastline road.

Takis Rent A Bike & Bicycles (22970 91001; *Mylos*)

Kostas Bike Hire (22970 91021; *Skala*)

You can also follow tracks from Metohi overland through cool pine forest to reach Dhragonera Beach. Take a compass; tracks divide often and route-finding can be frustrating.

Skala & Around Σκάλα

The port-resort village of Skala is crammed with small hotels, apartments, tavernas and cafes but life, in general, still ticks along gently. A right turn from the quay leads to the small harbour beach and then to a church on a low headland. Beyond lies the best beach on the island, but it disappears beneath sun loungers and broiling bodies in July and August. Turning left from the quay at Skala takes you south along a dirt path

through the pine trees to the pebbly and clothing-optional Halikadha Beach . About 1km west from Skala, Angistri's other port, Mylos (Megalochori), has an appealing traditional character, rooms and tavernas, but no beach. Aponissos has turquoise waters, a small offshore island, and a reliably tasty taverna. Limenaria has deeper green waters. The island as a whole gets super-sleepy in low season.

Sleeping & Eating

Book ahead, especially for August and summer weekends. A board on Skala's quay lists accommodation if you haven't booked.

Rosy's Little Village PENSION €€

(22970 91610;; s/d/tr €50/70/90;) A complex of Cycladic-style cubes steps gently down to the sea, a short way east of Skala's quay. Full of light and colour, with built-in couches and tiny balconies with sea views, Rosy's also offers free sunbeds and mountain bikes, and summertime courses, weekly picnics and live-music evenings. Their restaurant (*mains* €6-10; *lunch & dinner*) emphasises organics.

Alkyoni Inn PENSION, TAVERNA €

(22970 91378;; r €50-55, *mains* €6-10; *breakfast, lunch & dinner Easter-Sep*;) The welcoming family-run Alkyoni Inn is a 10-minute stroll southeast of Skala's quay. The popular taverna dishes up well-prepared fish and meat while the hotel offers some sea-facing rooms and apartments with fabulous, unobstructed views. Two-storey family apartments sleep four.

Other recommended tavernas are Gialos (6977787785), just outside Skala on the Mylos road, and Kafeses (22970 91357) , overlooking Mylos harbour. In Skala, Pizzeria Avli (22970 91573) serves decent pizzas.

Information

There's a bank with ATM in Skala's main street.

POROS

POP 5259

Poros (Πόρος) is separated from the mountainous Peloponnese by a narrow sea channel, and its protected setting makes the main settlement of Poros Town seem like a cheery lakeside resort. Its pastel-hued houses stack up the hillside to a clocktower and make a vibrant first impression.

Poros is made up of two land masses connected by a tiny isthmus: tiny Sferia, which is occupied mainly by the town of Poros, and the much larger and mainly forested Kalavria, which has the island's beaches and its larger seasonal hotels scattered along its southern shore. A popular holiday island, Poros still maintains a refreshing sense of remoteness in its sparsely populated and forested interior.

The Peloponnesian town of Galatas lies on the opposite shore, making Poros a useful base from which to explore the ancient sites of the Peloponnese. For example, the exquisite ancient theatre of Epidavros is within reach by car or taxi (29804 2888 in Galatas).

Getting There & Away

Daily ferries connect Piraeus to Poros in summer (reduced to four daily in winter). High speed ferries continue south to Hydra, Spetses, Ermioni and Porto Heli. Conventional ferries connect Aegina to Poros and Methana on the mainland. For local agents, see Tourist Information, [Click here](#) .

Caïques shuttle constantly between Poros and Galatas (€0.80, five minutes). They

leave from the quay opposite Plateia Iroön, the triangular square near the main ferry dock in Poros Town. Hydrofoils dock about 50m north of here and car ferries to Galatas (person/car €0.80/5.60) leave from the dock several hundred metres north again, on the road to Kalavria.

BOAT SERVICES FROM POROS

DESTINATION	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Aegina	1¼hr	€8.30	2-3 daily
Hydra*	30min	€12.50	5-6 daily
Methana	30min	€4.50	2-3 daily
Piraeus	2½hr	€12.80	2-3 daily
Piraeus*	1hr	€22.50	5-6 daily
Spetses*	1½hr	€14.50	3-4 daily

*high-speed services

Getting Around

BOAT Caiques go to beaches during summer. Operators stand on the harbour calling out destinations.

BUS A bus (€3) operates May to October every half hour from 7am until midnight on a route that starts next to the kiosk at the eastern end of Plateia Iroön. It crosses to Kalavria and goes east along the south coast as far as Moni Zoöдохου Pigis (10 minutes), then turns around and heads west to Neorion Beach (15 minutes).

MOTORCYCLE & BICYCLE Several places on the road to Kalavria rent bicycles and scooters.

Fotis (22980 25873) Scooters/bikes per day €15/4.

Stelios (22980 23026) Scooters per day €15-25, bikes €6.

TAXI 22980 23003

Poros Town Πόρος

POP 4102

Zippy Poros Town is a mishmash of charming ice cream-coloured houses that look out across the narrow channel at Galatas and the shapely mountains of the Peloponnese. Sailboats bob along the lengthy quay while ferries glide through the channel and smaller vessels scurry to and fro. Behind the harbour, *plateies* (squares) and tavernas hide from view and a rocky bluff rises steeply to a crowning clock tower.

Sleeping

Seven Brothers Hotel HOTEL €€

(22980 23412;; *Plateia Iroön*; s €50-65, d €50-80, tr €55-85;) Conveniently close to the hydrofoil quay, this modern hotel has bright, comfy rooms with small balconies, some with sea views. Super-duper bathrooms were renovated in 2010.

Georgia Mellou Rooms PENSION €

(22980 22309, 6937850705;; *Plateia Georgiou*; s/d/tr €35/45/55;) These simple, old-fashioned rooms are tucked into the heart of the old town, next to the cathedral and high above the harbour. The charming owner keeps everything ship-shape. Book ahead for fantastic views from west-side rooms.

Hotel Manessi BUSINESS HOTEL €€

(22980 22273/25857;; *Paralia*; d €65-90;) Well placed at the mid-point of the harbour front, the Manessi is a bit worn in places but offers business-style rooms.

Roloi APARTMENTS €€

(22980 25808;; *studio* €75-110, *apt* €150-180, *house* €250;) Good source for apartments in town.

Eating

There's not much haute cuisine on Poros, but traditional tavernas have character to match the cooking.

Aspros Gatos SEAFOOD, TAVERNA €

(22980 25650;; Labraki 49; mains €6-15; lunch & dinner Easter-Oct) A short walk from town, 400m west of the bridge on the road to Neorion Beach, Poros' best seafood taverna sits smack out over the water. Watch the local kayaking team do their thing as the jolly owner provides anything from *bolognese* to the catch of the day.

Taverna Karavolos TAVERNA €

(22980 26158;; mains €6.50-9; dinner) Karavolos means 'big snail' and snails are a speciality of the house at this quaint eatery on a backstreet. Friendly proprietors also offer classic Greek meat dishes and some fish. Head north from the cathedral about 100m, then go left and down broad steps towards the harbour.

Dimitris Family Taverna TAVERNA €

(22980 23709; mains €6.50-11.50; dinner) Renowned for their meat, the owners of this place have a butcher's business, so cuts of pork, lamb and chicken are of the finest quality. Vegetarians have choices too. Head north from the cathedral for 20m, turn right and then left for 100m.

Oasis TAVERNA €

(22980 22955; mains €6-12; lunch & dinner) Harbourside home-cooked Greek staples and seafood.

Information

Poros has no tourist office. Harbour-front agencies arrange accommodation, car hire, tours and cruises. Banks on Plateia Iroön have ATMs.

Askeli Travel (22980 24900;);

Family Tours (22980 25900;) Sells conventional-ferry tickets.

Marinos Tours (22980 23423;) Across from hydrofoil quay, sells hydrofoil tickets.

Post office (22980 22274; Tombazi; 7.30am-2pm Mon-Fri) Next to Seven Brothers Hotel.

Tourist police (22980 22462/22256; Dimosthenous 10) Behind the high school.

Around Poros

Poros' best beaches include the pebbly Kanali Beach, on Kalavria 1km east of the bridge, and the long, sandy Askeli Beach, about 500m further east. Askeli has a few year-round seafront tavernas and Hotel New Aegli (22980 22372;; d €70;), a decent resort-style hotel, with all the expected amenities, sea views and even weekend Greek music.

The 18th-century monastery Moni Zoödohou Pigis, well signposted 4km east of Poros Town, has a beautiful gilded iconostasis from Asia Minor. Nearby, Sirene Blue Resort (22980 22741;; Monastiri Beach; d incl breakfast €140-175;) has been recently renovated and offers a true deluxe seaside vacation experience.

From the road below the monastery you can head inland to the 6th-century Temple of Poseidon. There's very little left of the temple, but the worthwhile walk gives superb views of the Saronic Gulf and the Peloponnese. From the ruins you can continue along the road and circle back to the bridge onto Sferia. It's about 6km in total.

Neorion Beach, 3km west of the bridge, has water skiing and banana-boat and air-chair rides. The best beach is at Russian Bay, 1.5km past Neorion.

HYDRA

POP 2913

Hydra (ee -dhr-ah; Υδρα) is truly the gem of the Saronic Gulf and stands alone among Greek islands as the one free of wheeled vehicles. No cars. No scooters. Just tiny marble-cobbled lanes, donkeys, rocks and sea. Artists (Brice Marden, Nikos Chatzikyriakos-Ghikas, Panayiotis Tetsis), musicians (Leonard Cohen), celebrities (Melina Mercouri, Sophia Loren) and travellers (you) have all been drawn to Hydra over the years. So in addition to the island's exquisitely preserved stone architecture, criss-crossing rural paths and clear, deep waters, you can find a good cappuccino along the people-watching harbour.

Hydra Town is the centre of island life and more than a standard harbour. Its historic feel, mansions and cafe scene give the island an amphitheatre-like focal point. But if you're an outdoors person, don't be lulled by the hubbub of port life into forgetting the mountainous interior, the coastal paths and the hidden swimming bays.

The mules and donkeys are the main means of heavy transport and they, along with the rustic aspects of life on the island, give Hydra its two faces: chic and earthy.

History

Hydra was sparsely populated in ancient times and is just mentioned in passing by Herodotus. The most significant evidence of settlement dates from Mycenaen times. But, in the 16th century, Hydra became a refuge for people fleeing the skirmishes between the Venetians and the Ottomans. Many hailed from the area of modern-day Albania. By the mid-1700s the settlers began building boats and took to the thin line between maritime commerce and piracy with enthusiasm. They travelled as far as Egypt and the Black Sea and ran the British blockade during the Napoleonic Wars (1805–15). As a result of steady (lucrative) tax paying, the island experienced only light interference under the Ottoman Empire. By the 19th century, Hydra had become a full-blown maritime power and wealthy shipping merchants had built most of the town's grand

mansions. At its height in 1821, the island's population reached 28,000. Hydra supplied 130 ships for a blockade of the Turks during the Greek War of Independence and the island bred such leaders as Admiral Andreas Miaoulis, who commanded the Greek fleet, and Georgios Koundouriotis, president of Greece's national assembly from 1822 to 1827. Streets and squares all over Greece are named after them.

Getting There & Away

High-speed ferries link Hydra with Poros, Piraeus and Spetses, and Ermioni and Porto Heli on the Peloponnese; service is greatly reduced in winter. Buy tickets from **Hydreoniki Travel** (22980 54007;), up the lane to the right of the Alpha Bank. The *Freedom shuttle* (6944242141;) runs between Hydra and Metohi (little more than a car park) on the mainland (€6.50, 10 minutes, hourly, schedule posted on quay).

BOAT SERVICES FROM HYDRA

DESTINATION	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Ermioni*	20-40min	€9.50	3-4 daily
Piraeus*	1-2hr	€25.50	7-8 daily
Poros*	30min	€12.50	5-6 daily
Porto Heli*	1hr	€15	3 daily
Spetses*	40min	€10.50	5-6 daily

*high-speed services

Getting Around

Generally, people get around Hydra by walking.

In summer, caïques from Hydra Town go to the island's beaches. **Water taxi** (22980 53690) fares are posted on the quay (Kamini costs €10, Vlyhos €14).

Donkey owners clustered around the port charge €10 to €15 to transport your bags to your hotel. Quick donkey rides around the port cost about €10 per person.

Hydra Town Ύδρα

POP 2526

Life in Hydra centres around the gorgeous port. Whether you sail or ferry in, the sparkling boat-filled harbour and the bright light striking the tiers of carefully preserved stone houses make a lasting impression. The harbour in high season is an ecosystem of its own, with yachts, caïques, water taxis and sailboats zipping in and out. The marble quay is a surging rhythm of donkeys, visitors, cafe denizens and boat-taxi hawkers. By night the scene becomes a promenade: grab a chair, order a drink, and watch the world go by.

Of course, if you head back into the warren of port-side houses, and especially if you climb the steep slopes banking away from the town centre, you get a totally different view of Hydra life. Grandmothers chat in quiet lanes about what's for dinner and roads peter out into dirt paths that head into the mountains, ever-changing in colour, depending on the season and the time of day.

Sights

Melina Mercouri exhibition hall and Deste Foundation () host high-season art shows.

Hydra Town

Top Sights

Harbour Front B3

[Historical Archives Museum of Hydra](#) C1

[Kimisis Tis Theotokou](#) B3

[Lazaros Koundouriotis Historical Mansion](#) A4

Sleeping

[1_Angelica Hotel](#) B5

[2_Bahia](#) C4

[3_Glaros](#) C3

[4_Hotel Leto](#) C4

[5_Hotel Miranda](#) B5

[6_Hotel Orloff](#) A5

- [7 Hotel Sophia](#) B3
- [8 Hydra Hotel](#) A4
- [9 Kirki](#) B4
- [10 Pension Alkionides](#) C4
- [11 Pension Erofilii](#) D4

Eating

- [12 Barba Dimas](#) C4
- [13 Bratsera](#) D4
- [14 Caprice](#) D3
- [15 Flora's](#) B4
- [16 Isalos](#) C2
- [17 Ostria](#) A3
- [18 Paradosiako](#) C3
- [19 Psarapoula](#) C3
- [20 Veranda](#) A4

Drinking

- [21 Amalour](#) C3
- [22 Nautilus](#) A2
- [23 Pirate](#) A3
- [24 Red](#) A3

Entertainment

- [25 Cinema Club of Hydra](#) C4

Lazaros Koundouriotis Historical Mansion MUSEUM

(22980 52421;; *adult/child €4/free; 10am-2pm & 6-9pm Apr-Oct, by appointment Nov-Mar*) Hydra's star cultural attraction is this handsome ochre-coloured *arhontiko* (stone mansion) sitting high above the harbour. It was the home of one of the major players in the Greek independence struggle and is an exquisite example of late-18th-century traditional architecture. It is filled with original furnishings, folk costumes and handicrafts and a painting exhibition. Find it a steep hike up from the southwest corner of the harbour.

Historical Archives Museum of Hydra MUSEUM

(22980 52355;; *adult/child €5/3; 9am-4pm*) On the eastern arm of the harbour, this fine museum houses an extensive collection of portraits and naval artefacts, with an emphasis on the island's role in the War of Independence. Temporary exhibitions rotate through high season and occasional concerts occur on the rooftop terrace.

Kimisis Tis Theotokou CHURCH, MUSEUM

Housed in the peaceful monastery complex on the harbour, the cathedral dates from the 17th century. The Ecclesiastical Museum (22980 54071; *adult/child €2/free; 10am-2pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct*) contains a collection of icons and religious pieces.

KAPARI

The private island of Kapari off Ermioni in the Peloponnese offers a chance to dive with dolphins. The odyssey to find and dive with the short-beaked common dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*) can lead to a once-in-a-lifetime experience or a bust, as you search for these wild creatures. The Kallianos Diving Center (27540 31095, 6936805054;; *outings from €80*) runs this trip (€200), which requires advanced PADI certification. You get a 50% refund if the dolphins can't be found. Other offerings include PADI courses and a range of two-dive outings (reef, cave, wreck etc) with equipment, snacks and instructor. Book at least two days ahead. They can pick up from Ermioni or Metohi (on the mainland across from Hydra).

Festivals & Events

Easter RELIGION

An extravaganza week-long celebration including a famous parade of a flower-festooned epitaph into the harbour at Kamini.

Miaoulia Festival CULTURE

(3rd weekend of Jun) Celebration of Admiral Miaoulis and the Hydriot contribution to the War of Independence with an exuberant mock battle (with fireworks) in Hydra harbour.

Rembetika Conference MUSIC

(; Oct) Musicians and music-lovers gather to enjoy traditional Greek *rembetika* (blues songs).

Sleeping

Accommodation in Hydra is of a high standard, but you pay accordingly. Most owners will meet you at the harbour if pre-arranged and can organise luggage transfer. Prices drop midweek and for longer stays.

Hydra Hotel BOUTIQUE STUDIOS €€

(22980 53420, 6972868161;; *Petrou Voulgari 8; studio incl breakfast €100-130, apt €160-230, maisonette €230;*) Climb high on the south side of the port to swishy, top-of-the-line apartments in an impeccably renovated ancient mansion with kitchenettes and sweeping views. Get room 202 for a tiny balcony with panoramas to die for.

Nereids PENSION €€

(22980 52875;; *Kouloura; d €65-80;*) This carefully restored stone house contains lovely rooms of exceptional value and quality. Spacious, peaceful and with beautiful decor, rooms have open views to Hydra's rocky heights and top-floor rooms have sea views. Find it a few minutes' walk up Tombazi from the harbour.

Piteoussa PENSION €€

(22980 52810;; *Kouloura; d €65-75;*) Jolly owners maintain beautiful rooms in two buildings on a quiet, pine tree-lined street. Rooms in the restored corner mansion drip with period character and modern amenities, while the smaller rooms in the second building were renovated in 2010 and have a chic feel. This is one of the best deals on the island.

Hotel Sophia BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(22980 52313;; *Harbour Front; d incl breakfast €100-110, tr €140; Apr-Oct;*) Gorgeous, small rooms sit right on the harbour-front and some have balconies. Each has been painstakingly outfitted with all the mod cons, bathrooms are luscious marble, and triples are two storeys.

Hotel Miranda HISTORIC HOTEL €€

(22980 52230;; *Miaouli; d incl breakfast €100-150;*) Pretend you're a 19th-century sea captain in this antique-laden jewel. Public spaces are decked out in antique prints, carved woodwork and rotating exhibitions. Gaze at your inlaid ceilings or, in the higher-end rooms, from your balcony.

Angelica Hotel BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€

(22980 53202;; *Miaouli; s & d incl breakfast €130-160, tr €200;*) An attractive boutique hotel in a quiet location, the Angelica is popular for its comfortable, luxurious rooms and spacious, impeccable bathrooms. Superior rooms have balconies. Relax in the jacuzzi or courtyard.

Pension Alkionides PENSION €€

(22980 54055;; *off Oikonomou; d/tr/studio €60/75/100;*) Hidden in a central, peaceful cul-de-sac, rooms are smart, though some are quite small, have tea- and coffee-making facilities and a pretty courtyard. The studio has a private terrace and the owners are friendly.

Pension Erofilii PENSION €€

(22980 54049;; *Tombazi; d/tr €60/65;*) Tucked in the inner town, these pleasant, unassuming rooms are a decent deal for Hydra. Also has a studio with kitchen.

Hotel Orloff PENSION €€€

(22980 52564;; *Rafalia 9; s/d incl breakfast €125/160;*) Dip into historic Hydra at this beautiful, slightly stuffy old mansion. Comfortable rooms look onto a lovely garden.

Hotel Leto BUSINESS HOTEL €€€

(22980 53385;; *off Miaouli; d incl breakfast €165-185;*) Modern decor, spacious rooms, a fitness studio and bar make this one of Hydra's only full-service hotels. It has the only fully equipped room for disabled use in the Saronic Gulf.

Glaros PENSION €€

(22980 53679, 6940748446; *d €60;*) Simple, well-kept rooms in a convenient spot just back from the harbour.

Kirki PENSION €

(22980 53181;; *Miaouli; d €45;*) Basic, tidy, central rooms have views into the rooftops and trees.

Bahia PENSION €€

(22980 52257, 6977462852; *Oikonomou; d €60;*) Slightly worn rooms have no views, but two have kitchens, a rarity in Hydra.

Eating

Pirate and Hydronetta bars offer fresh, delicious lunches and Pirate also does scrummy breakfasts. Flora's sweet shop on inland Plateia Votsi makes *galaktoboureko* (custard pie), rice pudding and ice creams from local goat's milk.

Leonidas & Panagiota TAVERNA €

(22980 53097; *Miaouli; mains €5-9; dinner Apr-Jan*) Feel like eating at someone's home? This is as close as it gets. Call ahead to special-order, then Leonidas and Panagiota will pop out to do the shopping and home-cook everything. Eat either in their quaint cabinet-lined dining room or on the small terrace. Probably the single best dish on the island is their savoury *tyropita* (cheese pie) dusted with sugar and cinnamon, made according to Leonidas' Cretan mother's recipe. The lamb or stuffed eggplant are nothing to scoff at either.

Sunset MEDITERRANEAN €€

(22980 52067; mains €9-22; lunch & dinner Easter-Oct) Famed for its splendid panoramic spot near the cannons to the west of the harbour, Sunset also has fine, fresh cuisine. Tasty salads, inventive pastas and local fish are prepared with flair and a hint of elegance.

Paradosiako TAVERNA €

(22980 54155; Tombazi; mains €7-15; lunch & dinner Easter-Nov) This little streetside *mezedhopoleio* (restaurant specialising in mezedhes) is traditional Greek personified. Sit on the corner terrace to watch the people-parade as you dig into classic mezedhes such as beetroot salad with garlic dip or meats and seafood, eg fresh, filleted and grilled sardines.

Ostria TAVERNA €

(*Stathis & Tassoula*; 22980 54077; mains €5-6; lunch & dinner) Often referred to by just the gregarious owners' names, this year-round taverna serves only what's fresh. Throw out the menu and ask: perhaps chicken cutlets, or fava or zucchini balls. Stathis catches his own calamari, sweet and delicious. Find it just back from the southwest side of the harbour.

Psarapoula TAVERNA €

(22980 52630;; harbour; mains €7-12; lunch & dinner) Don't be fooled by the port-side location: it's not a tourist trap. Visitors and locals alike dig into daily specials and Greek standards at this historic eatery that was established in 1911.

Barba Dimas ITALIAN €€

(22980 52967; Tombazi; mains €11-20; dinner) Authentic Italian food like their Neapolitan grandmother used to make. Menus change daily. Reserve in high season.

Caprice ITALIAN €€

(22980 52454; Sahtouri; mains €9-15; dinner Apr-Oct) A chance for romantic candlelit dining with a solid repertoire of Italian dishes, some using fresh-made pasta.

Veranda MEDITERRANEAN €€

(22980 52259; Lignou; mains €7-15; dinner Apr-Oct) Cheerful brothers run this dreamy terrace restaurant with views looking out across the port and mountains. Tasty salads and pork fillet with Roquefort are worth the trip.

Ta Gefyria TAVERNA €

(22980 29677; Kouloura; mains €5-10; lunch & dinner) On a quiet, tree-lined street in the rear of town. Friendly owners make consistently yummy grilled meats and mezedhes.

Bratsera MEDITERRANEAN €€

(22980 52794; Tombazi; mains €9-20; lunch & dinner Apr-Oct) The in-house restaurant by the pool of the Bratsera Hotel (22980 53971; d incl breakfast €160-215, ste €270;) offers the chance to have a higher-end meal and use their pool.

Isalos CAFE

(22980 53845) Right by the ferry dock, Isalos makes exceptional coffees and a solid run of sandwiches and pastas.

Drinking & Entertainment

Prices are high, but lively people-watching comes with your coffee or cocktail. The harbour revs up after midnight.

Pirate CAFE, DISCO

(22980 52711; *Harbour*) Friendly Wendy and Takis and their kids Zara and Zeus run this daytime cafe with first-rate coffees, breakfasts and home-cooked lunches, and morph it into a raging party-place at night. The music changes with the crowd and the mood.

Hydronetta CAFE, BAR

(22980 54160) You can't beat this gorgeous waterfront location on the swimming rocks to the far west of the harbour. Brothers Andreas and Elias provide snazzy cocktails and top-notch lunches with a smile (try the Hydronetta Salad with mango and chicken breast).

Amalour BAR, DISCO

(6977461357; *Tombazi*) A lively line in cocktails, relaxed outdoor seating and dancing inside after midnight.

Jazzmin's LIVE MUSIC

(*Boudouri, Avlaki*) Sip cocktails seaside at this renovated boathouse turned chic live-music roadhouse.

Red DISCO

(*Harbour*) Has been known to keep things rocking for days at a time.

Nautilus DISCO

(*Harbour*) Exuberant Greek sounds to the wee hours.

Omilos DISCO, RESTAURANT

(22980 53800; *West Harbour Front*) Chic waterside restaurant that turns into a night-time dance venue.

Cinema Club of Hydra CINEMA, THEATRE

(22980 53105;; *Oikonomou*) In July and August the open-air cinema screens blockbusters and indie flicks. The Club also organises excursions to plays at the ancient theatre of Epidavros.

Information

There's no tourist office on Hydra. ATMs are at the harbour-front banks.

Flamingo Internet Café (22980 53485; *Tombazi*; €3 per 30min; 8.30am-late)

Hospital (22980 53150; *Votsi*)

Post office (7.30am-2pm *Mon-Fri*) On a small internal square.

Tourist police (22980 52205) Share an office with regular police.

Around Hydra

Hydra's mountainous, arid interior, now with some regenerating pines, makes a robust but peaceful contrast to the clamour of the quayside. A useful map for walkers is the *Hydra* map in the Anavasi Central Aegean series (); view local maps with suspicion, once you leave town there are very few marked paths and no villages per se. Always take plenty of water.

An unbeatable Hydra experience is the long haul up to *Moni Profiti Ili*, but you need to be fit and willing. The wonderful monastery complex in a walled compound contains

beautiful icons and serenity. Starting up Miaouli street from the harbour, it's a solid hour or more through relentless zigzags and pine trees to panoramic bliss on the top. Moni Agias Efpraxias sits just below Profiti Iliia.

Other paths lead to Mt Eros (588m), the island's highest point, and along the island spine to east and west, but you need advanced route-finding skills or reliable walking directions from knowledgeable locals.

The coastal road turns into a simple, beautiful trail about a 1.5km walk west from the port, after Kamini. Kamini has a tiny fishing port, several good tavernas, swimming rocks and a small pebble beach. In fact, Hydra's shortcoming – or blessing – is its lack of sandy beaches to draw the crowds. People usually swim off the rocks, but if you go as far as Vlyhos, 1.5km after Kamini, this last little hamlet before the mountains offers two slightly larger pebble beaches (one called Vlyhos and the other the more pristine Plakes), tavernas and a restored 19th-century stone bridge.

The coastal road leads 2.5km east from the port to a pebble beach at Mandraki where trampoline-and-music beach resort Miramare offers occasional water-craft rental.

Boats run from the harbour to all of these places, but you will certainly need them to reach Bisti Bay or Agios Nikolaos Bay, on the island's southwest, with their remote but umbrella-laden pebble beaches and green waters.

Sleeping & Eating

Four Seasons TAVERNA, PENSION €

(22980 53698;; *Plakes; mains €6-12; lunch & dinner Easter-Oct*) This scrummy seaside taverna offers a different face of Hydra: the sound of the breeze and the waves instead of the portside buzz. Don't miss the *taramasalata* (fish roe dip) with bread and whatever else tickles your fancy. It also has handsome suites (€220).

Christina TAVERNA €

(22980 53516; *Kamini; mains €6-12; lunch & dinner Thu-Tue*) Just inland from the port in Kamini, Mrs Christina and her kids dish out some of the island's best Greek dishes and fresh fish.

To Pefkaki SEAFOOD, MEZEDHES €

(6974406287; *Kamini; mains €5-10; lunch & dinner Thu-Tue Easter-Oct*) Worth the short walk along the coast to Kamini for a laidback lunch of mezedhes and fresh seafood (delicious fried *gavros* – marinated anchovies).

Pirofani INTERNATIONAL €€

(22980 53175;; *Kamini; mains €10-16; dinner Wed-Sun*) Gregarious Theo creates an eclectic range of dishes, from a beef fillet with rose-pepper sauce to a spicy Asian curry.

Enalion TAVERNA €

(22980 53455;; *Vlyhos; mains €6-12; lunch & dinner Easter-Oct*) Perhaps the best seaside option at Vlyhos beach.

SPETSES

POP 4393

Spetses (Σπέτσες) stands proudly just a few kilometres from the mainland Peloponnese, but there is a stronger sense of carefree island Greece here than in other Saronic Gulf destinations. The lively, historic old town is the only village on the island, the rest, ringed by a simple road, is rolling hills and crystal-clear coves. Relaxed-feeling Spetses has great nightlife, some of the Saronic's best restaurants and easily-accessible, gorgeous swimming spots.

History

In Spetses Town, there's evidence of an early Helladic settlement near the Old Harbour and at Dapia. Roman and Byzantine remains have been found in the area behind Moni Agios Nikolaos, halfway between the two.

From the 10th century, Spetses is thought to have been uninhabited for almost 600 years, until the arrival of Albanian refugees fleeing the fighting between Turks and Venetians in the 16th century.

Spetses, like Hydra, grew wealthy from shipbuilding. Island captains busted the British blockade during the Napoleonic Wars and refitted their ships to join the Greek fleet during the War of Independence. In the process they immortalised one local woman, albeit originally from Hydra, the formidable Laskarina Bouboulina, ship's commander and fearless fighter (see [Click here](#) and).

The island's forests of Aleppo pine, a legacy of the far-sighted philanthropist Sotirios Anargyros, have been devastated by fires several times in the past 20 years. The trees are slowly recovering. Anargyros was born on Spetses in 1848 and emigrated to the USA, returning in 1914 a very wealthy tobacco tycoon. He bought 45% of the then largely barren island and planted the pines that stand today. Anargyros also financed the Spetses road network and commissioned many of Spetses Town's grand buildings and historic boarding school modelled on Eton.

Getting There & Away

Fast ferries link Spetses with Hydra, Poros and Piraeus, and Ermioni and Porto Heli in the Peloponnese. In summer, caiques (€2 per person) and a car ferry (€1.50) go from the harbour to Kosta on the mainland.

Bardakos Tours (22980 73141, *Dapia Harbour*)

Mimoza Travel (22980 75170) Just to the left of the ferry quay.

BOAT SERVICES FROM SPETSES

DESTINATION	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Hydra*	40min	€10.50	5-6 daily
Ermioni*	20-30min	€7.50	2 daily
Piraeus*	2hr 10min	€35	5-6 daily
Poros*	1½hr	€14.50	3-4 daily
Porto Heli*	15min	€5.50	3 daily

*high-speed services

Getting Around

BICYCLE Bike Center (22980 72209; 10.15am-3pm & 5.30-10pm) behind the fish market, rents bikes to suit all ages (€6 per day), including baby seats.

BOAT In summer, caiques serve the island's beaches (€10 return). **Water taxi** (22980 72072; *Dapia Harbour*) fares are displayed on a board. One-way fares per trip, not per person: Old Harbour (€18), Agia Marina (€30), Agii Anargyri (€75), mainland Porto Heli (€45) and Kosta (€20). A trip round the island costs €90. Add 50% from midnight to 6am. All leave from the quay opposite Bardakos Tours.

BUS Two routes start over Easter and increase in frequency to three or four daily from June to September. Departure times are displayed on a board by the bus stops and around town.

One goes from Plateia Agiou Mama in Spetses Town to Agia Paraskevi (€6, 40 minutes), travelling via Agia Marina and Agii Anargyri.

The other leaves from in front of Hotel Poseidonion going to Vrellos (€4) via Ligoneri.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE Only locally owned autos are allowed on Spetses, and those are not allowed in the centre. The transport of choice tends to be scooters and motorbikes; motorbike- and quad-hire shops abound (€16 to €25 per day).

Spetses Town Σπέτσες

POP 3550

Bustling Spetses Town lies on the east coast of the island and stretches along a meandering waterfront encompassing several quays and beaches. The main Dapia Harbour, where ferries arrive, and the area around adjacent Plateia Limenarhiou and inland Plateia Orologiou (Clocktower Sq) teem with chic tourist shops and cafes. Scooters and quads zip perilously around.

As you head further inland on the quieter lanes or go left along the harbour-front road of Sotiriou Anargyriou, past the town beach and Plateia Agiou Mama, impressive *arhontika* (old mansions) illustrate Spetses' historic wealth.

Passing the church of Moni Agios Nikolaos you arrive at the attractive Old Harbour (Palio Limani), and the interesting Baltiza yacht anchorage and boatbuilding area. From the north side of Dapia Harbour a promenade and road lead through the Kounoupitsa area.

Sights

Spetses Museum MUSEUM

(22980 72994; adult/child €3/2; 8.30am-2.30pm Tue-Sun) Small, fascinating collections are housed in the old mansion of Hatzigiannis Mexis (1754–1844), a shipowner who became the island's first governor. They include traditional costumes, folkloric items and portraits of the island's founding fathers. Most have English translations. Go straight up from the top left-hand corner of Plateia Orologiou, turn left at the junction and then right, then follow the signposts.

Bouboulina's Museum MUSEUM

(22980 72416;; adult/child €6/2; approximately 10.30am-8.15pm Mar-Oct) The

mansion of Spetses' famous daughter, the 19th-century seagoer Laskarina Bouboulina, has been converted into a museum . Entry is via 40-minute guided tours which run every 45 minutes (billboards around town advertise starting times). To find it, turn left at the north end of the cafes on the Dapia Harbour terrace. The museum also hosts concerts.

There's an impressive statue of Bouboulina on the harbour opposite the Hotel Poseidonion. For more about Bouboulina, see *A Female Force* ().

Festivals

Armata CULTURE

(8 Sep) Dedicated to Panagia Armata, the week-long celebration of performing arts culminates in the island commemorating its victory over the Turks in a key 1822 naval battle, with an enormous water-borne re-enactment and fireworks.

Sleeping

Spetses has a host of high-end accommodation. Most places offer discounts outside August.

Poseidonion Grand Hotel LUXURY HOTEL €€€

(22980 74553;; Dapia; d incl breakfast €218-291, q €291, 4-person ste €595;

) Here's your chance to live like a wealthy dame (or bloke) in the roaring '20s. This venerable old hotel has had a total renovation and every inch, from the chic rooms to the gracious lobby bar and luxurious pool, drips with the feeling of wealth. Oh, and it also has two of the island's best restaurants.

Orloff Resort LUXURY PENSION €€€

(22980 75444;; d incl breakfast from €210; Mar-Oct;) On the edge of town along the road to Agia Marina and near the old port, the pristine Orloff hides behind high white walls. Enjoy stylish rooms and a crystal-clear pool.

Zoe's Club APARTMENTS €€€

(22980 74447;; studio from €150;) Freestanding spacious studios and apartments surround a decadent pool and courtyard. Behind a high stone wall in the central part of town near the Spetses Museum.

Kastro APARTMENTS €€

(22980 75319;; studio & apt incl breakfast €120-180;) A private, quiet complex encloses these studios and apartments situated close to the centre. Low-key decor and modern amenities combine with welcoming terraces. Go west along the harbour for several hundred metres and Kastro is signposted along a lane to the left.

Nissia LUXURY APARTMENTS €€€

(22980 75000;; Dapia; studio incl breakfast €210-280; Apr-Oct;) Studios and maisonettes are arranged around a spacious courtyard, complete with swimming pool and soothing greenery in this exclusive seafront oasis. It's along the coastal promenade just north of Dapia Harbour and has a fine restaurant.

Klimis Hotel HOTEL €€

(22980 72334; klimishotel@hol.gr; Dapia; s/d from €40/60;) Serviceable rooms, some with seafront balconies, at this standard hotel are as cheap as you'll get in Spetses. The ground floor sports a cafe-bar and patisserie.

Villa Christina Hotel PENSION €€

(22980 72218;; s/d/tr incl breakfast from €50/60/80;) Located about 200m uphill on the main road inland from the harbour, these well-kept rooms and lovely garden are back from the worst traffic noise.

Hotel Kamelia PENSION €

(6939095513; s/d €45/50; *Easter-Oct*;) Good-value airy rooms are tucked away from the busy seafront. Head along the lane to the right of the kiosk in Plateia Agiou Mama for 100m, then bear right before a little bridge. In another 100m or so, go right along a narrow lane to where the Kamelia lies draped in bougainvillea.

Villa Marina PENSION €€

(22980 72646;; s/d €55/65;) Super-basic rooms have refrigerators and there is a well-equipped communal kitchen downstairs. Just to the right of Plateia Agiou Mama.

Eating

The Poseidonion Grand Hotel and Nissia have outstanding restaurants.

Akrogialia SEAFOOD, TAVERNA €

(22980 74749; *Kounoupitsa*; mains €9-17; *9am-midnight*) This superb restaurant is on the Kounoupitsa seafront and matches its delicious food with friendly service and a bright setting. Tasty options include oven-baked *melidzana rolos* (eggplant with cream cheese and walnuts). Enjoy terrific fish risotto (€17) or settle for a choice steak; all accompanied by a thoughtful selection of Greek wines.

Patrali SEAFOOD €

(22980 75380; mains €7-15; *Kounoupitsa*; *lunch & dinner Jan-Oct*) Operating for over 70 years and known island-wide for its outstanding seafood, Patrali sits smack on the seafront in the Kounoupitsa neighbourhood.

Tarsanas SEAFOOD €€

(22980 74490; *Old Harbour*; mains €17-26; *lunch & dinner*) A hugely popular *psarotaverna* (fish taverna), this family-run place deals almost exclusively in fish dishes. It can be pricey, but the fish soup (€6) alone is a delight and other starters such as anchovies marinated with lemon start at €5. For mains try the Tarsanas special: a seafood *saganaki* (fried cheese).

Hatzi's Taverna TAVERNA €

(22980 73723; *Old Harbour*; mains €10-15; *lunch & dinner*) Choose from what's fresh for the very best Greek taverna standards. Everything from octopus to roast chicken with lemon-infused oven potatoes.

To Nero tis Agapis MEDITERRANEAN €€

(22980 74009; *Kounoupitsa*; mains €12-19; *lunch & dinner*) The sweetly named 'Water of Love' is a sister restaurant to Tarsanas but offers meat as well as fish dishes. The crayfish tagliatelle is worth every bite, as is the *zarzuela* (fish stew). Meat-eaters can settle for pork fillet in a cream sauce, and there's a selection of creative salads.

Orloff FINE DINING €€

(22980 75255; *Old Harbour*; mains €13-19; *dinner*) Fresh fish and super specialities such as seafood linguini or pork fillet with aubergine puree are hallmarks of the popular Orloff. The terrace sits above the water at a bend in the road just before the old harbour.

La Scala ITALIAN €€

(22980 73207; *Old Harbour*; mains €10-20; *dinner*) Sup on Italian specialties like fresh-made pasta and delicious, beautifully presented seafood and meat, on a terrace in the old harbour.

Spetsiotiko TAVERNA €€

(*Agiou Mama*; mains €15-20; *lunch & dinner*) Dine overlooking the water on the freshest Greek staples. The owners never scrimp and the food is always lovely.

Taverna O Lazaros TAVERNA €

(22980 72600; mains €5-9; *dinner*) A hike of about 400m up Botasi St from the harbour sharpens your appetite for Greek standards at this very local taverna where the

goat in lemon sauce is still the favourite.

Drinking & Entertainment

Spetses' lively nightlife is concentrated in the Old Harbour–Baltiza area and includes the excellent Throubi Bar . La Luz has live music, Fortezza and Mourayo play Greek pop and Tsitsiano traditional Greek. Dance venues include Stavento Club () and Baltiza .

PEDAL POWER

Spetses' circular coast road can be enjoyed astride motorbikes and quads, but it cries out for a bicycle ([Click here](#)) – an antidote to all that fine Greek food. The road is satisfyingly sinuous and hugs the coast for 26km. Locals advise going anticlockwise to get hefty climbs behind you, but going clockwise leaves well-earned freewheeling for the end.

The island's interior is criss-crossed with quieter roads and woodland tracks and you can veer off for some more strenuous uphill off-roading. (But take a decent map and compass with you.)

Bar Spetsa BAR

(22980 74131; 8pm-late) One of life's great little bars, this Spetses institution never loses its integrity and its easygoing atmosphere. The music is guaranteed to stir memories. Find it 50m beyond Plateia Agiou Mama on the road to the right of the kiosk.

Roussos CAFE

(Dapia) Old-time Spetsiot coffee house with pastries, on the harbour.

Cine Marina CINEMA

(Dapia) Drop in for Hollywood blockbusters and arthouse flicks in their original languages.

Information

Banks at Dapia Harbour have ATMs.

1800 Net Café (near Hotel Poseidonion; per hr €3; 9am-midnight;)

Mimoza Travel (22980 75170; mimoza-kent@aig.forthnet.gr) On the harbour; helps with accommodation and other services.

Municipal kiosk (10am-9.30pm May-Sep) On the quay, the seasonal staff provide answers to general questions about the island.

Port police (22980 72245) Just beyond the Dapia Harbour upper terrace.

Post office (7.30am-2pm Mon-Fri) On the street behind seafront hotels.

Tourist police (22980 73100; mid-May-Sep) Same location as the port police.

Around Spetses

Spetses' gorgeous coastline undulates with pebbly coves and small, pine-shaded beaches. A surfaced road skirts the entire coastline, so a scooter, quad or bicycle are ideal for exploring. A detailed map is a must for inland explorers: download () or buy (€3.50 in newstands) the new, detailed island map.

Tiny, tranquil Xylokeriza on the southwest coast has a souvlaki kiosk with yummy fresh-made salads and delicious oven potatoes.

Further along, the popular long, pebbly Agia Paraskevi and the sandier Agii Anargyri have picturesque, albeit crowded, beaches. Both have tavernas and water sports of every description and are served by boats and buses in summer. At the north end of Anargyri, you can follow a small path to submerged, swimmable Bekiris Cave .

Other beautiful spots include Vrellos and Zogheria beaches.

Closer to town, Agia Marina is a small resort with a beach that gets packed. The beach at Ligoneri , about 2.5km northwest of Spetses Town, is easily reached by bus.

The small island of Spetsopoula , off the southern coast, is owned by the Niarchos family and not open to the public.

Cyclades

Includes »

[Andros](#)

[Tinos](#)

[Syros](#)

[Mykonos](#)

[Delos](#)

Why Go?

The Cyclades (kih- *klah* -dez; Κυκλάδες) are where Greek life is at its most intense and seductive, where countless islands rise from the glittering Aegean, their ochre hills sparkling with bone-white cubist settlements and limestone outcrops. This is where you find tourism on a human scale, yet with more than a dash of sun-kissed hedonism. You'll also find a compelling cultural menu that draws on ancient and modern themes at major archaeological sites and at small but sophisticated museums and galleries. Sample the sun-lounger beaches and raunchy nightlife of Mykonos and Ios; the glitz and glamour of Santorini; the subtler pace of island life on Paros and Naxos; and the cool escapism of tiny islands such as Anafi and Koufonisia, adrift in the Big Blue. Sleeping and eating options throughout the Cyclades match the best you'll find in Greece. Enjoy, above all, the timeless spirit of these ancient milestones of Aegean history and the exhilaration of adventurous island hopping.

When to Go

Apr & May Catch early-season sun without overheating and early boats without overcrowding.

Jun–Aug Sun, sea and sand, balmy nights and lively company.

Sep & Oct Quieter beaches, open spaces, sweet scent of herbs and great walks on island hills.

Best Places to Eat

- » Selene ()
- » Deli Restaurant and Sweet Bar ()
- » Levantis ()
- » Eva's Garden ()
- » Ariadne Restaurant ()

Best Places to Stay

- » Red Tractor Farm ()
- » Emprostiada Traditional Guest House ()
- » Sofia Pension ()
- » Naxian Collection ()
- » Aroma Suites ()

Cyclades Highlights

Explore the compelling archaeological sites of **Delos** ([Click here](#)) and **Ancient Thira** ()

Enjoy the best Cycladic cuisine on **Santorini** (), **Paros** () and **Schinousa** ()

Slip away to serenity on the islands of the **Little Cyclades** ()

Party until dawn on **Mykonos** ([Click here](#)) and **Ios** ()

Turn off the clocks on dreamy **Folegandros** ()

Hike through the mountains of **Naxos** (), **Andros** ([Click here](#)) and **Sifnos** ()

Discover the compelling marble art and industry of **Tinos** ([Click here](#))

Lose yourself amid the history and culture of traditional **Sifnos** ()

History

The Cyclades are said to have been inhabited since at least 7000 BC. Around 3000 BC

there emerged a cohesive Cycladic civilisation that was bound together by seagoing commerce and exchange. During the Early Cycladic period (3000–2000 BC) the tiny but distinctive Cycladic marble figurines, mainly stylised representations of the naked female form, were sculpted. Recent discoveries on Keros, an uninhabited island near Koufonisia in the Little Cyclades, indicate that the island was a possible pilgrimage site where figurines that had been broken up as part of rituals were deposited.

In the Middle Cycladic period (2000–1500 BC) many of the islands were occupied by the Minoans, who probably colonised from Crete. At Akrotiri, on Santorini, a Minoan town has been excavated and artefacts from the site have all the distinctive beauty of those from Crete's Minoan palaces. At the beginning of the Late Cycladic period (1500–1100 BC) the archipelago came under the influence of the Mycenaeans of the Peloponnese who were supplanted by northern Dorians in the 8th century BC.

By the mid-5th century BC the Cyclades were part of a fully fledged Athenian empire. In the Hellenistic era (323–146 BC) they were governed by Egypt's Ptolemaic dynasties and later by the Macedonians. In 146 BC the islands became a Roman province and lucrative trade links were established with many parts of the Mediterranean.

The division of the Roman Empire in AD 395 resulted in the Cyclades being ruled from Byzantium (Constantinople), but after the fall of Byzantium in 1204 they came under a Venetian governance that doled out the islands to opportunistic aristocrats. The most powerful of these was Marco Sanudo (self-styled Venetian Duke of Naxos), who acquired Naxos, Paros, Ios, Santorini, Anafi, Sifnos, Milos, Amorgos and Folegandros, introducing a Venetian gloss that survives to this day in island architecture.

The Cyclades came under Turkish rule in 1537 although the empire had difficulty in managing, let alone protecting, such scattered dependencies. Cycladic coastal settlements suffered frequent pirate raids, a scourge that led to many villages being relocated to hidden inland sites. They survive as the 'Horas' (capitals) that are such an attractive feature of the islands today. Ottoman neglect, piracy and shortages of food and water often led to wholesale depopulation of more remote islands, and in 1563 only five islands were still inhabited. The Cyclades played a minimal part in the Greek War of Independence, but became havens for people fleeing from other islands where insurrections against the Turks had led to massacres and persecution. Italian forces occupied the Cyclades during WWII. After the war, the islands emerged more economically deprived than ever. Many islanders lived in deep poverty; many more gave up the struggle and headed to the mainland, or to America and Australia, in search of work.

The tourism boom that began in the 1970s revived the fortunes of the Cyclades. The challenge remains, however, of finding alternative and sustainable economies that will not mar the beauty and appeal of these remarkable islands.

ANDROS

POP 4107

Andros (*Avδρος*) seems to float peacefully outside the mainstream on the northern edge of the Cyclades and is the ideal destination for those who want a low-key island experience. The second largest of the Cyclades after Naxos, the island is a mix of bare mountains and deep valleys. A network of footpaths, many of them stepped and cobbled, wriggle across the hills and the island has a fascinating archaeological and cultural heritage.

Andros has several beaches, many of them in out-of-the-way locations. There are three main settlements: the unpretentious port of Gavrio, the resort of Batsi and the handsome main town of Hora, known also as Andros.

Getting There & Away

Andros is best reached from the mainland port of Rafina, 66km away and a reasonable two hours by ferry. Regular ferries run south to the neighbouring islands of Tinos, Syros and Mykonos, from where onward links to the rest of the archipelago can be made.

BOAT SERVICES FROM ANDROS

DESTINATION	PORT	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Kea (Tzia)	Gavrio	6hr 20min	€10	2 weekly
Kythnos	Gavrio	5hr 10min	€15	1 weekly
Mykonos	Gavrio	2hr 20min	€15	3 daily
Rafina	Gavrio	2½hr	€15	4-8 daily
Syros	Gavrio	2hr 50min	€9	7 daily
Tinos	Gavrio	1hr 35min	€12	4 daily

Getting Around

Nine buses daily (fewer on weekends) link Gavrio and Hora (€4, 55 minutes) via Batsi

(€1.50, 15 minutes). Schedules are posted at the bus stops in Gavrio and Hora; otherwise, call 22820 22316 for information.

A **taxi** (Gavrio 22820 71171, Batsi 22820 41081, Hora 22820 22171) from Gavrio to Batsi costs about €10 and to Hora €35. Car hire is about €35 in August and about €25 in low season. **Euro Rent A Car** (22820 72440;) is opposite the Gavrio ferry quay.

Gavrio Γαύριο

POP 974

Located on the west coast, Gavrio is the main port of Andros. Apart from the flurry of ferry arrivals, it is pretty low key and can seem a touch drab.

Sleeping & Eating

Ostria Hotel and Apartments APARTMENTS €€

(22820 71551;; s/d/apt €60/70/90;) The spacious rooms at this well-located place, about 300m along the Batsi road, stand in a terraced complex. The apartments have cooking facilities.

Andros Camping CAMPGROUND €

(22820 71444;; camp sites per adult/child/tent €6.50/3/3;) A shaded site located about 400m behind the harbour front. You can rent a small tent for €6 or a large one for €10.

Sails SEAFOOD €€

(mains €7.50-22) An excellent *ouzerie* (place that serves ouzo and light snacks) and *psarotaverna* (fish taverna), Sails usually has some good locally caught fish. You'll pay about €25 for a decent-sized sea bream. There are chicken and pork dishes as well.

Information

The ferry quay is situated midway along the waterfront and the bus stop is in front of it. The post office is 150m to the left as you leave the ferry quay. There's an ATM outside Kyklades Travel and there's a bank with ATM on the middle of the waterfront.

Kyklades Travel (22820 72363; lasia@otenet.gr) A helpful office opposite the ferry quay with another office about 50m to the right next to the Agricultural Bank of Greece. They sell ferry tickets and can arrange accommodation.

Port police (22820 71213) Located on the waterfront.

Batsi Μπατσι

POP 1069

Batsi lies 7km southeast of Gavrio on the shores of a handsome bay. It is the island's main resort and is a cheerful, unpretentious place that revs up through July and August. A long sandy beach merges with a curving harbour-front promenade that is backed by a colourful swath of cafes, tavernas and shops.

Greek Sun Holidays (22820 41198;), located towards the far end of the harbour front, can help with accommodation, car hire and ferry tickets. Scooters can be hired for about €18 to €25 per day from Dino's Rent-a-Bike (22820 42169), by the car park.

During July and August you're able to hire well-maintained self-drive boats from Riva Boats (22820 24412, 6974460330) in Hora.

The tiny post office is tucked away beside the taverna opposite the bus stop. The taxi rank and National and Alpha banks (with ATMs) are all on the middle of the waterfront.

Sleeping & Eating

It's wise to book accommodation well ahead for July and August and for weekends in June and September.

Likio Studios APARTMENTS €€

(22820 41050;; d/apt €80/130;) A welcoming atmosphere makes these spacious and well-equipped rooms and apartments amid a peaceful flower-filled garden a great choice. It is about 150m inland from the beach on the road to the left of the big car park.

Cavo D'ora Pension PENSION €

(22820 41766; s/d €30/45) Located above a snack bar and pizzeria, the handful of pleasant rooms here are good value. You can get breakfast for €5, mezedhes for €6 to €7 and pizzas and pasta dishes for €7 to €9. It's at the tree-shaded entrance to town, just across from the beach.

Stamatis Taverna TAVERNA €

(22820 41283; mains €5.50-18) A well-run and friendly taverna on the terrace above the harbour, offering a great choice of starters such as *pikandiko* (feta, tomato, green pepper, oregano and spices baked in a pot). The fish and vegetable soups are delicious.

Oti Kalo TAVERNA €

(22820 41287; mains €5.50-12) The name means 'everything good', and it's no idle boast. Specialising in the Andros favourite, *froustalia* (spicy sausage and potato omelette); other mains include pork in white wine, lemon and oregano sauce.

Hora (Andros) Χώρα (Ανδρος)

POP 1801

Hora unfolds its many charms along a narrow, rocky peninsula that runs between two bays on the east coast of Andros, 35km southeast of Gavrio. The town's numerous neoclassical buildings reflect Venetian origins underscored by Byzantine and Ottoman accents. Hora's cultural pedigree is even more distinguished by its Museum of Modern Art and an impressive archaeological museum.

Sights & Activities

Hora has two outstanding museums; both were donated to the state by Basil and Elise Goulandris, of the wealthy ship-owning Andriot family.

Andros Archaeological Museum MUSEUM

(22820 23664; Plateia Kaiiri; adult/child/student €3/2/free; 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun) This museum contains impressive finds from the settlements of Zagora and Paleopoli (9th to 8th century BC) on Andros' west coast, as well as items of the Roman, Byzantine and early Christian periods. They include a spellbinding marble copy of the 4th-century bronze *Hermes of Andros* by Praxiteles.

Museum of Contemporary Art MUSEUM

(22820 22444;; adult/student Jun-Sep €6/3, Oct-May €3/1.50; 10am-2pm & 6-8pm Wed-Sat & Mon, 10am-2pm Sun Jun-Sep, 10am-2pm Sat-Mon Oct-May) has earned Andros a reputation in the international art world. The main gallery features the work of prominent Greek artists, but each year during the summer months the gallery stages an exhibition of works by one of the world's artists. To date there have been exhibitions featuring original works by Picasso, Matisse, Braque, Toulouse-Lautrec and Miro, a remarkable achievement for a modest Greek island. To reach the gallery, head down the steps from Plateia Kaiiri towards the old harbour.

Bronze Statue MONUMENT

The huge bronze statue of a sailor that stands in Plateia Riva celebrates Hora's seagoing traditions, although it looks more Russian triumphalist than Andriot in its scale and style.

Venetian Fortress RUINS

The ruins of a Venetian fortress stand on an island that is linked to the tip of the headland by the worn remnants of a steeply arched bridge.

Riva Boats BOAT TRIPS

(22820 24412, 6974460330; *Nimborio*) An exciting option is to hire a self-drive boat and head out to some of the west and north coasts' glorious beaches, most of which are difficult to reach by road. Riva Boats has superb 4.5m Norwegian-built open boats with 20HP outboards, life raft and anchor, and even a mobile phone. Hire per boat for a minimum of one day is about €80 and no licence is necessary. Riva can also arrange by phone for boats to be hired from Batsi.

Sleeping & Eating

Karaoulanis Studios-Apartments APARTMENTS €€

(22820 24412, 6974460330;; *d/apt €50/100*) These stylish self-catering studios and apartments are on the outskirts of Hora and have cool furnishings and decor. English and French are spoken by family members. Check here for scooter and boat hire also.

Alcioni Inn APARTMENTS €€

(22820 23652, 6973403934;; *Nimborio; d €110;*) These comfortable and well-appointed self-catering rooms are in the midst of the main Nimborio beachfront. They feature a fresh and appealing marine architectural style complete with circular windows framing the sea in a couple of apartments. The same family has other apartments in Hora.

Hotel Egli HOTEL €€

(22820 22060;; *d/tr €80/95;*) Housed in a grand old building, the Egli has been renovated recently and has been transformed into an elegant and comfortable mix of old and new in its decor and style. Check out the splendid curving staircase for starters. Breakfast is €8.

Karaoulanis Rooms GUESTHOUSE €

(22820 24412, 6974460330;; *d/apt €50/100*) This tall old house is right down by the harbour and has bright and pleasant rooms. There are good discount prices in low season.

Parea TAVERNA €

(*mains €6-10*) A long-established taverna popular with locals, Parea is at the heart of town and has a lovely terrace overlooking Paraporti Beach. Great dishes include stuffed squid in tomato sauce and there are local meat dishes and very tasty vegetarian options also.

Palinorio SEAFOOD €

(*Nimborio; mains €7-12*) Fish is priced by the kilo at this long-established and reliable restaurant on the waterfront at the edge of Nimborio Beach. Lobster dishes are especially well prepared. Traditional Greek dishes and pasta dishes are available.

Nonna's SEAFOOD €

(*Plakoura; mains €6-10*) Authentic mezedhes and fish dishes are the order of the day at this popular little taverna at the old harbour. Ask about fresh fish dishes mainly using fish caught from the family boat. Vegetarians have a decent choice, too, from salads to zucchini pie.

Information

The bus station is on Plateia Goulandri, from where a narrow lane leads past a taxi rank, beside the spacious town square, to a T-junction. The post office is to the left. At the top side of the square is a small **tourist information booth** . It operates in the summer months and is funded by the mayor's office. The marble-paved and notionally pedestrianised main street leads down to the right.

Several banks with ATMs are found on the main street. Occasional steps lead down

north to the old harbour area of Plakoura and Nimborio Beach. Further down the main street is the pretty central square, Plateia Kaïri, with tree-shaded tavernas and cafes watched over by the Andros Archaeological Museum. Scooters and motorbikes can be hired from Riva Boats and through Karaoulanis Studios-Apartments for €15 to €18 per day.

Around Andros

Between Gavrio and Paleopoli Bay are several pleasant beaches, including Agios Kyprianos , where there's a little church with a taverna close by; Delavoia , one half of which is naturist; Anerousa ; and Green Beach .

Paleopoli , 7km south of Batsi on the coast road, is the site of Ancient Andros, where the Hermes of Andros was found. The small but intriguing Archaeological Museum of Paleopoli (22829 41985; admission free; 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun) displays and interprets finds from the area.

If you have transport, a worthwhile trip is to head down the west coast of the island before turning northeast at Batsilianos through a charming landscape of fields and cypresses to reach Ormos Korthiou , a bay-side village with a beach of sorts. Head north from here for 20km to reach Hora along a lovely coastal road.

From Hora you can continue north on another scenic route through the high hills of central Andros before descending through switchbacks to Batsi.

TINOS

POP 8614

Tinos (Τήνος) is a relentless focus of Greek Orthodox religion, especially in the main port, Hora, where the imposing Church of Panagia Evangelistria is home to the sacred icon of the Megalochari, the Holy Virgin. Yet, the natural beauty of the island as a whole will captivate the hearts of even the determinedly non-religious. The sacred icon is one of most revered in Greece and was found in 1822 on land where the Church of Panagia Evangelistria now stands. From the start, the icon was said to have healing powers, thus encouraging mass pilgrimage and a commercial future for Tinos. Set into the surface of the street on one side of Leoforos Megaloharis is a rubberised strip, complete with side lights. This is used by pilgrims, who may be seen at any time of year heading for the church on their hands and knees, pushing long candles before them. The final approach is up carpeted steps. Religion still takes centre stage in Hora, although the town rattles and hums around it all with the vibrancy of a typical island port.

Beyond all this lies a landscape of rugged, rocky hills dotted with over 40 villages that protrude like marble outcrops from the brindled slopes. Scattered across the countryside are countless ornate dovecotes, a legacy of Venetian influence. There is a strong artistic tradition on Tinos, not least in the sculptors' village of Pyrgos in the north, where the island's marble quarries are located.

Getting There & Away

Tinos is well served by ferries and there are regular connections to the mainland ports of Rafina and Piraeus as well as to the neighbouring islands of Syros and Andros and south to Mykonos and beyond.

There are two ferry departure quays in Hora, known locally as 'ports'. The Outer Port is the main dock for conventional and larger fast ferries. It is about 300m to the north of the main harbour. The Middle Port, where smaller, fast ferries dock, is at the north end of the town's main harbour. When you buy a ferry ticket it's essential to check which of these two ports your ferry is leaving from. Allow at least 20 minutes to walk from the centre of Hora to the Outer Port.

BOAT SERVICES FROM TINOS

DESTINATION	PORT	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Andros	Tinos	1hr 35min	€12	4 daily
Lavrio	Tinos	5½hr	€19	1 weekly
Mykonos	Tinos	30-40min	€7	4 daily
Mykonos*	Tinos	15-25min	€11	5 daily
Naxos *	Tinos	1hr	€26.50	2 weekly
Paros	Tinos	55min	€32.70	1-2 daily
Piraeus	Tinos	4½hr	€29	1 daily
Piraeus*	Tinos	4hr	€48-51	3 daily
Rafina	Tinos	3hr 50min	€23.50	5 daily
Rafina*	Tinos	1¾hr	€48.50	5 daily
Syros	Tinos	30min	€5.50	4-5 daily

Syros*	Tinos	1hr 10min	€8	3 daily
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*high-speed services

Getting Around

From June to September there are frequent buses from Hora (Tinos) to Porto and Kionia (€1.60, 10 minutes) and several daily to Panormos (€4.50, one hour) via Kambos (€1.60, 15 minutes) and Pyrgos (€3.70, 50 minutes). Buses leave from the bus station on the Hora harbour front opposite the bus ticket office, which is next to the Poseidon Hotel. You buy tickets on the bus.

Motorcycles (€15 to €20 per day) and cars (minimum €44 per weekday, €60 on weekends) can be hired from a number of outfits along the waterfront at Hora. Rates drop out of season. **Vidalis Rent a Car & Bike** (22830 25670; *Trion Ierarhon 2*) is a reliable firm. They have a second office directly opposite the inner end of the Outer Port.

Hora (Tinos) Χώρα (Τήνος)

POP 4615

Hora, also known as Tinos, is the island's capital and port. The harbour front is lined with cafes and hotels and the narrow streets behind are full of restaurants and tavernas. The streets leading up to the Church of Panagia Evangelistria are lined with shops and stalls crammed with souvenirs and religious wares with the odd mobile-phone outlet pitching for modern iconography.

Sights

Tinos has an enviable cultural heritage and several absorbing museums reflect this.

Church of Panagia Evangelistria CHURCH

(8am-8pm) The island's famous religious focus is the neoclassical Church of the Annunciation, which is built of marble from the island's Panormos quarries. The complex lies within a pleasant courtyard flanked by cool arcades. Within the church complex, several museums house religious artefacts, icons and secular artworks.

Cultural Foundation of Tinos GALLERY

(22830 29070;; *adult/child/student €3/free/free; 9am-3pm Mon, Wed & Thu, 10am-2pm & 7-9pm Fri-Sun Jun-Oct, 8am-4pm Mon-Fri Nov-May*) This excellent cultural centre is the pride of Hora. It is housed in a handsome neoclassical building on the southern waterfront. An upstairs gallery houses a superb permanent exhibition of the work of the famous Tinian sculptor Yannoulis Chalepas, while a second gallery has changing exhibitions. Musical events are staged at the centre in summer and range from classical to jazz. There's a library, shop, cafe and internet access (€3 per hour).

Archaeological museum MUSEUM

(22830 22670; *Leoforos Megaloharis; admission €2; 8am-3pm Tue-Sun*) On the right-hand side of the street as you descend from the church, this museum has a collection that includes impressive clay *pithoi* (Minoan storage jars).

Sleeping

Hora is overcrowded on 25 March (Annunciation), 15 August (Feast of the Assumption) and 15 November (Advent). If not booked into a hotel months ahead, you'll have to join the roofless devotees who sleep on the streets at these times.

Altana Hotel BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(22830 25102;; *s/d incl breakfast €85/100, ste incl breakfast €145-220;*)
Located about 700m to the north of town, this engaging hotel has a modernist

Cycladean style, all snowy white walls and cool interiors incorporating distinctive Tinian motifs. Altana is an ideal base from which to explore the island, and its young family owners are courteous and friendly.

Athos APARTMENTS €€

(22830 24702;; s/d/t €45/ 55/70;) Tucked away in a quiet corner above the Outer Port, these pleasant self-catering rooms are comfortable and well kept. There are views to the sea from front-room balconies. There's a friendly and kind welcome from the owners. Greek mainly spoken.

Nikoleta ROOMS €

(22830 24719;; Kapodistriou 11; s/d/studios without air-con €25/30, s/d/ste with air-con €40/50/55;) The recently renovated Nikoleta is some distance inland from the south end of town, but it's one of the best options for value and comes with a kindly welcome. There is a lovely garden area.

Hotel Poseidonio HOTEL €€

(22830 23123;; Paralia 4; s/d/tr incl breakfast €40/75/90;) Decent rooms mid-waterfront.

Oceanis HOTEL €

(22830 22452; oceanis@mail.gr; Akti G Drosou; s/d/tr €35/50/70;) Rooms are not overly large at this modern, well-run hotel that has a lift.

Eating

Symposion MEDITERRANEAN €€

(Evangelistria 13; mains €9-18) A pretty staircase leads to this elegant cafe-restaurant, which serves an excellent menu including tasty mixed plates, pasta, and main dishes such as fillet of sole or pork fillet stuffed with plums. Breakfasts (€4 to €17) range from toasted sandwiches to a mighty Tinian special, while crêpes and sandwiches (€3.50 to €9.50) are also available.

Metaxy Mas MODERN GREEK €€

(Plateia Palladas; mains €8-19.50) Modern Mediterranean cuisine is the rule at this stylish restaurant where starters such as Tinian artichokes, aubergine soufflé and *louza* (local smoked ham) smooth the way to mains of chicken with orange sauce or specialities such as cuttlefish with spinach.

To Koutouki tis Elenis MODERN GREEK €€

(G Gagou 5; mains €7-18) This cosy little place is on the narrow lane that veers off from the bottom of Evangelistria. Its rustic interior and decor are well matched by such adventurous dishes as pork escalope flambéed in cognac and rabbit stew with pearl onions.

Pallada Taverna TAVERNA €

(Plateia Palladas; mains €6-13.50) A local favourite with dishes such as veal *pastitsio* (veal layered with macaroni), fresh squid stuffed with rice, and zucchini balls with anise and cheese. Local wines from the barrel are very moreish and the house retsina is more than fine.

Drinking & Entertainment

In the back lanes opposite the Middle Port there's a clutch of music and dance bars such as Village Club , Volto and Sibylla , glowing with candy-coloured light and churning out clubby standards and Greek pop as a counterbalance to all that sacred song.

Koursaros TAVERNA

(8am-3am) This long-established bar spins an engaging mix of rock, funk and jazz.

It's at the far end of the line of harbour-front cafe-bars.

Information

There are two ferry departure quays, the locations of which visitors definitely need to know (see).

The uphill street of Leoforos Megaloharis, straight ahead from the middle of the main waterfront, is the route pilgrims take to the church. The narrower shopping street of Evangelistria, also leading to the church, is to its right.

The post office is at the southeastern end of the harbour front, just past the bus station, and the National Bank of Greece (with ATM) is 50m left of Hotel Poseidonio.

Malliaris Travel (22830 24241; fax 22830 24243; malliaris@thn.forthnet.gr; *Paralia*) On the waterfront near Hotel Poseidonio; sells ferry tickets.

Port police (22830 22348; *Kionion*) On the road opposite the Outer Port.

Symposion (22830 24368; *Evangelistria 13*) Stylish cafe-restaurant with internet access (€3 for 30 minutes).

Around Tinos

Outside Hora's conspicuous religiosity and down-to-earth commercialism, the countryside of Tinos is a glorious mix of wild hill tops crowned with crags, unspoiled villages, fine beaches and fascinating architecture that includes picturesque dovecotes.

At Porto , 6km east of Hora, there's a pleasant, uncrowded beach facing Mykonos, while about a kilometre further on is the even lovelier Pahia Ammos Beach .

Kionia , 3km northwest of Hora, has several small beaches. Near the largest are the scant remains of the 4th-century-BC Sanctuary of Poseidon and Amphitrite , a once enormous complex that drew pilgrims in much the same way as the present Church of Panagia Evangelistria does today.

About 17km northwest of Hora is the lovely village of Kardiani , perched on a steep cliff slope and enclosed by greenery. Narrow lanes wind through the village and the views towards Syros are exhilarating.

About 12km north of Hora on the north coast is Kolymvythra Bay , where there are two sandy beaches.

Pyrgos is a handsome village where even the cemetery is a feast of carved marble. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries Pyrgos was the centre of a remarkable tradition of sculpture sustained by the supply of excellent local marble.

Just across the road from the car park at the entrance to Pyrgos is the Museum House of Yannoulis Halepas (*adult/child* €5/2.50; 10.30am-2.30pm & 5-8pm Apr-mid-Oct)

. It's a fascinating place, where the sculptor's humble rooms and workshop, with their striated plaster walls and slate floors, have been preserved. An adjoining gallery has splendid examples of the work of local sculptors. Outstanding are *Girl on a Rock* by Georgios Vamvakis, *Hamlet* by Loukas Doukas, and a copy of the dramatic *Fisherman* sculpture by Dimitrios Filippolis.

About 6km directly north of Hora is the tiny village of Volax , a scribble of white houses at the heart of an amphitheatre of low hills studded with hundreds of dark-coloured boulders. There's a folklore museum (ask at the nearest house for the key), an attractive Catholic chapel and an outdoor theatre. There are a couple of tavernas, including the recommended Rokos (*mains* €6-9) , serving reliable Greek favourites. The ruins of the Venetian fortress of Exobourgo lie 2km south of Volax, on top of a mighty 640m rock outcrop.

MARVELLOUS MARBLE

On the slopes above Pyrgos is the superb Museum of Marble Crafts (22830 31290;; *adult/child* €3/1.50; 10am-6pm Wed-Mon Mar-mid-Oct, 10am-5pm mid-Oct-Mar) . Opened in recent years, this outstanding complex portrays the quarrying traditions of the area. It is extremely well curated and includes films and displays of quarrying techniques and of the geological

background, along with examples of the often beautiful artefacts and architectural features shaped from Tinian marble. The filmed reconstructions of quarrying are compelling.

SYROS

POP 20,220

Syros (Σύρος) is an authentic merging of traditional and modern Greece. It is one of the smallest islands of the Cyclades (its outline bears a quirky resemblance to the British mainland), yet it has the highest population and is the legal and administrative centre of the entire archipelago. It is also the ferry hub of the northern islands and home to Ermoupoli, the largest and handsomest of all Cycladic towns. If you break the lightest of laws anywhere in the Cyclades, you may end up at court in Syros. Go under your own steam instead and discover one of the most endearing islands in the Aegean, with several attractive beaches, great eating options and the best of everyday Greek life.

History

Excavations of an Early Cycladic fortified settlement and burial ground at Kastri in the island's northeast date from the Neolithic era (2800–2300 BC).

During the medieval period Syros had an overwhelmingly Roman Catholic population. Capuchin monks and Jesuits settled on the island during the 17th and 18th centuries, and such was the Catholic influence that France was called upon by Syros to help it during Turkish rule. Later Turkish influence was benevolent and minimal and Syros busied itself with shipping and commerce.

During the War of Independence, thousands of refugees from islands ravaged by the Turks fled to Syros. They brought with them an infusion of Greek Orthodoxy and a fresh commercial drive that made Syros the commercial, naval and cultural centre of Greece during the 19th century. This position was lost to Piraeus in the 20th century. The island's industrial mainstay of shipbuilding has declined, but Syros still has textile manufacturing, a thriving horticultural sector, a sizeable administrative and service sector and a small but healthy tourism industry. There is still a local Catholic population.

Getting There & Away

With Syros being of such administrative and social importance there are ferry connections to the mainland ports of Piraeus and Rafina, to neighbouring islands and even to such far-flung destinations as Folegandros. A bi-weekly flight from Athens (€70, 35 minutes) is also an option.

BOAT SERVICES FROM SYROS

DESTINATION	PORT	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Anafi	Syros	9hr 35min	€19	2-3 weekly
Amorgos	Syros	6hr 35min	€16	4 weekly
Andros	Syros	2hr 50min	€9	4 weekly
Astypalea	Syros	6¼hr	€22	3 weekly
Donousa	Syros	7hr	€14	4 weekly
Folegandros	Syros	5hr 20min	€13	3 weekly
Ios	Syros	3½hr* 7hr	€16	1 daily

Iraklia	Syros	4hr 20min	€12	3-4 weekly
Kea (Tzia)	Syros	3hr 40min	€12	2 weekly
Kimolos	Syros	3¾hr	€15	4 weekly
Kos	Syros	6hr 20min	€34	3 weekly
Koufonisia	Syros	5½hr	€13	4 weekly
Kythnos	Syros	2hr 10min	€10	4 weekly
Lavrio	Syros	4hr 25min	€18	3 weekly
Leros	Syros	4hr 35min	€29.50	3 weekly
Milos	Syros	5hr	€15	4 weekly
Mykonos	Syros	1hr 20min	€8.50	1 daily
Mykonos*	Syros	45min	€17	4 daily
Naxos	Syros	2hr 10min	€12	2 daily
Paros	Syros	55min	€9	1-3 daily
Patmos	Syros	3hr 25min	€27.50	3 weekly
Piraeus	Syros	4hr	€27	4 daily
Piraeus*	Syros	2½hr	€48-53	3 daily
Rhodes	Syros	9hr 25min	€40	3 weekly
Samos	Syros	4½hr	€24.50	6 weekly

*high-speed services

Getting Around

About nine buses per day run a circular route from Ermoupoli to Galissas (€1.60, 20 minutes) and Vari (€1.60, 30 minutes) and back to Ermoupoli. They leave Ermoupoli every half-hour from June to September and every hour the rest of the year, with alternating clockwise and anticlockwise routes. About five buses a day run from Ermoupoli to Kini (€1.60, 35 minutes).

There is a bus from Ermoupoli bus station to Ano Syros at 10.30am and noon every day except Sunday (€1.60, 15 minutes). **Taxis** (22810 86222) charge €3.20 to Ano Syros from the port, €11 to Galissas, and €11 to Vari.

A free bus runs along the length of the harbour front between car parking at the north and south ends of town about every half-hour from around 7am until late evening. It does not run after 2pm Saturday or on Sunday.

Cars can be hired from about €40 per day and scooters from €15 per day at numerous hire outlets on the waterfront.

Ermoupoli Ερμούπολη

POP 13,000

Ermoupoli grew out of the Greek War of Independence refugee town. The refugees were Greek Orthodox and, after some early antagonism, lived in harmony with the original Catholic majority. In 1826, the town was named formally after Hermes, the god of commerce. Ermoupoli is a lively and likeable place, full of paved stairways, restored neoclassical mansions and handsome public buildings, and has a busy shopping scene. Catholic Ano Syros and Greek Orthodox Vrodado lie to the northwest and northeast and both spill down from high hill tops, with even taller hills rising behind.

Sights

Plateia Miaouli SQUARE

The great square of Plateia Miaouli is the finest urban space in the Cyclades and is worthy of Athens. Once the sea reached as far as here, but today the square is well inland and is flanked by palm trees and lined along its south side with cafes and bars. The north side of the square is dominated by the dignified neoclassical town hall

Ermoupolis

Sights

1 [Archaeological Museum](#) B1

2 [Town Hall](#) B1

Sleeping

3 [Aegli Hotel](#) B2

4 [Diogenis Hotel](#) A4

5 [Ethrion](#) A2

6 [Hermoupolis Rooms](#) B2

Eating

[7 Porto](#) C2

[8 Stis Ninettas](#) C1

[9 To Kastrì](#) C2

[10 To Petrino](#) C1

Drinking

[11 Boheme del Mar](#) C2

[12 Liquid Bar](#) C2

[13 Ponente](#) C2

[14 Scritto](#) B1

[Severo](#) (see 12)

Archaeological Museum MUSEUM

(22810 88487; Benaki; admission €3; 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun) This small museum at the rear of the town hall, founded in 1834 and one of the oldest in Greece, houses a tiny collection of ceramic and marble vases, grave *stelae* and some very fine Cycladic figurines.

Industrial Museum of Ermoupoli MUSEUM

(22810 84764; Papandreos; adult/concession €2.50/1.50, Wed free; 10am-2pm & 6-9pm Thu-Sun, 10am-2pm Mon & Wed Jun-Sep) This museum is about a kilometre south from the centre of town. It celebrates Syros' industrial and shipbuilding traditions and occupies old factory buildings. There are over 300 items on display. Opening hours are reduced slightly in winter.

Ano Syros HISTORIC AREA

Originally a medieval settlement, Ano Syros has narrow lanes and whitewashed houses. Be wise and catch the bus up to the settlement. From the bus terminus, head into the delightful maze and search out the finest of the Catholic churches, the 13th-century Agios Georgios cathedral, with its star-fretted barrel roof and baroque capitals. Follow your nose from the church, past stunning viewpoints to reach the main street.

Activities

Cyclades Sailing (22810 82501; csail@otenet.gr) can organise yachting charters, as can Nomikos Sailing (22810 88527) ; call direct or book through Teamwork Holidays ([Click here](#)).

You can also book a day coach trip (*adult/child €20/7*) around the island on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday through Teamwork Holidays.

Sleeping

Ermoupoli has a reasonably broad selection of rooms, with most budget options clustered above the waterfront near where the ferry docks. Most places are open all year.

Ethrion HOTEL €

(22810 89066;; Kosma 24; s/d/tr €45/50/60;) Close to the harbour front and centre of town yet in a quiet area, Ethrion has comfortable rooms, several with balconies boasting views over the town.

Hermoupolis Rooms PENSION €

(22810 87475; Naxou; s/d/tr €35/50/65;) There's a cheerful welcome at these well-kept self-catering rooms tucked away in narrow Naxou, a short climb up from the waterfront. Front rooms open on to tiny, bougainvillea-cloaked balconies and an extension is due to open in 2012.

Aegli Hotel HOTEL €€

(22810 79279; hotegli@otenet.gr; Klisthenous 14; s/d/tr incl breakfast €83/105/130;) Located in a quiet side street, yet very close to the centre, this attractive hotel has an air of exclusivity and has comfy rooms. There's a roof garden with panoramic views.

Sea Colours Apartments APARTMENTS €€

(22810 81181/83400; Athinas; s/d/apt €50/66/72;) These apartments overlook Agios Nikolaos Bay at the north end of town.

Diogenis Hotel HOTEL €€

(22810 86301-5;; Plateia Papagou; s/d incl breakfast €60/75;) The rule is business-class quality at this well-run, child-friendly waterfront hotel. Breakfast is an extra €10, but is filling. There's a cafe on the ground floor.

Eating

Standard restaurants and cafes throng the waterfront, especially along Akti Petrou Ralli and on the southern edge of Plateia Miaouli. In quieter corners, however, there are several fine tavernas and restaurants.

To Kastri TAVERNA €

(Antiparou 13; mains €5-6; 9am-5pm) Sentiment should never influence the stomach, but this unique eating place deserves support, and the food's great anyway. It's run by an association of local women who cook up a storm of traditional island dishes. They sell an attractive cookery book (with Greek and English editions).

Porto SEAFOOD €

(Akti Petrou Ralli 48; mains €5-8) The place with the brightly painted tables and chairs midwaterfront, Porto is a classic *ouzerie* offering a range of seafood dishes including crab and tuna salads and a signature dish of mussels in a tomato and feta sauce. They do pork and veal dishes as well, and great vegetarian options.

To Petrino TAVERNA €

(Stefanou 9; mains €5-17) Swaths of bougainvillea bedeck the pretty enclave of Stefanou, and at its heart is the popular To Petrino, serving dishes such as small pork chops with mustard sauce and squid stuffed with feta.

Stis Ninettas MEZEDHES €

(Emm Roidi 11; €3.50-9) Something different in style and personality, this *ouzerie* with its charming owner offers some quirky local dishes, including a delicious soup and *horta* (mountain greens).

Drinking

Music bars such as Boheme del Mar, Liquid Bar, Severo and Ponente, are clustered along the waterfront on Akti Petrou Ralli. They play mostly lounge music by day and a mix of house, funk and modern Greek music by night.

Scritto BAR

(Hiou) For perfect retro, drop in to Scritto, a great cafe-bar where classic rock rules and where you are overseen by posters and album covers of everybody from Hendrix to

Morrison to Jagger.

Information

There is an information booth run by the Syros Hotels' Association on the waterfront, about 100m northeast of the main ferry quay; opening times are not guaranteed. The website has a reasonable amount of information.

Alpha Bank (*El Venizelou*) Has an ATM.

Enjoy Your Holidays (22810 87070; *Akti Papagou 2*) Opposite the bus station. Sells ferry tickets and can advise on accommodation.

Eurobank (*Akti Ethnikis Andistasis*) Has an ATM.

Hospital (22810 96500; *Papandreos*)

InSpot (*Akti Papagou 4; internet per hr €2; 24hr*) Fast connections plus most services including scanning and CD writing. Popular gaming spot.

Piraeus Bank (*Akti Petrou Ralli*) Has an ATM.

Police station (22810 82610; *Plateia Vardaka*) Beside the Apollon Theatre.

Port police (22810 82690/8888; *Plateia Laïkis Kyriarchias*) On the eastern side of the port.

Post office (*Protopapadaki*) Western Union money transfer.

Teamwork Holidays (28810 83400;; *Akti Papagou 18*) Just across from the main ferry quay. Sells ferry tickets and can arrange accommodation, excursions and car hire.

Galissas Γαλησσάς

POP 120

When Ermoupoli becomes too metro for you, head west on a short bus ride to Galissas, a small resort with one of the best beaches on Syros, several bars and restaurants, and some great places to stay. The main bus stop is at an intersection behind the beach.

Sleeping

Oasis APARTMENTS €

(22810 42357, 6948274933;; *s/d/studios €30/40/50;*) A genuine oasis, this lovely place at the heart of a small family farm has bright and airy rooms, and the welcome is charming. It's about 400m back from the village, set amid olive trees and vines. Follow signs from the main bus stop intersection in the village.

Hotel Benois HOTEL €€

(22810 42833;; *s/d/tr incl breakfast €75/100/120, apt €150;*) A well-run hotel at the northern entrance to the village, the Benois has spick-and-span rooms. It has relaxing and spacious public areas and a swimming pool. Open April to October.

Two Hearts Camping CAMPGROUND €

(22810 42052;; *camp sites per adult/child/tent €8/4/4*) Set in a pistachio orchard about 400m from the village and beach, this popular campground has good facilities. Tents can be rented for €6 and there's a range of fixed accommodation from wooden 'tents' to bungalows from €12 to €20 per person. A minibus meets ferries in high season.

Eating & Drinking

Savvas TAVERNA €

(*mains €6-10*) A local favourite, Savvas sources local ingredients and serves authentic Syran cuisine; signature dishes include pork in honey and aniseed and there is a great selection of mezedhes.

Iliovasilema TAVERNA €

(*mains €5-16*) Tasty fish dishes such as black bream are by the kilo, but there are reasonably priced seafood starters and meat dishes also.

Green Dollars Bar BAR

Also recommended is this bar on the beach road for daytime snacks and music while you drink. Rock and reggae are favourites from 10am to 4am.

Around Syros

The beaches south of Galissas all have domatia (rooms, usually in a private home) and some have hotels. Some beaches are narrow, roadside strips of dullish sand, but they're not too busy. They include Finikas , Posidonia and Angathopes . Back on the main road and on the south coast proper, the town of Megas Gialos has a couple of roadside beaches.

The pleasant Vari Bay , further east, has a sandy beach with some development, including a couple of hotels and a beachfront taverna.

Kini Beach , out on its own on the west coast, north of Galissas, has a long stretch of beach and is developing into a popular resort with standard modern hotels, apartments, cafes and tavernas.

MYKONOS

POP 7929

Mykonos (Μύκονος) is the great glamour island of the Cyclades and happily flaunts its camp and fashionable reputation with style. Beneath the gloss and glitter, however, this is a charming and hugely entertaining place where the sometimes frantic mix of good-time holidaymakers, cruise-ship crowds, posturing fashionistas and preening celebrities is magically subdued by the cubist charms of Mykonos town, a traditional Cycladic maze. Local people have had 40 years to get a grip on tourism and have not lost their Greek identity in doing so.

Be prepared, however, for the oiled-up lounge lifestyle of the island's packed main beaches, the jostling street scenes and the relentless, yet sometimes forlorn, partying. That said, there's still a handful of off-track beaches worth fighting for. Plus, the stylish bars, restaurants and shops have great appeal, and you can still find a quieter pulse amid the labyrinthine old town. Add to all this the archaeological splendour of the nearby island of Delos, and Mykonos really does live up to its reputation as a fabulous destination.

Getting There & Away

Mykonos is well served by air connections to Athens (€63 to €136, 50 minutes, three to five daily) and Thessaloniki (€196, one hour, three weekly). There are also direct easyJet flights to London from about May to mid-September.

With Mykonos being such a major tourist destination, ferry connections to the mainland ports of Piraeus and Rafina are very good, as are connections to neighbouring islands. Links south to that other popular destination, Santorini, and to points between are also excellent.

Mykonos has two ferry quays: the Old Port, 400m north of town, where some conventional ferries and smaller fast ferries dock, and the New Port, 2km north of town, where the bigger fast ferries and some conventional ferries dock. There is no hard-and-fast rule, and when buying outgoing tickets you should always double-check which quay your ferry leaves from.

BOAT SERVICES FROM MYKONOS

DESTINATION	PORT	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Andros	Mykonos	2hr 20min	€15	3-4 daily
Ios*	Mykonos	1hr 40min	€36	2-3 daily
Iraklio*	Mykonos	6hr 35min	€77	1-2 daily
Naxos	Mykonos	2hr 25min	€12	1 weekly
Naxos*	Mykonos	45min	€26.50	2 daily
Paros*	Mykonos	1hr	€19	3 daily
Piraeus	Mykonos	4 ³ / ₄ hr	€32-39.50	1 daily
Piraeus*	Mykonos	3hr	€50-54.50	3 daily
Rafina	Mykonos	4 ¹ / ₂ hr	€26.50	2-3 daily
Rafina*	Mykonos	2hr 10min	€52.50	4-5 daily
Santorini (Thira)*	Mykonos	2 ¹ / ₂ hr	€50	2-3 daily

Syros	Mykonos	1hr 20min	€8.50	2-3 daily
Syros*	Mykonos	45min	€17	3 daily
Tinos	Mykonos	30min	€7	5 daily
Tinos*	Mykonos	15min	€11	5-6 daily

*high-speed services

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Buses from the southern bus station serve Mykonos' airport (€1.60), which is 3km southeast of the town centre. Make sure you arrange an airport transfer with your accommodation (expect to pay around €6) or take a **taxi** (22890 22400, *airport 22890 23700*).

BOAT

Caïque (little boat) services leave from Platys Gialos to Paradise (€5), Super Paradise (€6), Agrari (€7) and Elia (€7) beaches. Boats also leave from Hora (Mykonos) for Super Paradise, Agrari and Elia beaches (June to September only).

BUS

The Mykonos **bus network** (22890 26797;) has two main bus stations and a pick-up point at the New Port. The northern bus station (Remezzo) is behind the OTE office and has frequent departures to Agios Stefanos via Tourlos (€1.60), and services to Ano Mera (€1.60), Elia Beach (€1.90) and Kalafatis Beach (€2.10). Trips range from 20 minutes to 40 minutes. There are two buses daily to Kalo Livadi Beach (€1.70). Buses for the New Port, Tourlos and Agios Stefanos stop at the Old Port. The southern bus station (Fabrika Sq [Plateia Yialos]) serves Agios Ioannis Beach, Ornos, Platys Gialos, Paraga and Paradise Beach (all trips €1.60). Trips range from 15 minutes to 40 minutes.

Bus tickets are sold at machines, street kiosks, minimarkets and tourist shops. You must buy a ticket before boarding (buy return tickets if required), validate the ticket on the bus and hang on to it. From 12.15am to 6am all trips are €2.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

For cars, expect to pay (depending on model) from about €45 per day, plus insurances, in high season; €35 low season. For scooters it starts at €20 to €40 (quad bikes) high season; €15 to €30 low season. Reliable hire agencies are the Mykonos Accommodation Centre ([Click here](#)) and **OK Rent A Car** (22890 23761; *Agio Stefanos*). There are several car- and motorcycle-hire firms around the southern bus station in Hora.

TAXI

If you need a **taxi** (22400 23700/22400), they're at Hora's Taxi Sq (Plateia Manto Mavrogenous) and by the bus stations and ports. All taxis must have meters installed. The minimum fare is €3.30 and there's a charge of €0.38 for each item of luggage. Fares from Hora to beaches include Agios Stefanos (€9), Ornos (€8.40), Platys Gialos (€9.20), Paradise (€9.50), Kalafatis (€15) and Elia (€15). Add €3 for a phone booking.

Hora (Mykonos) Χώρα (Μύκονος)

POP 6467

Hora (also known as Mykonos), the island's port and capital, is a warren of narrow alleyways that wriggle between white-walled buildings, their stone surfaces webbed with white paint. In the heart of the Little Venice area (Venetia), tiny flower-bedecked churches jostle with trendy boutiques, and there's a deluge of bougainvillea around every corner. Without question, you will soon pass the same junction twice. It's

entertaining at first, but can become frustrating as throngs of equally lost people, fast moving locals and disdainful Mykonos veterans add to the stress. For quick-fix navigation, familiarise yourself with main junctions and the three main streets of Matogianni, Enoplon Dynameon and Mitropoleos, which form a horseshoe behind the waterfront. The streets are crowded with chic fashion salons, cool galleries, jangling jewellers, languid and loud music bars, brightly painted houses and torrents of crimson flowers – plus a catwalk cast of thousands.

Sights

Archaeological Museum MUSEUM

(22890 22325; Agiou Stefanou; adult/concession €2/1; 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun)
This museum houses pottery from Delos, and grave *stelae* (pillars) and jewellery from the island of Renia (Delos' necropolis). Chief exhibits include a statue of Hercules in Parian marble.

Hora (Mykonos)

Sights

- [1_Aegean Maritime Museum](#) C6
- [2_Archaeological Museum](#) D1
- [3_Church of Panagia Paraportiani](#) A4
- [Lena's House](#) (see 1)
- [4Mykonos Folklore Museum](#)A3

Activities, Courses & Tours

- [5Mykonos Accommodation Centre](#)C6

Sleeping

- [6Carbonaki Hotel](#)D6
- [7_Fresh Hotel](#) C5
- [8_Hotel Lefteris](#) D4

[9 Hotel Philippi](#) C5

[10 Manto Hotel](#) D4

Eating

[11 Appaloosa](#) D4

[12 Casa di Giorgio](#) B6

[Kalita](#) (see 7)

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[15 Piccolo](#) B4

[16 To Maereio](#) C5

Drinking

[17 Aigli](#) C6

[18 Angyra](#) C4

[19 Aroma](#) C6

[20 Astra](#) C6

[21 Bolero Bar](#) C5

[22 Bubbles Bar](#) C4

[23 Diva](#) A5

[Galleraki](#) (see 31)

[24 Jackie O'](#) A3

[Kastro](#) (see 25)

[25 Katerina's Bar](#) A4

[La Scarpa](#) (see 31)

[26 Pierro's](#) A3

[27 Porta](#) B4

[28 Remezzo](#) D1

[29 Scandinavian Bar](#) B4

[30 Space](#) C7

[31 Verandah Café](#) A4

Shopping

[32 Art Studio Gallery](#) D5

[33 Scala Shop Gallery](#) C5

Aegean Maritime Museum MUSEUM

(22890 22700; *Tria Pigadia*; adult/concession €4/1.50; 10.30am-1pm & 6.30-9pm Apr-Oct) The maritime museum has a fascinating collection of nautical paraphernalia, including ships' models.

Lena's House MUSEUM

(22890 22390; *Tria Pigadia*; admission €2; 6.30-9.30pm Mon-Sat, 7-9pm Sun Apr-Oct) Next door to the maritime museum, Lena's house is a charming late-19th-century, middle-class Mykonian house (with furnishings intact). It takes its name from its last owner, Lena Skrivanou.

Mykonos Folklore Museum MUSEUM

(6932178330; *Paraportianis*; 5.30-8.30pm Mon-Sat, 6.30-8.30pm Sun Apr-Oct) This folklore museum, housed in an 18th-century sea captain's house, features a large collection of furnishings and other artefacts, including old musical instruments.

Church of Panagia Paraportiani CHURCH

(admission free, donations appreciated; variable, usually open mornings) Mykonos' most famous church is the rocklike Panagia Paraportiani. A rugged, rocky little building beyond Delos ferry quay on the way to Little Venice, it comprises four small chapels

plus another on an upper storey that is reached by an outside staircase.

Tours

Mykonos Accommodation Centre SIGHTSEEING TOURS

(MAC; 22890 23408;; 1st fl, Enoplou Dynameon 10) Organises guided tours to Delos (adult/child €38/30) including entrance fee and authorised guide. The MAC also runs tours to Tinos (adult/child €58/38), as well as a Mykonos bus tour (adult/child €33/22), island cruise (adult/child €43/21.50) and a wine and culture tour (adult/child €29/21), and can arrange private charter, including gay-only, boat cruises.

Sleeping

There are scores of sleeping options in Mykonos, but if you arrive without a reservation between July and September check out the local accommodation organisations – when you get off at the town ferry quay, you will see a low building with numbered offices. Number 1 is the Hoteliers Association of Mykonos (22890 24540;; Old Port; 9.30-4pm Apr-Oct). The association also has a desk (22890 25770; 9am-10pm) at Mykonos Airport and will book a room on the spot, but does not accept telephone bookings prior to your arrival. Number 2 is the Association of Rooms, Studios and Apartments (22890 24860, fax 22890 26860; 9am-5pm Apr-Oct) . If you plan to stay in Hora and want somewhere quiet, think carefully before settling for domatia on the main streets – bar noise until dawn is inevitable. Some places only advertise doubles, but single occupancy may be negotiable. During late July and early August some hotels will only accept minimum three-night stays.

Carbonaki Hotel BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€

(22890 24124/22461;; 23 Panahrantou; s/d/tr/q €140/175/220/240;) This family-run boutique hotel, right on the edge of central Mykonos, has a delightful ambience and has developed admirable eco policies regarding recycling. It also has disabled access and facilities on the ground floor. Rooms are comfortable and bright and there are relaxing public balconies dotted round the sunny central courtyards. A jacuzzi and small sauna were recently added. Breakfast is €10.

Rania Apartments APARTMENTS €€

(22890 28272/3;; Leondiou Boni 2; s/d/tr/apt €95/120/190/320;) A quite location high above the harbour means a bit of an uphill walk from town, but the apartments are easily accessed from Agiou Ioannou, the 'ring road'. In a lovely garden setting that imparts a sense of exclusiveness, the accommodation is charming and well appointed and each apartment has self-catering facilities.

Hotel Lefteris HOTEL €€

(22890 27117;; Apollonos 9; s/d €95/130, studios €220-270;) A colour-ful entranceway sets the tone for this welcoming international meeting place for all ages. Tucked away from the crowds and close to Taxi Sq, the Lefteris has simple but bright and comfy rooms, most with fans or air-con. There is a communal kitchen and the roof terrace is a sociable place to relax. Studios are well equipped and the hotel has other rooms nearby.

Manto Hotel HOTEL €€

(22890 22330;; Manto Sq; s/d/tr incl breakfast €75/115/135;) Buried in the heart of town and close to the action, Manto has had a recent refurbishment and is an

excellent budget option (for Mykonos), with well-kept rooms, a pleasant breakfast room and friendly owners.

Hotel Elysium HOTEL €€€

(22890 23952;; s €260-340, d €310-400, tr €480-560; Apr-Oct;)

Located high above the main town in the School of Fine Arts area, this stylish gay hotel (although nongays are also welcome) has cool decor and good-sized comfortable rooms. There are plenty of special trimmings, including personal computers in suites and deluxe rooms, a spa and massage service, and high-camp in-house entertainment.

Fresh Hotel HOTEL €€€

(22890 24670;; Kalogera 31; d incl breakfast €195;) The gay-friendly Fresh is located right in the heart of town and is handy for all the action. There's a leafy central garden, an attractive breakfast room and bar, and a jacuzzi. Rooms have wooden floors and furnishings and are a stylish and comfortable mix of old and new. The garden is the location of the Kalita restaurant.

Hotel Philippi HOTEL €€

(22890 22294;; Kalogera 25; s/d €90/125;) A garden full of trees, flowers and shrubs makes this a welcome choice in the heart of Hora. There's an appealing ambience in the bright, clean rooms that open onto a railed verandah overlooking the garden. Rooms have tea- and coffee-making facilities.

Eating

High prices don't necessarily reflect high quality in many Mykonos eateries. There are, however, some rewarding restaurants of all kinds.

Piccolo SANDWICHES €

(*Drakopoulou 18; snacks €4-7.80*) There are no linen-draped tables at this immaculate wayside outlet, but the food is first class and ranges from Mykonian pies to a mouth-watering selection of sandwich fillings that include local prosciutto, *manouri* (soft cheese), smoked local ham, smoked eel and crab. There's a delicious chicken-salad version with parmesan, sundried tomatoes and cucumber.

Katerina's MODERN GREEK €€

(*Agion Anargyron; mains €11-25*) The famous Katerina's Bar has now branched out with its own small restaurant. There's a creative menu of crisp salads and starters such as prawn *saganaki* (skillet-fried) or wild porcini mushrooms. Mains include fresh sea bass or mixed seafood plate for two (€50) or vegetarian options. For dessert try the home-made baklava.

To Maereio MODERN GREEK €€

(*Kalogera 16; dishes €14-21*) A small but selective menu of Mykonian favourites keeps this cosy place popular. The mainly meat and poultry dishes can be preceded by salad mixes that include apple and pear, yoghurt and a balsamic vinegar sauce. A tasty choice is the tenderloin with feta, green peppers and lemon juice.

Opa TAVERNA €

(*Plateia Goumenou; mains €7.50-16.50*) You won't go wrong at this cheerful taverna that brings authentic local cuisine to the heart of Mykonos. There's infectious enthusiasm for food here and helpings are generous. Try the delicious tabouli salad.

La Casa GREEK €€

(*Matogianni 8; mains €9.90-18.90*) The classic La Casa has a strong Greek basis with Italian, Arabic and Lebanese influences. Starters of smoked cheeses with mushrooms and inventive salads – including a Mykonian special with *louza*, local prosciutto, cheeses and rocket – lead on to mains such as pork fillet with mustard, *pleurotus* mushrooms and tarragon.

Kalita MODERN GREEK €€

(*Kalogera 31; mains €12-29*) Located in the pretty garden of the Fresh Hotel, this stylish restaurant has a fine menu starting with crisp and colourful salads and offering such signature dishes as steak with Evritania prosciutto from the Pindos, *formaela* cheese from central Greece, sautéed leeks and tomato marmalade.

Appaloosa INTERNATIONAL €€

(*Mavrogenous 1, Plateia Goumeniou; mains €9.50-25*) International cuisine with Mexican and Indonesian influences. A hot line in tequila and cocktails goes with cool music.

Casa di Giorgio ITALIAN €€

(*Mitropoleos; mains €12-22*) A varied range of pizzas and pastas, as well as meat and seafood dishes, served on a big terrace.

Drinking & Entertainment

Hora's Little Venice quarter is not exactly the Grand Canal, but it does offer the Mediterranean at your feet as well as rosy sunsets, windmill views, glowing candles and a swath of colourful bars. The music meanders through smooth soul and easy listening, but can ear-crunch you at times with shattering decibel rivalries.

A top spot is Galleraki, which turns out superb cocktails. Nearby, it's the sunset view at Verandah Café, while La Scarpa lets you lean back from the sea on its cosy cushions. Further north, Katerina's Bar (*Agion Anargyron*) has a cool balcony and eases you into the evening's action with relaxing sounds.

Deeper into town, the relentlessly stylish Aroma (*Enoplon Dynameon; 9am-late*) sits on a strategic corner, providing the evening catwalk view. It's open for breakfast and coffee as well. Just across the way, down an alleyway, is Bolero Bar (*Malamatenias*) a long-standing favourite, frequented in its time by such stellar celebs as Keith Richards.

Further down Enoplon Dynameon is Astra, where the decor is modernist Mykonos at its best, and where some of Athens' top DJs feed the ambience with rock, funk, house and drum and base. Just across from Astra, cocktail-cool Aigli has another useful terrace for people-watching. Matogianni has a couple of music bars, including Angyra, which sticks with easy listening and mainstream. Head inland from Agios Nikolaos church, midway along the waterfront, to Agios Vlassos for Bubbles Bar, an out-of-the-ordinary champagne bar with a fine selection of top labels and other drinks and a quirky annexe full of Leonidas Belgian chocolates. They do tapas as well.

Scandinavian Bar (*Ioanni Voinovich 9*) is mainstream mayhem with ground-floor bars and a space upstairs for close-quarters moving to retro dance hits. For big action into the dawn, Space (*Laka;*) is the place. The night builds superbly through a mix of techno, house and progressive, and the bar-top dancing fires up the late-night action. Remezzo (*Polikandrioti*) is run by the Space team but features lounge and dance for a more relaxing scene. Entry is around €20 to both

clubs.

THE GAIETY OF NATIONS

Mykonos is one of the world's liveliest gay-friendly destinations. Gay life is less overt here, but Hora has many gay-centric bars and hang-outs from where the late-night crowds spill out onto the streets. Most are not gay exclusive. The waterfront area, between the Old Harbour and the Church of Paraportiani is a focus for late night gay interaction.

Jackie O' BAR

(; *Old Harbour*) Jackie O' has now taken the hot times to the waterfront west of the Old Harbour, alongside Babylon and Pierro's.

Pierro's BAR

(*Old Harbour*) This world-famous Mykonos bar has hived off its main action to the Old Harbour area and taken its heavy-beat house and over-the-top promenaders with it. There's still a Pierro's franchise, however, in the old haunt in Plateia Agias Kyriakis.

Kastro BAR

(*Agion Anargyron*) With a leaning towards stylish classical sounds, this is a good place to start the night with cocktails as the sun sets on Little Venice.

Diva BAR

(*K Georgouli*) An upbeat atmosphere makes this a Mykonos favourite with a mixed crowd and a loyal lesbian core.

Porta BAR

(*Ioanni Voinovich*) Porta's recent makeover has maintained its cruisey ambience where things get crowded and close towards midnight.

Shopping

Style and art venues vie for attention throughout Hora's streets and include authentic Lacoste, Dolce & Gabbana, Naf Naf, Diesel and Body Shop. Clothes hanging apart, there are some stand-out galleries worth seeking out.

Scala Shop Gallery ARTS & CRAFTS

(; *Matogianni 48*) Scala is one of the more stylish galleries of Mykonos. It stages changing displays of fine art and also sells contemporary jewellery and ceramics. The owner, Dimitris Rousounelos, is an accomplished writer on Mykonos traditions.

Art Studio Gallery ARTS & CRAFTS

(22890 22796;; *Agion Saranta 22*) A fascinating gallery exhibiting the works of a number of accomplished Greek painters and sculptors including the gallery's founder, Magdalini Sakellaridi.

International Press BOOKS

(*Kambani 5*) Numerous international news-papers, although editions are a day late. Also an excellent range of magazines and books.

Information

Emergency

Police station (22890 22716) On the road to the airport.

Port police (22890 22218; *Akti Kambani*) Midway along the waterfront.

Tourist police (22890 22482) At the airport.

Internet Access

Angelo's Internet Café (*Xenias*; per hr €3; 10am-2am;) On the road between

the windmills and the southern bus station. Can burn CDs and do photocopying. Book exchange.

Medical Services

First Aid Clinic (22890 22274; *Agiou Ioannou*)

Hospital (22890 23994) Located about 1km along the road to Ano Mera.

Money

Several banks by the Old Port quay have ATMs. Eurobank has ATMs at Taxi Sq and Fabrika Sq.

Eurochange (*Taxi Sq*) Money exchange office.

Post

Post office (*Laka*) In the southern part of town.

Travel Agencies

Delia Travel (22890 22322; *travel@delia.gr*; *Akti Kambani*) Halfway along the inner waterfront. Sells ferry tickets and tickets for Delos. It's also the French Consulate.

Mykonos Accommodation Centre (22890 23408;; *1st fl, Enoplou Dynameon 10*) Well organised and very helpful for a range of information. Can also arrange midrange, top-end and gay-friendly accommodation.

Sea & Sky (22890 22853; *Akti Kambani*) Information and ferry tickets.

Around Mykonos

Beaches

Mykonos has a good number of beaches and most have golden sand in attractive locations. They're not so big that you'll escape from the crowds, especially from June onwards. Don't expect seclusion, although there can be a distinct sense of *exclusion* as various cliques commandeer the sun lounges, while segregation zones of style and sheer snobbery dominate at some locations.

You need to be a party person for the likes of Paradise and Super Paradise. It can all get very claustrophobic, but it's heaven for the gregarious. Most beaches have a varied clientele, and attitudes to toplessness and nudity also vary, but what's accepted at each beach is obvious when you get there.

An excellent guide to island beaches and their specific or mixed clientele can be found on the beaches link of.

The nearest beaches to Hora (Mykonos), which are also the island's least glamorous beaches, are Malaliamos ; the tiny and crowded Tourlos , 2km to the north of town; and Agios Stefanos (4km). About 3.5km south of Hora is the packed and noisy Ornos , from where you can hop onto boats for other beaches. Just west is Agios Ioannis . The sizeable package-holiday resort of Platys Gialos is 4km from Hora on the southwest coast. All of the above beaches are family orientated.

Platys Gialos is the caïque jumping-off point for the glitzier beaches to the east, such as Paradise and Super Paradise.

Approximately 1km south of Platys Gialos you'll find the attractive Paraga Beach , which has a small gay section. About 1km east of here is the famous Paradise , which is not a recognised gay beach, but has a lively younger scene. Super Paradise (aka Plintri or Super P) has a fully gay section. Mixed and gay-friendly Elia is the last caïque stop, and then just a few minutes' walk from here is the secluded Agrari . Nudity is fairly commonplace on all of these beaches.

North-coast beaches can be exposed to the *meltemi* (dry northerly wind), but Panormos and Agios Sostis are fairly sheltered and becoming more popular. Both have a mix of gay and nongay devotees.

For out-of-the-way beaching you need to head for the likes of Lia on the southeast coast, or the smaller Fokos and Mersini on the northeast coast, but you'll need tough

wheels and undercarriage to get there.

Activities

Dive Adventures DIVING

(22890 26539;; *Paradise Beach*) Offers a full range of diving courses with multilingual instructors. Two introductory dives cost €130; snorkelling costs €45. There are various dive packages starting with a five-dive deal for €250, and PADI certification courses are available.

Planet Windsailing WINDSURFING

(22890 72345;) On a great location at Kalafatis Beach, Planet Windsailing has one-hour or one-day windsurfing for €30 or €70, respectively, or a two-hour beginner's course for two people for €70.

Kalafati Dive Center DIVING

(22890 71677;) Also at Kalafatis, this dive centre has the full range of diving courses including a deal for 10 boat dives with tank and weights for €360 and with full gear for €420. A single boat dive with tank and weights costs €50, or with all equipment €60. A 'discover scuba diving' session is €68. A snorkelling trip with equipment is €20. There's a 10% discount for prepaid bookings.

Sleeping

Mykonos Camping CAMPGROUND €

(22890 24578;; *camp sites per adult/child/tent €10/5/8, bungalow per person €17.50-30, apt €180-235*) This budget option is by the pleasant Paraga Beach (a 10-minute walk from Platys Gialos). Total peace and privacy cannot be guaranteed, but facilities are reasonable and there are also bungalows and apartments that sleep two to six people.

Princess of Mykonos BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€

(22890 23806;; *d incl breakfast €173-219, tr incl breakfast €196-242;*) Sea-view rooms are the most expensive at this attractive hotel that merges art-deco touches with Cycladic cubist style. The hotel is above the often busy Agios Stefanos beach.

Eating

Christos SEAFOOD €€

(*Agios Ioannis Beach; mains €6-18*) Fisherman, chef and sculptor Christos runs his beachside eatery with unassuming style. It's right on the 'Shirley Valentine' shoreline, but Christos really is authentic Mykonos, where the best fish and seafood, not least unbeatable *astakos* (crawfish or spiny lobster), is prepared with skill.

Tasos Trattoria TAVERNA €

(*Paraga Beach; mains €9-19*) Central to Paraga Beach, this popular taverna does terrific fish, chicken, pork and veal dishes and a great mix of veggie options.

Entertainment

Cavo Paradiso CLUB

() When dawn gleams just over the horizon, hard-core bar hoppers move from Hora (Mykonos) to Cavo Paradiso, the megaclub that's been blasting away at Paradise Beach since 1993 and has featured top international DJs ever since, including house legends David Morales and Louie Vega.

DELOS

The Cyclades fulfil their collective name (*kyklos* – circle) by encircling the sacred island of **Delos** (22890 22259; *museum & sites adult/concession* €5/3; 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun) , but Mykonos clutches the island jealously to its heart. Delos (Δήλος) has no permanent population and so it is a soothing contrast to the relentless liveliness of modern Mykonos, although in high summer you share it all with fellow visitors. The island is one of the most important archaeological sites in Greece and the most important in the Cyclades. It lies a few kilometres off the west coast of Mykonos. Delos is still hiding its secrets and every now and then fresh discoveries are unearthed. In recent years a gold workshop was uncovered alongside the Street of the Lions.

History

Delos won early acclaim as the mythical birthplace of the twins Apollo and Artemis and was first inhabited in the 3rd millennium BC. From the 8th century BC it became a shrine to Apollo, and the oldest temples on the island date from this era. The dominant Athenians had full control of Delos – and thus the Aegean – by the 5th century BC. In 478 BC Athens established an alliance known as the Delian League, which maintained its treasury on Delos. A cynical decree ensured that no one could be born or die on Delos, thus strengthening Athens' control over the island by expelling the native population.

Delos reached the height of its power in Hellenistic times, becoming one of the three most important religious centres in Greece and a flourishing centre of commerce. Many of its inhabitants were wealthy merchants, mariners and bankers from as far away as Egypt and Syria. They built temples to their homeland gods, but Apollo remained the principal deity.

The Romans made Delos a free port in 167 BC. This brought even greater prosperity, due largely to a lucrative slave market that sold up to 10,000 people a day. During the following century, as ancient religions lost relevance and trade routes shifted, Delos began a long, painful decline. By the 3rd century AD there was only a small Christian settlement on the island, and in the following centuries the ancient site was looted of many of its antiquities. It was not until the Renaissance that its antiquarian value was recognised.

Getting There & Away

Boats for Delos (return €17, 30 minutes) leave Hora (Mykonos) around six times a day from about 9am in high season with the last outward boat about 12.50pm. Departure and return times are posted on the ticket kiosk at the entrance to the Old Jetty at the south end of the harbour. There are fewer boats outside July and August. There are no boats on Monday when the site is closed. Boats return from the island between 11am and 3pm. When buying tickets, you need to establish which boat is available for your return, especially later in the day. In Hora (Mykonos), **Delia Travel** (22890 22322; *travel@delia.gr; Akti Kambani*) and the **Mykonos Accommodation Centre** (22890 23408;; *1st fl, Enoplon Dynameon 10*) sell tickets. You pay an entrance fee of €3 at a kiosk on the island.

The Mykonos Accommodation Centre organises guided tours to Delos at 10am every day except Monday between May and September (adult/child €38/30, three hours). They include boat transfers from and to the Old Jetty and admission to the site and museum. Tours are in English, French, German and Italian, and in Spanish and Russian on request.

A boat departs for Delos (€14, 30 minutes) from Platys Gialos on Mykonos' south coast at 10.15am daily.

Ancient Delos Δήλος

The quay where excursion boats dock is south of the tranquil Sacred Harbour. Many of the most significant finds from Delos are in the National Archaeological Museum () in Athens, but the site's rather run down museum still has an interesting collection, including the lions from the Terrace of the Lions (those on the terrace itself are plaster-cast replicas).

Overnight stays on Delos are forbidden and boat schedules allow a maximum of about six or seven hours there. Bring water and food. Wear a hat and you'll need really sensible shoes.

- 1 Agora of the CompetalistsA4
- 2 Agora of the DeliansB3
- 3 Agora of the ItaliansB3
- 4 [Cistern](#) B5
- 5 DodekatheonB3
- 6 GymnasiumD1
- 7 Hill HouseA2
- 8 [House of Cleopatra](#) B4
- 9 House of ComediansB2
- 10 House of DiadumenosB2
- 11 [House of Dionysos](#) B4
- 12 House of HermesB4
- 13 [House of the Dolphins](#) C5
- 14 [House of the Masks](#) B5
- 15 House of the NaxiotsB3
- 16 [House of the Trident](#) B4
- 17 Institution of the PoseidoniastsB2
- 18 KeratonB3
- 19 Lake HouseB2
- 20 Monument of the BullsB3
- 21 [Museum](#) B3
- 22 PalaestraB2
- 23 Poros TempleB3
- 24 Roman WallB2
- 25 Sacred CaveC5
- 26 [Sanctuary of Apollo](#) B3
- 27 Sanctuary of ArchegetesC2
- 28 Sanctuary of DionysosB3
- 29 [Sanctuary of the Syrian Gods](#) C4
- 30 [Shrine to the Egyptian Gods](#) C4
- 31 [Shrine to the Samothracian Great Gods](#) C4
- 32 South StoaB4
- 33 StadiumD1
- 34 Stoa of AntigonasB3
- 35 Stoa of Philip VB3
- 36 Stoa of PoseidonA3
- 37 Stoa of the NaxiotsA3
- 38 Temple of ApolloB3
- 39 Temple of ArtemisB3
- 40 Temple of the AtheniansB3
- 41 [Terrace of the Lions \(Replicas Only\)](#)B2
- 42 [Theatre](#) B4
- 43 [Theatre Quarter](#) B4
- 44 Tourist PavilionB3
- 45 Wall of the TriarusA4
- 46 WarehousesA5

Exploring the Site

The following is an outline of some significant archaeological remains on the site. For further details, a guidebook from the ticket office is advisable, or take a guided tour. The rock-encrusted Mt Kythnos (113m) rises elegantly to the southeast of the harbour. It's worth the steep climb across the rocks, even in the heat; on clear days there are terrific views of the surrounding islands from its summit.

The path to Mt Kythnos is reached by walking through the Theatre Quarter, where Delos' wealthiest inhabitants once built their houses. These houses surrounded peristyle courtyards, with colourful mosaics (a status symbol) being the most striking feature of each house.

The most lavish dwellings were the House of Dionysos, named after the mosaic depicting the wine god riding a panther, and the House of Cleopatra, where headless statues of the owners were found. The House of the Trident was one of the grandest. The House of the Masks, probably an actors' hostelry, has another mosaic of Dionysos resplendently astride a panther. The House of the Dolphins has another exceptional mosaic. The theatre dates from 300 BC and had a large cistern, the remains of which can be seen. It supplied much of the town with water. The houses of the wealthy had their own cisterns – essential, as Delos was almost as parched and barren then as it is today.

Descending from Mt Kythnos, explore the Sanctuaries of the Foreign Gods. Here, at the Shrine to the Samothracian Great Gods, the Kabeiroi (the twins Dardanos and Aeton) were worshipped. At the Sanctuary of the Syrian Gods there are the remains of a theatre where an audience watched ritual orgies. There is also the Shrine to the Egyptian Gods, where Egyptian deities including Serapis and Isis were worshipped.

The Sanctuary of Apollo, to the northeast of the harbour, is the site of the much-photographed Terrace of the Lions. These proud beasts, carved from marble, were offerings from the people of Naxos, presented to Delos in the 7th century BC to guard the sacred area. To the northeast is the Sacred Lake (dry since it was drained in 1925 to prevent malarial mosquitoes breeding) where, according to legend, Leto gave birth to Apollo and Artemis.

PAROS

POP 12,853

Paros (Πάρος) is the ferry hub of the eastern Cyclades and meets the challenge with a friendly, welcoming face. Ferries approach from the west across a huge bay above which the island's gently rolling hills rise smoothly to the high point of Mt Profitis Ilias (770m). White marble made Paros prosperous from the Early Cycladic period onwards – most famously, the *Venus de Milo* was carved from Parian marble, as was Napoleon's tomb. Busy Parikia is the island's main town and port. The other major settlement, Naousa, on the north coast, is a developing resort that has acquired a stylish, almost Mykonian ambience around its still active fishing harbour. On the east coast is the delightful little port and low-key resort of Piso Livadi, while deep at the heart of Paros is the mountain village of Lefkes, a serene haven of Cycladean traditional life. The smaller island of Antiparos, 1km southwest of Paros, is easily reached by car ferry or excursion boat.

Getting There & Away

Paros is the main ferry hub for onward travel to other islands in the Aegean. It is thus well-served by regular ferries from Piraeus and by connections to most of the other islands of the Cyclades, and also to Thessaloniki, Crete and the Dodecanese.

There is one flight daily from Athens to Paros (€70, 45 minutes).

BOAT SERVICES FROM PAROS

DESTINATION	PORT	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Amorgos	Paros	4hr	€16	1-2 daily

Anafi	Paros	6½-8¾hr	€17	3-4 weekly
Astypalea	Paros	4hr 50min	€30	5 weekly
Donousa	Paros	2½hr	€14	1-3 daily
Folegandros	Paros	3½hr	€9	5 weekly
Ios	Paros	2½hr	€11	2 daily
Iraklia	Paros	2hr	€13.50	1-2 daily
Iraklio*	Paros	3hr 40min	€75.50	1 daily
Kalymnos	Paros	8hr 40min	€21	2 weekly
Kea (Tzia)	Paros	7hr 50min	€18	2 weekly
Kimolos	Paros	5hr 35min	€24	2 weekly
Kos	Paros	10hr 40min	€24.50	2 weekly
Koufonisia	Paros	3hr	€16	1-2 daily
Kythnos	Paros	6hr 50min	€16	2 weekly
Milos	Paros	6¾hr	€14	4 weekly
Mykonos*	Paros	1hr	€27.50	3 daily
Naxos	Paros	1hr	€8	5 daily
Naxos*	Paros	35min	€15.50	2 daily
Piraeus	Paros	4¾hr	€32.50	6 daily
Piraeus*	Paros	2½hr	€48.50	4 daily
Rafina*	Paros	3hr 10min	€52.80	1 daily
Rhodes	Paros	15hr	€34	2 weekly
Santorini (Thira)	Paros	3-4hr	€18.50	5 daily
Santorini (Thira)*	Paros	2¼hr	€45	2-3 daily
Schinousa	Paros	2hr 20min	€10.50	1-2 daily
Serifos	Paros	3¾hr	€10	2 weekly
Sifnos	Paros	4¾hr	€5	3 weekly
Sikinos	Paros	4hr 25min	€9	3-4 weekly
Syros*	Paros	45min	€8.50	3 daily
Tinos	Paros	1¼hr	€32.70	1 daily

*high-speed services

Getting Around

BOAT

Water taxis leave from the quay for beaches around Parikia. Tickets range from €8 to €15 and are available onboard.

BUS

About 12 buses daily link Parikia and Naousa (€1.60) directly, and there are seven buses daily from Parikia to Naousa via Dryos (€2.60), Lefkes (€1.60) and Piso Livadi (€2.20). There are 10 buses to Pounta (for Antiparos; €1.60) and six to Aliki (via the

airport; €1.60).

A free, green-by-nature, green-in-colour bus – powered by electricity – runs around Parikia at regular intervals from early morning until late evening all year; a laudable energy-saving strategy by the local authority, it is reportedly well used by locals at all times.

CAR, MOTORCYCLE & BICYCLE

There are rental outlets along the waterfront in Parikia and all around the island. A good outfit is **Acropolis** (22840 21830) . Minimum hire per day in August for a car is about €45; for a motorbike it's €20.

TAXI

Taxis (22840 21500) gather beside the roundabout in Parikia. Fares include the airport (€17), Naousa (€13), Pounta (€12), Lefkes (€13) and Piso Livadi (€22). Add €1 if going from the port. There are extra charges of €2 if you book ahead more than 20 minutes beforehand, €3 if less than 20 minutes. More than two pieces of luggage are charged at €1 each.

Parikia Παροικία

POP 5812

Parikia is a lively, colourful place full of the comings and goings of a typical island port but enhanced by a labyrinthine old town, 13th-century Venetian *kastro* (fort) and a long, straggling waterfront crammed with tavernas, bars and cafes.

Sights

Panagia Ekatondapyliani CHURCH

(*Plateia Ekatondapyliani*; 7.30am-9.30pm Easter-Sep, 8am-1pm & 4-9pm Oct-Easter) The Panagia Ekatondapyliani, which dates from AD 326, is one of the finest churches in the Cyclades. The building is three distinct churches: Agios Nikolaos, the largest, with superb columns of Parian marble and a carved iconostasis, in the east of the compound; the Church of Our Lady; and the Baptistry. The name translates as Our Lady of the Hundred Gates, but this is a wishful rounding-up of a still-impressive number of doorways. The Byzantine Museum (*admission* €1.50; 9.30am-2pm & 6-9pm) , within the compound, has a collection of icons and other artefacts.

Parikia

Top Sights

[Archaeological Museum](#) C2

[Panagia Ekatondapyliani](#) C2

Sights

1 [Ancient Cemetery](#) C1

2 [Byzantine Museum](#) C2

Activities, Courses & Tours

3 [Santorineos Travel Services](#) A2

Sleeping

4 [Angie's Studios](#) A3

5 [Hotel Argonauta](#) A2

6 [Pension Rena](#) C1

7 [Rooms Mike](#) B1

8 [Sofia Pension](#) D1

Eating

[Bakaliko](#) (see 5)

9 [Bella Roma](#) B2

10 [Happy Green Cows](#) A2

11 [Karen's](#) A2

12 [Levantis](#) A2

13 [Marina Cafe](#) C1

14 [Micro Café](#) A3

Drinking

15 [Evinos](#) A2

16 [Pebbles Jazz Bar](#) A2

17 A3

Archaeological Museum MUSEUM

(22840 21231; admission €3; 8.30am-2.45pm Tue-Sun) Next to a school and behind the Panagia Ekatondapyliani, this museum is a cool escape from the heat and hustle of town. It harbours some marvellous pieces, including a 5th-century Nike on the point of alighting and a 6th-century Gorgon also barely in touch with the surly earth. Earlier examples of splendid pottery include the *Fat Lady of Saliagos*, while a major exhibit is a fragment slab of the 4th-century Parian Chronicle, which lists the most outstanding artistic achievements of ancient Greece. It was discovered in the 17th century and, rather typically, two other slabs ended up in the Ashmolean Museum, in Oxford, England.

Ancient Cemetery RUINS

North along the waterfront there is a fenced ancient cemetery dating from the 7th century BC; it was excavated in 1983. Roman graves, burial pots and sarcophagi are floodlit at night.

Frankish Kastro RUINS

This fortress was built by Marco Sanudo, Duke of Naxos, in AD 1260, on the remains of a temple to Athena. Not much of the *kastro* remains, save for a large wall that is a jigsaw of unpainted column bases and dressed blocks.

Tours

Santorineos Travel Services SIGHTSEEING TOURS

(22840 24245; info@traveltoparos.gr; D Vasileou) This company can book bus tours of Paros (€35), boat trips to Mykonos and Delos (adult/child €45/23), to Santorini including a bus tour of the island (adult/child €55/30), to Naxos (adult/child €10/5) and to Iraklio and Koufonisia (adult/child €40/20).

Sleeping

In August the Rooms Association (22840 22722, after hours 22840 22220), located on the quay, has information on domatia; otherwise, owners meet ferries. The Hotel Association (22840 51207) has information about hotels on Paros and Antiparos. All campgrounds have minibuses that meet ferries.

Sofia Pension BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(22840 22085;; s/d/tr €65/75/90;) Tucked away in a quiet cul-de-sac about 400m east of the ferry quay, this delightful place is set in a lovingly tended garden that is full of greenery and flowers. Rooms are immaculate and have individual decor. The owners are charming. Breakfast is available for €8.

Hotel Argonauta HOTEL €€

(22840 21440;; Plateia Mavrogenous; s/d/tr €65/85/95; Apr-mid-Oct;) A long-established family-run hotel with a central location overlooking Plateia Mavrogenous, the Argonauta has a peaceful ambience. The modern decor and furnishings have attractive traditional touches and the rooms are spotless and comfy and have double glazing.

Pension Rena PENSION €

(22840 22220;; s/d/tr €35/45/55;) One of the best choices in town, these

immaculate rooms are very good value, and there's a friendly welcome. The rooms are in a quiet but handy location just back from the waterfront. Air-con is €5 extra. The owners also have apartments to rent in Naousa (€80 to €120).

Rooms Mike PENSION €

(22840 22856;; s/d/tr €35/65/75;) A long-standing favourite in sight of the ferry quay; you'll never be short of chat and advice at Mike's place. There's a shared kitchen and a roof terrace. Mike also has well maintained and well equipped studios (€55) elsewhere in town. Enquire for details. Credit cards are accepted.

Angie's Studios APARTMENTS €€

(22840 23909/6977;; Makedonias; d €68; Apr-Oct;) A garden glowing with bougainvillea surrounds these handsome studios. They are in a very quiet area about 500m from the ferry dock. The studios are big and extremely well kept and each has its own kitchen. There are generous discounts in the low season.

Koula Camping CAMPGROUND €

(22840 22801;; camp sites per adult/child/tent €8/3/4; Apr-Oct;) Situated at the north end of the Parikia waterfront.

Krios Camping CAMPGROUND €

(22840 21705;; camp sites per adult/child/tent €8/4/4; Jun-Sep;) Located on the north shore of Parikia Bay about 4km from the port, but they run a water taxi across the bay to Parikia.

Eating

Levantis MODERN GREEK €€

(22840 23613; Kastro; dishes €11-19) A courtyard garden setting enhances dining at this long-established restaurant at the heart of the Kastro area. Starters include fennel, pear and radish salad with chilli feta, while mains include codfish cakes, anchovy dressing and aubergine purée. Vegetarians might try the vegetable, olive and white bean *stifadho*. Desserts, such as Mediterranean nut tart with aniseed ice cream, round things off with a flourish. The quality house wine is underpinned with a good choice of Greek vintages.

Bakaliko MODERN GREEK €

(*Plateia Mavrogenous*; mains €6-8) Under new management in recent years, this fine place offers an excellent menu that includes such tasty dishes as chicken *tigania* (cubed with peppers in a mustard sauce). Choice Greek wines complement the food. The outside terrace is a popular spot for coffee and people-watching by day.

Happy Green Cows MODERN EUROPEAN €€

(22840 24691; dishes €12-18) Camp decor goes with the quirky name (inspired by a surreal dream, apparently) of this little eatery that is a vegetarian's delight, while catering for meat eaters as well. Dishes include the tempting *satyros*, fillets of smoked chicken with blueberries and cranberries in *mavrodafni* (sweet dessert wine), or marinated artichokes in olive oil with fresh herbs topped with parmesan cheese.

Micro Café CAFE €

(*Agora*; snacks €4-5) This great gathering spot for locals and visitors alike is bright and cheerful and lies at the heart of Kastro. It does breakfasts for €4, as well as coffee and snacks, sandwiches, fresh fruit and vegetable juices. There are drinks and music into

the early hours.

Karen's MEZEDHES €

(*Kastro; dishes €3.50-7*) Opened recently by the previous host of Karen's as a Parian tapas bar offering mixed plates with Greek touches, Greek wines and other drinks.

Bella Roma ITALIAN €

(*dishes €8-14*) Great choice of authentic Italian dishes and authentic Italian style.

Koralli SEAFOOD €

(*mains €6-9*) A good bet for fish dishes, including a fisherman's seafood platter for two at €18. Koralli is just next to Camping Koula.

Marina Cafe CAFE €

(*snacks €2.30-8;*) A cheerful waterfront cafe, the Marina does a mean hamburger and other snacks. It has free wi-fi, and internet at €2 per hour.

Drinking

Along with the following options, there are more bars along the southern waterfront, including the popular Evinos

Pebbles Jazz Bar BAR

(*9am-1am;*) Heading down through Kastro in the late evening you'd think Pebbles' sunset backdrop was a vast painting. Perched above the seafront, this chilled place has lounge music by day and jazz in the evenings, with a classical climax for the sunset and occasional live performers during July and August. Pebbles has breakfast from €4.50 to €7 and also offers food in conjunction with the nearby Karen's. There's an impressive wine list with some notable Greek vintages.

Pirate BAR

Ultracool corner of Parikia, Pirate is an ideal refuge, with accompanying mainstream sounds and funky rock. It's just off the far end of Market St beyond Micro Café and next to a little church.

Information

Health Centre (*22840 22500; Prombona; 9am-1.30pm Mon-Fri*) Also has a dentist.

Parosweb () Comprehensive and useful information on Paros and Antiparos.

Police station (*22840 23333; Plateia Mavrogenous*)

Port police (*22840 21240*) Back from the northern waterfront, near the post office.

Post office Located 400m east of the ferry quay.

Santorineos Travel Services (*22840 24245*) On the waterfront, just to the southwest of the windmill roundabout. Sells ferry tickets, can advise on accommodation and car hire, and has a luggage store (€1 per hour). You can book various tours here. Other services include bureau de change, FedEx (dispatch only) and MoneyGram (international money transfers).

Naousa Ναούσα

POP 3027

Naousa has transformed itself from a quiet fishing village into a popular resort with upbeat style, yet has not lost any of its appeal to all ages. Located on the shores of the large Plastira Bay on the north coast of Paros, there are attractive beaches nearby, and the town has several excellent restaurants and a growing number of classy beachside

cafes and bars. Behind the waterfront is a maze of narrow whitewashed streets, peppered with fish and flower motifs and with a mix of smart boutiques and souvenir shops.

Sights & Activities

The best beaches in the area are Kolimbythres and Monastiri, which has some good snorkelling and a clubbing venue. Low-key Lageri is also worth seeking out. Santa Maria, on the other side of the eastern headland, is ideal for windsurfing. They can all be reached by road, but caïques go from Naousa to each of them during July and August.

The Erkynda Travel office can help with various excursions including an island bus tour and boat trips to other islands.

Byzantine Museum MUSEUM

(admission €1.80; 10am-1pm & 6-9pm Aug) Naousa's Byzantine museum is housed in the blue-domed church, about 200m uphill from the central square on the main road to Parikia.

Folklore Museum MUSEUM

(22840 52284; admission €1.80; 9am-1pm & 6-9pm) This small museum, which focuses on regional costumes, can be reached by heading inland from the main square to another blue-domed church. Turn right behind the church.

Kokou Riding Centre HORSE RIDING

(22840 51818;) Kokou has morning (€50) and evening (€35) horse rides, and can arrange pick-up from Naousa's main square for €3.

Tao's Center MEDITATION

(22840 28882;; Ambelas) Tao's is a retreat and meditation centre located in splendid seclusion on a hill top to the east of Naousa. The centre offers workshops and courses in meditation, qi gong, yoga and dance, as well as massage therapies, all in sympathetic surroundings and with stylish facilities. It also organises activities for youngsters. It has strong green credentials and runs a popular Asian restaurant. The centre is reached by turning off the main road to Ambelas and then following conspicuous signs along a mainly surfaced track.

Sleeping

Katerina's Rooms APARTMENTS €€

(22840 51642;; s/d/tr €60/85/95, studios €170-180;) High on the hill above town and overlooking Plastira Bay, Katerina's has just got even better after a total refurbishment in 2011, and with self-catering now added you can't go wrong. All rooms have sparkling decor and the views are still unbeatable. Even the smallest room has a great view (without you even having to move from the bed).

Sunset Studios and Apartments APARTMENTS €€

(22840 51733;; d/tr €85/102, apt €180-216;) Tucked away on the hill above the centre of Naousa and a few minutes' stroll from the harbour are these peaceful rooms and apartments enhanced by a leafy garden and a warm welcome.

Hotel Galini HOTEL €€

(22840 53382;; s/d/tr incl breakfast €60/70/85;) Opposite the blue-domed local church (Byzantine Museum), on the main road into town from Parikia, this little hotel has comfortable, recently updated rooms. Be certain that this is our recommended hotel as there is a similarly named establishment elsewhere in town.

Young Inn HOSTEL €

(6976415232;; dm/d/tr €22/ 66/66;) This well-run place caters for a young, international clientele and organises events and outings. Prices drop substantially outside August. Scooter hire can be arranged. Breakfasts start at €3. It's located to the east of the harbour, beyond Naousa's cathedral. The organisers are planning to open a similar Young Inn hostel in Parikia in 2012. Check the website for details.

Eating & Drinking

Beyond the harbour, there's a beachfront line of cafes and music bars with cool lounge decor worthy of Mykonos. Places like Fotis and Briki spill out onto little beaches and play a mix of classical strands by day and jazzier, funkier sounds by night.

Glafkos MODERN GREEK €

(22840 52100; mains €6-13) There's a great take on seafood at this friendly beachside eatery with its subtle dishes such as shrimps and *manouri*, and scallops in a cream sauce, while meat eaters can enjoy dishes such as pork fillet with oregano and sweet wine. There are 50 different Greek wines available.

Tao's Restaurant THAI, ASIAN €

(22840 28882; mains €9-12) This well-run restaurant is part of the Tao's Center and serves authentic Thai and Asian cuisine prepared with consummate skill by its Thai chefs. Starters include an unbeatable mango salad and mains cover the finest examples of the genre. There's also a good value three-course set menu for €12. Take the road to Ambelas and then follow the signs to Tao's Center.

Perivolaria GREEK-ITALIAN €€

(dishes €5-23) Reliable Greek and international cuisine, pastas and wood-fired pizzas are the style at this long-established restaurant, where there's a lovely garden setting. Try the small pies with such fillings as *horta* (wild greens), feta and ouzo. Perivolaria is reached along the river road from the main square.

Moshonas TAVERNA €

(dishes €3.50-12.50) A classic harbourside *ouzerie* and fish restaurant. Fish is by the kilo, but there are main fish dishes at reasonable prices and you may see the family's own caïques tie up and deliver the fresh octopus that will soon be on your plate.

Information

The bus from Parikia terminates some way up from the main square just in from the waterfront, where a dried-up riverbed serves as a road leading south and inland. The main street of Naousa lies on the left of the riverbed. If arriving by car, be warned: parking in certain areas is banned from June to September. Signs may not be clear, but the hefty fines are painfully so. There's parking by the harbour and along the sides of the riverbed road, with a larger car park at the top end of the riverbed road.

The post office is a tedious uphill walk from the main square. There are several banks with ATMs around the main square.

Erkyna Travel (22840 22654;) On the river road. Sells ferry tickets and can help with accommodation, car hire and excursions.

Naousa Information (22840 52158; 10am-midnight Jul & Aug, 11am-1pm & 6-10pm mid-Jun-Jul) Can find you accommodation and is based in a booth by the main square.

(per hr €3; 10am-1am) Internet access; just by the entrance to the main square.

Lefkes Λεύκες

POP 494

Lovely Lefkes clings to a natural amphitheatre amid hills whose summits are dotted with old windmills. Siesta is taken seriously here and the village has a general air of serenity.

It lies 9km southeast of Parikia, high among the hills, and was capital of Paros during the Middle Ages. The village's main attractions are its pristine alleyways and buildings. The Cathedral of Agia Triada is an impressive structure, shaded by olive trees.

Around Paros

Down on the southeast coast is the attractive harbour and low-key resort of Piso Livadi, where there is a pleasant beach. Perantinos Travel and Tourism (22840 41135; perantin@otenet.gr) can arrange accommodation, car hire and boat trips to other islands, and also arranges money exchange. There is an ATM next to Perantinos.

Sights & Activities

Paros is a hot favourite for windsurfing and kiteboarding, while the clear waters round the island make for excellent diving.

Down the coast at Pounta are Eurodivers Club (22840 92071;) and Paros Kite Pro Center (22840 92229;).

At Golden Beach, Aegean Diving College (22840 43347, 6932289649;) offers a range of dives of archaeological and ecological interest, while Octopus Sea Trips (6932757123;) runs marine environmental courses.

Force7 Surf Centre (22840 42189;; *Hrysi Akti*) runs windsurfing, diving, water-skiing and wake-boarding sessions and week-long packages as well as dance and yoga holidays.

Beaches

There is a fair scattering of beaches around the island's coastline, including Paros' top beach, Hrysi Akti (Golden Beach), on the southeast coast, with good sand and several tavernas. The area is popular with windsurfers.

There is a decent enough beach at Aliko on the south coast.

Sleeping & Eating

Piso Livadi, which has a sunny magic of its own, has a number of modern rooms and apartments and a few decent tavernas.

Anna's Studios APARTMENTS €

(22840 41320;; *Piso Livadi; s/d/tr/ste/apt €43/57/65/65/95;*) Anna's bright and spacious studios, just inland from the harbour, are unbeatable value, right down to the exquisite decorative embroidery pieces by Anna's mother. The family also has well-kept rooms right on the harbour front, but without the seclusion of the studios. There are tea- and coffee-making facilities.

Chalaris Taverna TAVERNA €

(*mains €9-12*) Right on the Piso Livadi waterfront, Halaris is one of the best tavernas on Paros and specialises in fresh fish from the family's boat as well as traditional meat and vegetable dishes. A fish plate costs €10. The cod croquettes, shrimp pies and tomato croquettes are peerless. Add in the local wine and cheerful service and it doesn't get better than this.

Entertainment

Punda Beach Club CLUB

(; *Viva Punda*) For the ultragregarious, this all-day clubbing venue, on the east coast south of Piso Livadi, is the place to head for. It's a huge complex with swimming pools, bars, restaurants, a gym, live music shows and a relentlessly crowded beach scene.

ANTIPAROS

POP 1037

Antiparos (Αντίπαρος) lies dreamily offshore from Paros and is rightly proud of its independence from the latter. You feel a distinct slowing down in the pace of things on this lovely island. The main village and port (also called Antiparos) is a relaxed place. There's a touristy gloss round the waterfront and main streets, but the village runs deep inland to quiet squares and alleyways that give way suddenly to open fields. Beyond all this, the island slumbers gently in the sun.

Sights & Activities

Castle of Antiparos FORTRESS

Follow your nose from the top of the pedestrianised main street to reach Plateia Agios Nikolaou with its big plane tree. From here a narrow lane leads to the intriguing remnants of the Venetian Castle of Antiparos, entered through an archway. The castle dates from the 13th to the 16th centuries. The surrounding wall has houses with external quirky staircases and balconies on its inner side and the remains of the central keep is crowned by a stone water tower and clasped round by gnostic churches. There's a small Folk Museum here also.

Blue Island Divers DIVING

(22840 61767, 6983159452;) Halfway up the main street is a diving and beach gear shop where you can get information about Blue Island Divers, which has a wide range of dive options. A four-day PADI open-water course is €380 and a 'discover scuba-diving' course is €50. Trips can be tailored to suit individual wishes.

Cave of Antiparos CAVE

(admission €3.60; 10.45am-3.45pm summer) About 8km south of the port, this cave is still fairly awesome in spite of having suffered much looting of stalactites and stalagmites in the past. There are over 400 steps into the cave and it can be dank and gloomy. Follow the coast road south until you reach a signed turn-off into the hills. From the port there are hourly buses to the cave (one way €1.60).

Tours

MS Alexandros SIGHTSEEING TOURS

(22840 61273, 6972026585) Runs boat tours around the island daily, stopping at several beaches. Prices range from €35 to €45 per adult (less for children), and covers barbecue and drinks; you can book at local travel agencies.

Sleeping

Hotel Mantalena HOTEL €€

(22840 61206, 6977352363;; s/d/tr €72/80/96;) The Mantalena has bright, clean rooms and is located a short distance to the north of the main harbour quay. There's a spacious terrace and the building is set back from the harbour road. You get a decent breakfast for €6. The same family has apartments deeper into the village costing €65 to €75.

Anarghyros HOTEL €

(22840 61204;; s/d/tr €40/50/60;) It's good value at this well-kept, family-run hotel on the waterfront, where rooms are a decent size and come with tea- and coffee-making facilities. Attached to the hotel is a restaurant offering standard Greek dishes from €4.50 to €9.

Begleri HOTEL €€

(22840 61378; begleri@par.forthnet.gr; d €65-85, tr €100;) There are several accommodation places to the south of the main street. Begleri is a decent bet, family run and with very clean and bright rooms. Breakfast is €5.

Camping Antiparos CAMPGROUND €

(22840 61221;; *camp sites per adult/child/tent* €6/3/4) This beachside campground is planted with bamboo 'compartments' and cedars and is 1.5km north of the port. It has a minimarket, bar and restaurant. A site bus picks up from the port.

Eating & Drinking

The waterfront and main street of Antiparos have several cafes and tavernas serving Greek staples and fish dishes. You'll also find supermarkets and a bakery in the main street.

There are a couple of stylish cafe-bars at the top of the village. Tabula Rasa and Boogaloo are both upbeat places and rustle up some terrific cocktails and Greek-style 'tapas' to a lively playlist.

Margarita's MODERN GREEK €

(*Agora*; *mains* €8-20) Halfway up the main street is this bright and colourful little eatery that does big salads and other delicious dishes including tasty seafood pasta. A full breakfast is about €10.

Maki's TAVERNA €

(*dishes* €5.50-12) Seafood is the speciality at this harbour-front taverna. It's generally excellent, from the prawn souvlaki with calamari to lobster (by the kilo when available).

Information

Go right from the ferry quay along the waterfront. The main street, Agora, heads inland just by the Anarghyros Restaurant. Halfway up the main street are an **Emporiki Bank** and **National Bank of Greece** (next to each other and both with ATMs). The **post office** is also here. To reach the central square turn left at the top of the main street and then right, behind Smiles Cafe.

To reach the kastro, another Venetian creation, go under the stone arch that leads north off the central square.

The rest of the island runs to the south of the main settlement through quiet countryside. There are several decent beaches, especially at Glyfa and Soros on the east coast.

Nautica Café (22840 61323; *internet per hr* €1) is a busy waterfront cafe with coin-operated internet access and free wi-fi for customers.

There are several tour and travel agencies, including **Cave Travel** (22840 61376) and **Oliaris Tours** (22840 61231; oliaros@par.forthnet.gr) .

Getting There & Away

In summer, frequent excursion boats depart for Antiparos from Parikia (€5). There is also a half-hourly car ferry that runs from Pounta on the west coast of Paros to Antiparos (one way €1.10, per scooter €1.90, per car €6.10, 10 minutes); the first ferry departs from Pounta about 7.15am and the last boat returning to Pounta leaves Antiparos at about 12.30am.

Getting Around

The only bus service on Antiparos runs, in summer, to the cave in the centre of the island ([Click here](#) ; €5). The bus continues to Soros and Agios Georgios.

Cars, scooters and bicycles can be hired from **Aggelos** (22840 61626/027) , the first office as you come from the ferry quay. Cars start at about €42 per day (high season), scooters are €15 per day and bicycles are €5 per day.

NAXOS

POP 12,089

Naxos (Νάξος) is the largest of the Cyclades and has the mountains to prove it. It offers the best of both worlds, a classic island experience balanced by an occasional sense of being pleasantly landlocked in the deep heart of the mountains. It was on Naxos that an ungrateful Theseus is said to have abandoned Ariadne after she helped him escape the Cretan labyrinth. In keeping with classical soap opera, she didn't pine long, and was soon entwined with Dionysos, the god of wine and ecstasy and the island's favourite deity. Naxian wine has long been considered a useful antidote to a broken heart.

Naxos was a cultural centre of classical Greece and of Byzantium, while Venetian and Frankish influences have left their mark. It is more fertile than most of the other islands and produces olives, grapes, figs, citrus fruit, corn and potatoes. Mt Zeus (1004m; also known as Mt Zas) is the Cyclades' highest peak and is the central focus of the island's interior where you find such enchanting villages as Halki and Apiranthos. There are numerous sandy beaches and the island is a great place to explore on foot along the many surviving paths between villages, churches and other sights. There are walking guides and maps available from local bookshops.

Getting There & Away

Like Paros, Naxos is something of a ferry hub of the Cyclades, with a similar number of conventional and fast ferries making regular calls to and from Piraeus and weekly links to and from the mainland ports of Lavrio and Rafina via the Northern Cyclades. There is a daily flight to and from Athens (€71, 45 minutes).

BOAT SERVICES FROM NAXOS

DESTINATION	PORT	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Amorgos	Naxos	2¾hr	€14.50	2-3 daily
Amorgos*	Naxos	1hr 15min	€24.20	3 daily
Anafi	Naxos	5½hr	€14	5 weekly
Astypalea	Naxos	3hr 55min	€24.50	5 weekly
Donousa	Naxos	1-4hr	€7.60	1-3 daily
Folegandros	Naxos	5¾hr	€11	5 weekly
Folegandros*	Naxos	4hr	€37.40	6 weekly

Ios	Naxos	2hr 50min	€10	1-3 daily
Ios*	Naxos	50min	€25.50	1-2 daily
Iraklia	Naxos	1hr	€7.50	2-3 daily
Kalymnos	Naxos	8hr 40min	€21	2 weekly
Kea (Tzia)	Naxos	8hr 35min	€19	1 weekly
Kimolos	Naxos	4hr 40min	€15	2 weekly
Kos	Naxos	9hr 50min	€24.50	2 weekly
Koufonisia	Naxos	2hr	€9.50	2 daily
Kythnos	Naxos	7¼hr	€18	1 weekly
Lavrio	Naxos	9hr 25min	€23	1 weekly
Milos	Naxos	5hr	€56.20	4 weekly
Mykonos	Naxos	2hr 25min	€12	1 weekly
Mykonos*	Naxos	45min	€26.50	2 daily
Paros	Naxos	1hr	€8	5 daily
Paros*	Naxos	35min	€15.50	3 daily
Piraeus	Naxos	4¾hr	€31	4-5 daily
Piraeus*	Naxos	3¾hr	€48	4 daily
Rafina*	Naxos	3hr	€52.50	1 daily
Santorini (Thira)	Naxos	2hr	€16.50	5 daily
Santorini (Thira)*	Naxos	1hr 35min	€37	2-3 daily
Schinousa	Naxos	1hr 20min	€7	1-2 daily
Sikinos	Naxos	2¼hr	€8	3-4 weekly
Syros	Naxos	2h 10min	€10	1 daily
Tilos	Naxos	13hr	€24.50	2 weekly
Tinos	Naxos	1hr	€26.50	1 daily

*high-speed services

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

The airport is 3km south of Hora. There is no shuttle bus, but buses to Agios Prokopios Beach and Agia Anna pass close by. A taxi costs €10 to €15 depending on luggage amounts, the time of day, and if booked. All taxis are now metered and should give a receipt.

BUS

Frequent buses run to Agia Anna (€2) from Hora. Five buses daily serve Filoti (€2.30) via Halki (€2); four serve Apiranthos (€3.10) via Filoti and Halki; and at least three serve Apollonas (€6.20), Pyrgaki (€2.30) and Melanes (€1.60). There are less frequent departures to other villages.

Buses leave from the end of the ferry quay in Hora; timetables are posted outside the **bus information office** (22850 22291;), diagonally left and across the road from the bus stop. You have to buy tickets from the office or from the machine outside.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

August rates for hire cars range from about €45 to €65 per day, and quad bikes from €25 to €30. **Rental Center** (22850 23395; *Plateia Evripeou*) is a good bet.

Hora (Naxos) Χώρα (Νάξος)

POP 6727

Busy, colourful Hora, on the west coast of Naxos, is the island's port and capital. It's a large town, divided into two historic neighbourhoods of the Venetian era: Bourgos, where the Greeks lived; and the hill-top Kastro, where the Roman Catholics lived. The town has spread well beyond the harbour area.

Sights

To see the Bourgos area, head into the winding backstreets behind the northern end of Paralia. The most alluring part of Hora is the residential Kastro. Marco Sanudo made the town the capital of his duchy in 1207, and several Venetian mansions survive. Take a stroll around the Kastro during siesta to experience its hushed, timeless atmosphere.

Hora (Naxos)

Sights

- [1_Archaeological Museum](#) D3
- [2Della Rocca-Barozzi Venetian Museum](#)C3
- [3Mitropolis Museum](#)C1
- [4_Roman Catholic Cathedral](#) C3

Sleeping

- [5_Barbouni Hotel](#) C7
- [6_Chateau Zevgoli](#) C2
- [7_Despina's Rooms](#) C2
- [8_Hotel Anixis](#) C2
- [9_Hotel Glaros](#) B7
- [10_Pension Sofi](#) D1

Eating

- 11 [Anna's Garden Café](#) D7
- 12 [Irimi's](#) B2
- 13 [Meltemi](#) B7
- 14 [Meze 2](#) B3
- 15 [O Apostolis](#) C2
- 16 [To Elliniko](#) C7

Drinking

- 17 [Aktaion](#) C3
- 18 [Bossa Nova](#) B5
- 19 [Jazz-Blues Café](#) B2
- 20 [La Vigne](#) C2
- 21 [On the Rocks](#) C5

Entertainment

- [Della Rocca-Barozzi Venetian Museum](#)(see 2)
- 22 [Ghetto](#) C1
- 23 [Ocean](#) B5

Shopping

- [Anna's Organic Shop](#) (see 11)
- 24 [Kiriakos Tziblakis](#) C5
- 25 [Takis' Shop](#) B2

Mitropolis Museum MUSEUM

(22850 24151; *Kondyli*; 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun) A short distance behind the northern end of the waterfront are several churches and chapels, and the Mitropolis Museum. The museum features fragments of a Mycenaean city of the 13th to 11th centuries BC that was abandoned because of the threat of flooding by the sea. It's a haunting place where glass panels underfoot reveal ancient foundations and larger areas of excavated buildings.

Archaeological Museum MUSEUM

(22850 22725; admission €3; 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun) This museum is located in the Kastro, housed in the former Jesuit school where novelist Nikos Kazantzakis was briefly a pupil. The contents include Hellenistic and Roman terracotta figurines and some early Cycladic figurines.

Della Rocca-Barozzi Venetian Museum MUSEUM

(22850 22387; guided tours adult/student €5/3; 10am-3pm & 6.30pm-late mid-May-Oct) This museum, a handsome old tower house of the 13th century, is within the Kastro ramparts (by the northwest gate). There are changing art exhibitions in the vaults. Tours are multilingual. The museum also runs tours (adult/student €15/12) of the Kastro at 11am Tuesday to Sunday; tours last just over two hours. Evening concerts and other events are staged in the grounds of the museum (see [Click here](#)).

Roman Catholic Cathedral CHURCH

(6.30pm-8.30pm) This cathedral, also in the Kastro, is worth a visit.

Activities

Flisvos Sport Club WINDSURFING

(22850 24308;; *Agios Georgios*) This club is very well organised and has a range of windsurfing options, starting with a beginner's course of six hours for €150, or a four-hour Hobie Cat sailing course for €95. The club also organises walking trips in the mountains for €29, shorter walking tours of Naxos town for €15, and hires out mountain

bikes at a per-week rate of €60. These prices are for guests at the club's adjacent Hotelnaxos Beach1 (22850 22935;) . Non-residents pay 10% more. There's a surf shop and beach cafe.

Naxos Horse Riding HORSE RIDING

(6948809142;) Organises daily horse rides (10am to 1pm and 5pm to 8pm) inland and on beaches (€50 per person). You can book a ride up until 6pm the day before and can arrange pick-up and return to and from the stables. Beginners, young children and advanced riders are catered for.

Tours

There are frequent excursion boats to Delos and Mykonos (adult/child €45/23), Santorini, including a bus tour (adult/child €55/30), Paros and Naousa (adult/child €20/10), and Iraklia and Koufonisia (adult/child €40/20); book through travel agents (see).

Sleeping

Hora has plenty of accommodation options. If you settle for an offer at the port from a persistent hawker, establish with certainty the true distance of the rooms from the centre of town. In high season there may be booths on the quay dispensing information about hotels and rooms.

There are several campgrounds near Hora, and all have decent facilities. Minibuses meet the ferries. The sites are all handy to beaches.

Hotel Grotta HOTEL €€

(22850 22215;; *Grotta; s/d incl breakfast €70/85;*) Located on high ground overlooking the Kastro and main town, this fine modern hotel has comfortable and immaculate rooms, great sea views from the front, spacious public areas and a jacuzzi. It's made even better by the cheerful, attentive atmosphere.

Hotel Glaros BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(22850 23101;; *Agios Georgios Beach; d €95-100, ste €110-115;*) This well-run and immaculate hotel has been upgraded recently and retains its decor and fittings, which reflect the colours of sea and sky. Service is efficient and thoughtful and the beach is only a few steps away. There's a jacuzzi to back up the beach experience. Occasional art and music events are planned from 2012. Breakfast is €8. The owners also have attractive studios nearby (€65 to €100).

Naxian Collection LUXURY HOTEL €€€

(22850 24300;; *Stelida; ste €350-420, villas €640;*) In a beautiful hill-top location near Agios Prokopios beach, these luxurious villas and suites with their subtle and elegant Cycladean style merge with the environment in every way. The Naxian Collection is also developing into an arts hotel with displayed work by leading Aegean artists in the public areas. There are individual villas and suites with private or shared swimming pools depending on the accommodation. The central bar and breakfast area is a friendly gathering spot.

Pension Sofi APARTMENTS €€

(22850 25593;; *s/d/tr €65/70/90;*) Hospitality is the rule at this family-run place. It's just a short distance inland from the port and is framed by one of the biggest bougainvilleas you're likely to see. Rooms are clean and well equipped and most include cooking facilities. Prices drop considerably outside August.

Chateau Zevgoli HOTEL €€

(22850 26123;; Kastro; s/d/ste €85/95/105;) Tucked away at the heart of Kastro is this long-established hotel. It has a leafy garden setting to go with the traditional Naxian style of rooms and furnishings.

Despina's Rooms ROOMS €

(22850 22356;; Kastro; s/d/tr/q €40/50/60/70;) These decent rooms are tucked away in the Kastro and some have sea views. Rooms on the roof terrace are popular despite their small size. There's a communal kitchen.

Pension Irene II PENSION €

(22850 23169;; s/d €60/70;) Bright, clean rooms and a swimming pool have made this well-run place popular with a younger set.

Astir of Naxos HOTEL €€€

(22850 29320;; d incl breakfast €150-170, ste €320 ;) On the southern outskirts of town and just inland from St George Beach, this well-appointed hotel has a superb pool and spacious surroundings.

Barbouni Hotel HOTEL €€

(22850 24400;; s/d/tr/studios €50/70/75/75;) A pleasant family-run hotel with good rooms at the southern end of town.

Pension Irene I PENSION €€

(22850 23169;; s/d €50/60;) This long-standing favourite is a bit of a hike from the ferry dock, but is in a quiet side street and has clean, comfortable rooms.

Hotel Anixis HOTEL €€

(22850 22932;; s/d/tr €55/ 65/90;) Tucked away in a quiet location in Bourgos, this pleasant hotel, in a garden setting, has bright and well-kept rooms.

Camping Maragas CAMPGROUND €

(22850 24552;; per person €9) Located at Agia Anna Beach, south of Hora.

Naxos Camping CAMPGROUND €

(22850 23500;; camp site per person €9;) Situated about 1km south of Agios Georgios Beach.

Plaka Camping CAMPGROUND €

(22850 42700;; camp site per person €9;) Down at Plaka Beach, 6km south of town.

Eating

Naxos town has an excellent range of eateries.

Meltemi TAVERNA €

(*Agiou Arseniou; mains €7.50-14*) Top dishes at this family-run taverna are lamb flavoured with fresh lemon juice and oregano or *kaloyeros*, eggplant stuffed with slices of veal and Naxian gruyère. They also do three-course fixed menus for €10 to €12.50, all served with courtesy and good humour on a leafy terrace that makes up for an otherwise dull street scene. The family's own wine, olive oil and ouzo are all delicious.

Meze 2 SEAFOOD €

(22850 26401; *Paralia; mains €6-14*) The emphasis at this hugely popular place right in the middle of the Paralia is on fish, and even the local fishermen eat here. Superb seafood is prepared with flair and commitment and served in a lively atmosphere that is never less than sociable. Meat dishes also feature. There is another

Meze at Plaka Beach during July and August.

Anna's Garden Café BISTRO €

(*Paparrigopoulou*; dishes €5-10) This appealing place is part of Anna's Organic Shop and is 100% organic. Breakfasts are €3.50 to €8.50 and there's a dish of the day for lunch including both vegetarian and vegan, encompassing a range of international options. Soft drinks, beer and wine are available, and Anna also supplies picnic baskets if ordered a day in advance.

O Apostolis GREEK €€

(*Old Market*; mains €5.50-17) Right at the heart of the labyrinthine Old Market area of Bourgos, Apostolis serves up rewarding dishes such as mussels in garlic butter and parsley, and *bekri mezes*, a popular Cretan dish of casseroled beef. The *kleftiko*, lamb wrapped in filo pastry with sautéed vegetables and feta cheese, is particularly good.

To Elliniko TAVERNA €

(*Paparrigopoulou*; mains €5-8.50) Tucked away in downtown Hora, this classic Naxian taverna uses a charcoal grill and offers classic dishes such as octopus in a tomato, wine, onion and herb sauce and has delicious pies using pastry made on the premises. Sometimes it has traditional Greek music sessions.

Irini's TAVERNA €

(*Paralia*; mains €5.50-12.50) The real deal at this pleasant taverna is the terrific selection of dishes such as codfish croquettes and shrimp *saganaki* – from which you can construct a very satisfying meal.

The cheapest supermarkets are Atlantic and Vidalis, both a little way out of town on the ring road.

Drinking & Entertainment

The seafront Paralia has a good mix of cafe-bars interspersed with shops and offices, all ideal for people-watching. Aktaion, midway along, is famous for its delicious cakes.

Naxos also has a couple of clubs where you can kick up your heels.

On the Rocks BAR

(*Pigadakia*;) The place to go for fun and cocktails including Cuban-style daiquiris or tequila. Enjoy Havana cigars or a *shisha* (water pipe) with a wide selection of flavours from apple to mango, peach or pistachio. It all goes with sounds that vary between funk, house and electronic. Occasional live performances and karaoke stir the mix. There's internet facilities and free wi-fi.

La Vigne WINE BAR

For a cooler take on Naxian nightlife, head for this cheerful wine bar just behind Plateia Mandilara. It's run by two French ex-pats who know more than a thing or two about fine wines and good conversation. French wines take pride of place, but they serve some excellent Greek vintages also. Mezedhes-style dishes (€3.60 to €6), such as fish croquettes with yoghurt and lemon sauce, and sweets such as *tarte tatin*, add to the pleasure.

Bossa Nova BAR

Bossa Nova is in a terrific location by the water's edge at the southern end of the

harbour. It's where Hora's young set hang out for coffee, drinks, breakfast and snacks, and a happy hour for drinks from 2pm to 9pm.

Jazz-Blues Café BAR

The Jazz-Blues Café is a cosy cafe-bar that plays what it says it does, just where the narrow, almost tunnelled alleyways start to wriggle up into Kastro.

Della Rocca-Barozzi Venetian Museum CLASSICAL MUSIC

(22850 22387; Kastro; events admission €15-20; 8pm Apr-Oct) Special evening cultural events are held at the museum, and comprise traditional music and dance concerts, and classical and contemporary music recitals. Prices depend on seat position.

Ghetto CLUB

(Grotta Beach; admission €12; 11.30pm-3am May-mid-Sep, 11.30pm-late Fri & Sat mid-Sep-Apr) Has house and modern Greek to the fore.

Ocean CLUB

(Seafront; admission €12; 11.30pm-3am May-mid-Sep, 11.30pm-late Fri & Sat mid-Sep-Apr) Offers a sizeable space featuring house and some modern Greek and special nights with guest DJs.

Shopping

Takis' Shop WINE

(Plateia Mandilara) Among the wines here are such names as Lazaridis from northern Greece, Tselepos from the Peloponnese and Manousakis from Crete – all masterful vintages. Taki's own bottling, Idalo, is a distinctive local wine. You can also find Vallindras *kitron* (see) and ouzo here. Incorporated is Takis' jewellery shop, with individual pieces from some of Greece's most famous designers.

Kiriakos Tziblakis HOMEWARES

(Papavasiliou) A fascinating cavelike place crammed with traditional produce and goods, from pots and brushes to herbs, spices, wine, *raki* (fire-water) and olive oil.

Anna's Organic Shop FOOD

(Paparrigopoulou) This 100% genuinely organic shop sells a range of foodstuffs and other products including cosmetic items.

Zoom BOOKS

(Paralia) A large, well-stocked newsagent and bookshop that has most international newspapers the day after publication.

Information

There is no official tourist information office on Naxos. Travel agencies can deal with most queries.

Agricultural Bank of Greece (Paralia) Has ATM.

Alpha Bank (cnr Paralia & Papavasiliou) Has ATM.

Hospital (22853 60500; Prantouna)

National Bank of Greece (Paralia) Has ATM.

Naxos Tours (22850 22095;; Paralia) Sells ferry tickets and organises accommodation, tours and car hire.

OTE (telecommunications office; Paralia) Has several phone kiosks in an alleyway.

Police station (22850 22100; *Paparrigopoulou*) Southeast of Plateia Protodikou.

Port police (22850 22300) Just south of the quay.

Post office (*Georgiou*) Go past the OTE, across Papavasiliou, and left at the forked road.

Rental Center (22850 23395; *Plateia Evripeou*)

Zas Travel (22850 23330; *Paralia*) Sells ferry tickets and organises accommodation, tours and car hire.

Zas Travel (22850 23330; *zas-travel@nax.forthnet.gr; Paralia*)

Around Naxos

Conveniently located just south of the town's waterfront is Agios Georgios , Naxos' town beach. It's backed by hotels and tavernas at the town end and can get very crowded, but it runs for some way to the south and its shallow waters mean the beach is safe for youngsters.

The next beach south of Agios Georgios is Agios Prokopios , which lies in a sheltered bay to the south of the headland of Cape Mougkri. It merges with Agia Anna , a stretch of shining white sand, quite narrow but long enough to feel uncrowded towards its southern end. Development is fairly solid at Prokopios and the northern end of Agia Anna.

Sandy beaches continue down as far as Pyrgaki and include Plaka , Kastraki and Alyko .

One of the best of the southern beaches is Mikri Vigla , where golden granite slabs and boulders divide the beach into two.

Near the beach at Agios Prokopios is Villa Adriana (22850 42804;; *s/d/tr/apt €75/85/90/120;*) , a well-appointed hotel with excellent service and bright, comfortable rooms.

A great 'away from it all' option is Oasis Studios (22850 75494;; *d/tr/apt €90/105/120;*) at Mikri Vigla, 20km south of Hora. It is close to the beach and has lovely big rooms with kitchens and a swimming pool.

The Taverna Liofago (*dishes €4.50-9*) has a dreamy beach location at Mikra Vigla and favours a variety of Naxian dishes.

South of Mikri Vigla, at Kastraki, is one of the best restaurants on the island – Axiotissa (22850 75107) , noted for its sourcing of organic food and for its traditional dishes with added Anatolian flair.

TRAGAEA ΤΡΑΓΑΙΑ

The Tragaea region is a vast plain of olive groves and unspoilt villages, beneath the central mountains with Mt Zeus (1004m; also known as Mt Zas) dominating overall. Filoti , on the slopes of Mt Zeus, is the region's largest village. It has an ATM booth just down from the main bus stop. On the outskirts of the village (coming from Hora), an asphalt road leads off right to the isolated hamlets of Damarionas and Damalas . From Filoti, you can also reach the Cave of Zeus, a large, natural cavern at the foot of a cliff on the slopes of Mt Zeus. There's a junction signposted Aria Spring and Zas Cave, about 800m south of Filoti. If travelling by bus, ask to be dropped off here. The side road ends in 1.2km. From the road-end parking, follow a walled path past the Aria Spring , a fountain and picnic area, and on to a very rough track uphill to reach the cave. The path leads on from here steeply to the summit of Zas. From beyond the fountain area, it's a stiff hike of several kilometres and it's essential to have stout walking footwear, water and sunscreen, and to have some hill-climbing experience. A good way to return to Filoti from the top of Zas is to follow the path that leads northeast from the summit and then to head north at a junction to reach the little chapel of Aghia Marina on the road to Danakos. This is about 4km. From the chapel a mix of road walking and stepped paths then leads, in another few kilometres, to Filoti. This route

can be done in reverse or as a way there and back to the top of Zas. Either way is no mere stroll.

At Flerio near Mili, between Melanes and Kinidaros, is an area of ancient marble working with two striking examples of a *kouros* (youth) – large marble statues of the 6th and 7th centuries BC. Each *kouros* measures about 5.5m and both are in a broken state (the theory being that they were damaged during transportation). There is an even larger *kouros* at Apollonas ([Click here](#)). The site at Flerio is signed and interpreted, and just above the arrival car park is a well-presented cult sanctuary believed to have been associated with the archaic marble quarrying. Look for the ancient beehives.

ART OF THE AEGEAN: L'OLIVIER, NAXOS DES HANNIGAN

The first time I walked into L'Olivier (22850 31771;; *Halki*), a ceramics gallery and shop in the village of Halki on Naxos, it was late evening, early summer. The velvety dusk of the Tragaea, the mountain basin of Naxos, had settled like a veil on Halki's small village square. Young owls hooted from marble ledges on the facades of old Naxian mansions. Inside L'Olivier it was as if a sunset glow lingered. Even the artificial lighting was subtly deployed. Everywhere I looked were pieces of stoneware ceramics and jewellery that took my breath away.

Each piece of work reflected the ancient Mediterranean themes of fish and olive that are at the heart of the work of Naxian potter Katharina Bolesch and her partner, artist and craftsman Alexander Reichardt. Three-dimensional ceramic olives framed the edges of shining plates or tumbled down the side of elegant jugs and bowls. Grapes, too, hung in ceramic bunches. Painted shoals of fish darted across platters and swam around bowls and dishes. Silver and ceramic fish jewellery extended the theme.

These two outstanding artists may be based in a tiny Cycladean village, yet their fame is international and their work has been exhibited in such major venues as the Academy of Athens, the Goulandris Museum of Cycladic & Ancient Greek Art, the UN Headquarters in New York and the Design Museum of Helsinki. Yet, in spite of such a high profile, the work of Bolesch and Reichardt remains entirely accessible and affordable.

In recent years, Bolesch and Reichardt have opened the Fish & Olive Gallery just around the corner from their shop. Here they exhibit more of their exquisite work and host exhibitions by accomplished artists in a building that sits perfectly amid Halki's traditional Naxian facades and the serene beauty of the Tragaea. (Poor-quality imitations of Katharina Bolesch's work are sold elsewhere on Naxos, so be warned.)

HALKI ΑΛΚΕΙΟ

One of Naxos' finest experiences is a visit to the historic village of Halki, which lies at the heart of the Tragaea, about 20 minutes' drive from Hora. Halki is a vivid reflection of historic Naxos and is full of the handsome facades of old villas and tower houses, legacy of a rich past as the one-time centre of Naxian commerce.

The main road skirts Halki. In summer it is not permitted to park on the main road; there are parking spaces to the right in the dried-up riverbed, reached just after the bridge coming from Hora. There are cubicle toilets here also. There's more parking (summer only) in the schoolyard at the top of the village. Lanes lead off the main road to the picturesque square at the heart of Halki.

Paths and lanes radiate from Halki through peaceful olive groves and flower-filled meadows. The atmospheric 11th-century Church of St Giorgios Diasorites lies a short distance to the north of the village. It contains some splendid frescoes.

Since the late 19th century, Halki has had strong connections with the production of *kitron*, a unique liqueur. The citron (*Citrus medica*) was introduced to the Mediterranean area in about 300 BC and thrived on Naxos for centuries. The fruit is barely edible in its raw state, but its rind is very flavoursome when preserved in syrup as a *ghlika kutalyu* (spoon sweet). *Kitroraki*, a *raki*, can be distilled from grape skins and citron leaves, and by the late 19th century the preserved fruit and a sweet version of *kitroraki*, known as *kitron*, were being exported in large amounts from Naxos.

The Vallindras Distillery (22850 31220; 10am-11pm Jul-Aug, 10am-6pm May-Jun & Sep-Oct) in Halki's main square, distils *kitron* the old-fashioned way. There are

free tours of the old distillery's atmospheric rooms, which still contain ancient jars and copper stills. *Kitron* tastings round off the trip and a selection of the distillery's products are on sale. To arrange a tour during the period from November to April, phone 22850 22534 or 6942551161.

Another Halki institution is the world-class ceramics shop L'Olivier and its nearby gallery (see boxed text).

Near the L'Olivier gallery is the fascinating shop Era (*eraproducts@mail.gr*) where marmalade, jam and spoon desserts are made using the best ingredients. In Halki's picturesque central square, Yianni's Taverna (*dishes €7-12*) is noted for its local meat dishes and fresh salads with *myzithra* (sheep's-milk cheese). The Italian restaurant El Basilico (22859 31140; *mains €9-24*), is right at the entrance to Halki coming from Hora. It offers an excellent changing menu and sources ingredients daily, while well-sourced Italian wines add to the pleasure.

Do not miss Glikia Zoi (*Sweet Life*), directly opposite the L'Olivier gallery. Here Christina Falierou works her magic in a traditional cafe setting, making delicious cakes and sweets to go with coffee or drinks. Also of interest is Penelope, a shop where you'll find some splendid hand-woven textiles and embroidery work. For some of the best *galaktoboureko* (creamy custard in filo pastry) check out the Halki *kafeneio* (coffee house) on the main road.

Halki is spreading its cultural wings even further with its annual music, arts and literary celebration, the Axia Festival, held each summer and featuring international musicians, artists and writers. The festival is nonprofit and is organised by the Fish & Olive gallery.

An alternative scenic route from Hora to Halki is along the road that passes Ano Potamia. It's here that you'll find Taverna Pigi (*mains €5-22*), known for its local cooking, enjoyed with the serene music of the gurgling spring that the taverna is named after.

PANAGIA DROSIANI ΠΑΝΑΓΙΑΔΡΟΣΙΑΝΗ

The Panagia Drosiani (10am-7pm May-mid-Oct), just below Moni, 2.5km north of Halki, is one of the oldest and most revered churches in Greece. It has a warren of cavelike chapels, and several of the frescoes date back to the 7th century. Donations are appreciated.

SANGRI ΣΑΓΚΡΙ

The handsome towerlike building of Bazeos Castle (22850 31402; 10am-5pm & 6-9pm) stands prominently in the landscape about 2km east of the village of Sangri.

The castle was built in its original 17th-century form as the Monastery of Timios Stavros (True Cross). It was later bought by the Bazeos family, who refurbished the building. It now functions as a cultural centre and stages art exhibitions and the annual Naxos Festival during July and August, when concerts, plays and literary readings are held.

About 1.5km south of Sangri is the impressive Temple of Demeter (*Dimitra's Temple*; 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun). The ruins and reconstructions are not large, but they are historically fascinating. There is a site museum with some fine reconstructions of temple features. Signs point the way from Sangri.

APIRANTHOS ΑΠΕΙΡΑΝΘΟΣ

Apiranthos seems to grow out of the stony flanks of the rugged Mt Fanari (883m). The village's unadorned stone houses and marble-paved streets reflect a rugged individualism that is matched by the villagers themselves. Many of them are descendants of refugees who migrated from Crete, and today the village's distinctive form of the Greek language has echoes of the 'Great Island'. Apiranthos people have always been noted for their spirited politics and populism and the village has produced a

remarkable number of academics. There is an impressive trio of museums. On the main road, to the right of the parking and bus stop is the Museum of Natural History (*admission €3; 8.30am-2pm Tue-Sun*). The Geology Museum (*admission €3; 8.30am-2pm Tue-Sun*) and the Archaeology Museum (*admission free; 8.30am-2pm Tue-Sun*) are part-way along the main street. The latter has a marvellous collection of small Cycladean artefacts. The museums are notionally open from 7pm to 10pm in summer, but all the opening times stated here are flexible, in keeping with an admirable local spirit of independence.

There are a number of tavernas and *kafeneia* in the village. A classic taverna is Stamato Giannis (*mains €3.50-6*) for good local dishes, including *horta*. Taverna Lefteris (*mains €6-16*) has a subtle take on dishes such as rabbit *stifadho*.

There is parking at the entrance to Apiranthos, on the main Hora–Apollonas road.

APOLLONAS ΑΠΟΛΛΩΝΑΣ

POP 107

Tavernas line the waterfront adjoining a reasonable beach at Apollonas, on the north coast, but the main attraction here is a giant 7th-century-BC kouros (male statue of the Archaic period), which lies in an ancient quarry in the hillside above the village.

Apollonas has several rooms for rent.

With your own transport you can return to Hora via the west-coast road, passing through wild and sparsely populated country with awe-inspiring sea views.

LITTLE CYCLADES

The straggle of tiny islands that lies between Naxos and Amorgos is where you can stop the world and island-hop in slow-motion. Only four in the chain – Donousa, Ano Koufonisia, Iraklia and Schinoussa – have permanent populations. All were densely populated in antiquity, as shown by the large number of ancient graves that have been uncovered. During the Middle Ages, only wild goats and even wilder pirates inhabited these islands. Post-independence, intrepid souls from Naxos and Amorgos recolonised the Little Cyclades (Μικρές Κυκλάδες) . Now, the islands welcome growing numbers of independent-minded tourists.

Donousa is the northernmost of the group and the furthest from Naxos. The others are clustered near the southeast coast of Naxos. Each has a public telephone and post agency and there are ATMs on all islands, although you should still bring a decent amount of ready cash with you.

Getting There & Away

There are several connections a week between Piraeus and the Little Cyclades via Naxos, and daily connections to and from Naxos. Make sure you have plenty of time before committing yourself – these islands are not meant for last-minute visits or for one-night tick lists.

Blue Star ferries serve the Little Cyclades throughout the year but the sturdy little ferry **Express Scopelitis** (22850 71256/519; *Katapola, Amorgos*) is the mainstay service (weather permitting in winter), except for its annual refit layoff, usually in January. The *Scopelitis* leaves from Naxos at 2pm, Monday to Saturday, and calls at the Little Cyclades and Amorgos. It then stops overnight in Katapola, Amorgos, and returns to Naxos at 7am the following morning. See the ferry table for variations in the routes. The *Scopelitis* is a defining Cycladic experience. Most seating is open deck, so

when it's windy brace yourself for some real rock and roll. The leg north from Koufonisia to Donousa can be especially lively in the *meltemi*. Each of the small islands has at least one small tour boat. From June to September you may be able to negotiate one-way travel between the islands with these boats, provided they are not engaged on programmed trips, although it will be much more costly than the regular ferries.

BOAT SERVICES FROM IRAKLIA

DESTINATION	PORT	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Amorgos	Iraklia	1¾hr	€8.50	2-3 daily
Donousa	Iraklia	2hr 20min	€7	1-2 daily
Koufonisia	Iraklia	1hr	€5	2-3 daily
Naxos	Iraklia	1hr	€7.50	2-3 daily
Paros	Iraklia	2¼hr	€12.50	1-2 daily
Piraeus	Iraklia	7hr 20min	€30	1-2 daily
Schinousa	Iraklia	15min	€4.50	2-3 daily
Syros	Iraklia	3hr 35min	€22.70	4 weekly

BOAT SERVICES FROM SCHINOUSA

DESTINATION	PORT	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Amorgos	Schinousa	1hr 40min	€8-10.50	2-3 daily
Donousa	Schinousa	2hr	€13.50	1-2 daily
Iraklia	Schinousa	15min	€4.50	2-3 daily
Koufonisia	Schinousa	40min	€4.60	2-3 daily
Naxos	Schinousa	1hr 20min	€6.70	1-2 daily
Paros	Schinousa	2hr 20min	€10	1-2 daily
Piraeus	Schinousa	7½hr	€31	1-2 daily
Syros	Schinousa	5½hr	€13	4 weekly

BOAT SERVICES FROM KOUFONISIA

DESTINATION	PORT	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Amorgos	Koufonisia	1hr 5min	€7.50	3 daily
Donousa	Koufonisia	1¼hr	€5.50	1-2 daily
Folegandros*	Koufonisia	3hr	€56.20	1 daily
Iraklia	Koufonisia	1hr	€5	2-3 daily
Milos*	Koufonisia	4¼hr	€56.20	1 daily
Naxos	Koufonisia	2hr	€9.50	1-2 daily
Paros	Koufonisia	3hr	€16	1-2 daily
Piraeus	Koufonisia	8hr	€31	2-3 weekly
Piraeus*	Koufonisia	7hr 20min	€57.20	1 daily
Schinousa	Koufonisia	40min	€4.50	2-3 daily

Syros	Koufonisia	5½hr	€13	4 weekly
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*high-speed services

BOAT SERVICES FROM DONOUSA

DESTINATION	PORT	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Amorgos	Donousa	1hr 50min	€7	1-2 daily
Astypalea	Donousa	2hr 20min	€17	5 weekly
Iraklia	Donousa	2hr 20min-4hr	€7-14.40	1-2 daily
Koufonisia	Donousa	1¼hr	€6.50	1-2 daily
Naxos	Donousa	1hr 10min-4hr	€7.60	2-3 daily
Paros	Donousa	2½hr-6hr	€14	1-3 daily
Piraeus	Donousa	7hr 10min	€31	4 weekly
Schinousa	Donousa	2hr	€7	1-2 daily
Syros	Donousa	7hr	€14	4 weekly

Iraklia Ηρακλεία

POP 151

Iraklia (ir-a- *klee* -a) is only 19 sq km in area, a little Aegean gem dozing in the sun. Dump the party gear and spurn the nightlife, the sightseeing and the dreary souvenirs. Instead, brace yourself for a serene and quiet life and Iraklia will not disappoint. Only in July and August will you have to share the idyll with like-minded others.

The island now has the distinction of having the first offshore desalination plant in Greece. *And* it's driven by solar panels and windpower. You pass it as you enter the harbour.

The port and main village of Iraklia is Agios Georgios. It has an attractive covelike harbour, complete with a sandy beach. Turn right at the end of the ferry quay and then go up left for a well-supplied general store, Perigiali Supermarket. Further uphill is a smaller store and *kafeneio* called Melissa's, which is also the ferry ticket office, postal agency and perennial gossip shop. There are card phones outside Perigiali Supermarket and Melissa's and there is an ATM just up from the harbour. A medical centre is located next to Perigiali Supermarket. The island's website is.

A surfaced road leads off to the left of the ferry quay, and after about 1km you'll reach Livadi, the island's best beach. A steep 2.5km further on is Hora (Panagia). Where the road forks at the village entrance, keep to the right for the main street.

A surfaced road has recently been extended from Hora to Tourkopigado Beach.

The island's major 'sight' is the Cave of the Sacred Icon of Agios Giannis, which can be reached on foot from Panagia in a four-hour return trip. The path starts just beyond the church at a signpost on the right and is very rocky and steep in places; boots or walking shoes are essential and you should take plenty of water. At the site there is a large open cave on the left. On the right, white-painted rocks surround the apparently tiny entrance to the main sequence of caves. A torch is useful and the initial scramble along a low-roofed tunnel is worth it, leading as it does to caves full of stalactites and stalagmites. On 28 August, the eve of the death of John the Baptist, crowds of local people assemble at the cave and crawl inside to hold a candle-lit service.

Beyond the cave the path leads to the beach at Alimia, which is also served by boat from Agios Georgios in summer, offering a short-cut to the cave.

During July and August, a local boat ferries people to island beaches and also runs day

trips to nearby Schinoussa. Enquire at Perigiali Supermarket.

Sleeping & Eating

Domatia and tavernas are concentrated in and around Agios Georgios, although a few open on the beach at Livadi in summer. Domatia owners meet the boats, but in high season it's advisable to book.

There are a few tavernas in Agios Georgios. All serve fresh fish dishes and other Greek standards.

Anna's Place ROOMS €€

(22850 71145; s/tr €40/85, d €50-70;) Located on high ground above the port, these lovely, airy rooms have stylish furnishings and the front balconies have sweeping views. There's a big communal kitchen and outside eating area.

Agnadema/Dimitri's APARTMENTS €

(/fax 22850 71484, 6978048789; studios/d €40/50;) There's a great choice at this peaceful, family-owned property on the hillside above Agios Georgios harbour. Agnadema's rooms are big, bright and immaculate. Agnadema means 'great view', an understatement considering the superb position of the property. Dimitri's are a row of adjacent small studios with shared verandah, and are equally well equipped.

Maïstrali TAVERNA €

(dishes €5.50-8.50;) Maïstrali has a pleasant terrace and also has rooms and fairly creaky internet access.

Perigiali TAVERNA €

(dishes €4.50-8) This popular place has a large marble table encircling an old pine tree.

Taverna to Steki TAVERNA €

(dishes €4-8) In Hora, Taverna to Steki is a classic village eatery and is well known for its locally sourced ingredients and traditional food.

Schinoussa Σχοινούσα

POP 206

Schinoussa (skih- noo -sah), like Iraklia, has an easygoing pace and a rare sense of timelessness, although high season can be lively. The island has a gentler landscape than its neighbour. The major settlement Hora (Panagia) has a long, narrow main street lying along the breezy crest of the island. There are several beaches scattered round the low-lying coast, some more attractive than others.

Ferries dock at the fishing harbour of Mersini . Hora is a hot 1km uphill. Domatia owners, with transport, meet ferries from about May onwards and will always meet booked guests.

Paralos Travel (22850 71160, fax 22850 71957) is halfway along the main street. It sells ferry tickets for vessels other than the *Scopelitis* and also doubles as the post office and newsagent in season. Grispos Travel (22850 29329) , down at the Grispos Hotel and Restaurant at Tsigouri Beach and at an office at the far end of the village, sells all ferry tickets plus those for the *Express Scopelitis* .

There's a public telephone in the main square and an ATM next to Deli Restaurant. A reasonably useful website is.

On the way down to Tsigouri beach is a little folk museum that features a reconstructed bread oven. Opening hours go with the flow of island life.

Dirt tracks lead from Hora to beaches around the coast. The nearest are Tsigouri and Livadi , both uncrowded outside August. Haul a little further to decent beaches at Almyros and Aligaria . With the exception of Tsigouri, there are no shops or tavernas at the beaches, so take food and water.

From mid-June to September, the tour boat *Aeolia* (6979618233) runs various trips daily, including to Iraklia and Koufonisia. Prices range from about €15 to €35.

Private trips can also be arranged.

Sleeping

There are a few rooms down at Mersini and around the island, but Hora makes an ideal base.

Iliovasilema HOTEL €

(22850 71948;; Hora; s/d/tr/q €45/55/60/65;) Ideally located on the western outskirts of the village, looking south over the island, this bright, clean place has airy rooms and most of the balconies have fine views.

Galini PENSION €

(22850 71983; d/tr €50/60) Most rooms at this well-positioned pension have fabulous views. It stands, quietly, just beyond Hora in its own grounds. Rooms are bright and clean and pleasantly quaint. There's no air-conditioning, but the rooms have sturdy ceiling fans.

Anna Domatia PENSION €

(22850 71161; Hora; s/d/tr €40/45/50;) Well-kept, good-sized rooms, just behind the main street on the west side of the village, make Anna's a worthwhile choice. Some are self-catering.

Grispos Villas APARTMENTS €€

(22850 71930;; d incl breakfast €85-95, tr incl breakfast €105-113;) Down a rough track from Hora, the Grispos complex stands in an enviable location above Tsigouri Beach. There's accommodation and a restaurant (mains €5.80 to €9).

Eating

Akbar CAFE €

(dishes €3-6.50) A colourful little cafe in the main street, Akbar has mezedhes and fresh salads, as well as breakfast for €7 to €12. It does sandwiches as well as sweet crêpes and ice cream.

Loza CAFE €

(dishes €4.50-9.50) Just opposite Akbar, it's a local rendezvous for breakfasts (€7.50) as well as salads and pizzas. It's also a bakery and makes pastries, including baklava and walnut pie.

DELICIOUS DELI

Not only is Schinousa a Cycladean gem, it also harbours one of the finest restaurants in the archipelago, the Deli Restaurant and Sweet Bar (22850 74278;; mains €6.50-9.50) . The Deli is run by the young and creative team of Evdokia Despotidou, Dimitris Papadakis and Dimitris Grammatikakis, who between them produce outstanding Greek cuisine with Cretan and international influences, but with a strong local basis. The menu features such delights as fish carpaccio marinated in lemon, chicken fillet stuffed with sundried tomatoes and local soft goat's cheese. Vegetarians can relish a plate of the day and be certain of the freshest ingredients as Deli sources locally as much as it can. They even make their own bread from grain from the family farm. Try a slice with delicious local *myzithra* and *kefalotyri* cheeses, olives and a glass of *asyrtiko* . Deli is at the heart of village life. The upper floor houses the restaurant, the ground floor is a very cool cafe-bar and downstairs there's a sweet section that will seduce you. The wine list is trim, but excellent, with some fine Greek vintages.

Koufonisia Κουφονήσια

POP 366

Koufonisia is made up of three main islands, the populated Ano Koufonisia , also known as Pano Koufonisia, with the flat profile of Kato Koufonisia just to its south. East of the latter is the dramatic Keros , a rugged mountain of an island with dramatic cliffs.

Excellent beaches make the low-lying Ano Koufonisia one of the most visited of the Little Cyclades and modernisation has taken hold. New hotels and studios are springing up and a marina with capacity for 50 yachts was completed in recent years. The island retains its low-key charm, however, and a substantial fishing fleet sustains a thriving local community outside the fleeting summer season.

A caique ride away, Kato Koufonisia has some beautiful beaches and a lovely church. Archaeological digs on Keros have uncovered over 100 Early Cycladic figurines, including the famous harpist and flautist now on display in Athens' National Archaeological Museum (). In recent years, archaeologists discovered hoards of deliberately broken figurines, dating from the period 2500 BC to 2000 BC. The theory is that they were broken for ritualistic purposes rather than because of vandalism or by accident and may have been deposited on Keros because the island was an important centre of Cycladean ritual.

Sights

An easy walk along the sandy coast road to the east of the port leads in a couple of kilometres to Finikas , Harakopou and Fano Beaches. All tend to become swamped with grilling bodies in July and August and nudity becomes more overt the further you go.

Beyond Fano a path leads to several rocky swimming places, and then continues to the great bay at Pori , where a long crescent of sand slides effortlessly into the ultimate Greek-island-dream sea. Pori can also be reached by an inland road from Hora.

Tours

Koufonissia Tours BOAT TRIPS

(22850 71671;) Based at Villa Ostria hotel, Koufonissia organises caique trips to Keros, Kato Koufonisia and to other islands of the Little Cyclades.

Marigo BOAT TRIPS

(22859 71438, 6945042548) This boat runs transfers to and from various beaches every two hours from 10am for about €5.

Sleeping

Independent camping is not permitted on Koufonisia. There is a good selection of domatia and hotels, and Koufonissia Tours organises accommodation on the island.

Anna's Rooms ROOMS €

(22850 71061, 6974527838; annaloutro@gmail.com; s/d/tr/q €50/60/70/80;)

In a quiet location at Loutro on the west side of the port, these big, bright rooms are a great choice and the welcome is charming. The property overlooks the old harbour and is set amid colourful gardens. Each room has tea- and coffee-making facilities.

Alkionides Studios APARTMENTS €€

(22850 71694;; d/tr/q incl breakfast €70/75/80) In solitary glory high above Loutro's little harbour are these attractive studios. The name 'Alkyonides' is proudly displayed on an old boat, just one of a few eccentric touches. The spacious rooms have fans rather than air-conditioning, a plus as far as some are concerned. Don't be put off by the rocky track or odd abandoned car. An alternative path leads down to Loutro in a few minutes.

Ermis APARTMENTS €€

(22850 71693; fax 22850 74214; s/d €60/70;) These immaculate rooms are in a quiet location behind the post office. They have fresh, pastel colour schemes and are bounded by a lovingly kept garden. The upper rooms at the back have big balconies with sea views.

Villa Ostria HOTEL €€

(22850 71671;; s €60-70, d €70-80, studios €90-110;) Among several hotels on the high ground east of the beach, Ostria has attractive rooms and studios with some quirky decor. Tea- and coffee-making kit and a toaster enhance the smaller rooms and there are full cooking facilities in the studios. Ceiling fans and the absence of televisions are something of a plus.

Eating

Capetan Nikolas SEAFOOD €

(22850 71690; mains €4.50-14) One of the best seafood places around, this cheerful family-run restaurant overlooks the harbour at Loutro. The lobster salad is famous and the seafood pasta is delicious. Locally caught fish, such as red mullet and sea bream, are priced by the kilo. You can settle for tasty meat dishes also.

Karnagio MEZEDHES €

(mains €4.50-12) Don't miss this *ouzerie* at Loutro where the tables skirt the harbour. It operates out of a tiny building. The prawn *saganaki* is delicious as are the homemade pies such as cheese and sun-dried tomato and there are memorable fish dishes.

Kalamia Café CAFE €

(snacks €2.50-7;) A friendly gathering point and net-browsing venue. Link-up is free to customers and there is a bar-top screen if you don't have your own kit. As well as snacks there's a range of breakfast fare from €3.50 to €6. At night Kalamia becomes a very sociable bar.

Atairiastou GREEK €

(mains €7-14) At the top of the road leading directly inland from the quay is this bright and colourful restaurant with a hospitable welcome. The food is traditional with modern touches and each day there are special plates such as lobster with rice or stuffed local lamb. In summer there's occasional live Greek music.

Lefteris TAVERNA €

(dishes €4.50-9) Lefteris dishes up reasonably priced Greek standards to huge numbers of visitors in high summer. Its vast terrace looks out over the town beach and it's open for breakfast and lunch too.

Drinking

Kalamia Café COCKTAIL BAR

Of an evening, this cafe doubles as a great cocktail and drinks bar, where Ioannis Tsourakis has developed the culture of the cocktail and the dry Martini into an art form. Wi-fi available.

Scholio BAR

(7pm-3.30am;) A cosy bar and crêperie, Scholio plays jazz, blues, rock and other choice sounds. It's at the western end of the main street above Loutro. The owners are accomplished photographers and often have exhibitions of their work on show.

Information

Koufonisia's only settlement spreads out behind the ferry quay. On one side of the quay is the yacht marina; on the other side is a wide bay filled with moored fishing boats. A large beach of flat, hard sand gives a great sense of space to the waterfront. Its inner edge is used as a road. The older part of town, the hora, sprawls along a low hill above the harbour and is one long main street, often strewn with fallen leaves of bougainvillea. There are a couple of supermarkets along the road that leads inland from the beach to

link with the main street, and there's a ticket agency, **Prasinos** (22850 71438) halfway along the main street. The post office is along the first road that leads sharply left as you reach the road leading inland from the seafront. There is an ATM outside the post office.

DONOUSΑ ΔΟΝΟΥΣΑ

POP 163

Donousa is the out-on-a-limb island where you stop bothering about which day it might be. In late July and August the island can be swamped by holidaymaking Greeks and sun-seeking northern Europeans, but out of season be prepared to linger – and be rewarded for it.

Agios Stavros is Donousa's main settlement and port, a cluster of whitewashed buildings around a handsome church, overlooking a small, sandy bay. Little has changed here over the years, although the village now has a surfaced ring road and stone-laid walkways. There's an excellent beach, which also serves as a thoroughfare for infrequent vehicles and foot traffic to a clutch of homes, rental rooms and a taverna across the bay.

Kendros , situated 1.25km to the southeast of Agios Stavros, along a surfaced road or stepped track, is a sandy and secluded beach with a seasonal taverna. Livadi , a 1km hike further east, sees even fewer visitors. Both Kendros and Livadi are popular with naturists.

Bulldozed, unsurfaced roads have marred Donousa in places, but there are still paths and tracks that lead into the hills to timeless little hamlets such as Mersini .

Sleeping & Eating

You should book ahead for stays in July and August, and even early September. The hub of Agios Stavros village life is Kafeneio To Kyma by the quay, where things liven up late into the night in summer.

Prassinos Studios APARTMENTS €

(22850 51579, 6979299113; prassinostudios@gmail.com; s/d €40/45, studios/apt €80/95) In a lofty position on the high ground on the far side of the beach, this charming place has peaceful, well-kept rooms and studios, most with cooking facilities.

Skopelitis Studios ROOMS €

(22850 52296; skopelitis@gmx.net; s/d €40/50) These cheerful rooms with verandahs have imaginative decor and a friendly vibe. They have cooking facilities and lie just behind the beach in a remarkable garden of shrubs, flowers and hefty bottle palms.

To Iliovasilema APARTMENTS €

(22850 51570; d/studios/apt €50/60/70;) Reasonable rooms, with cooking

facilities, are ranged around an open area above the beach. The attached restaurant has a fine terrace and a good selection of food (dishes €5 to €8).

Captain Giorgis TAVERNA €

(*mains €4.50-9*) Sturdy traditional food, such as baked goat with potatoes and tomatoes, is on the menu at the Captain's, where the terrace, just above the harbour, has good views across the bay.

Information

Sigalis Travel (22850 51570, 6942269219) is the ticket agency for all ferries and has an office just inland from the harbour road and a second office at the To Iliovasilema restaurant complex. It opens every day from 5.15pm to 6.45pm and 40 minutes before ferry arrivals.

There is an ATM next to a small gift shop on the harbour road (it's sometimes hidden behind a blue shutter for protection from blown sand), but be sure to bring sufficient cash in high season. There is a public telephone up a steep hill above the waterfront; it's hidden behind a tree.

There is a **medical centre** (22850 51506) and postal agency just below the church.

AMORGOS

POP 1859

Amorgos (ah-mor- *ghoss* ; Αμοργός) lies on the far southeastern arc of the Cyclades, pointing the way towards the Dodecanese. Its long ridge of mountains grows in stature as you approach across the sea, the high summits often scarfed with plump purple clouds.

The island is 30km from tip to toe and reaches over 800m at its highest point. The southeast coast is unrelentingly steep and boasts an extraordinary monastery built into the base of a soaring cliff. The opposite coast is just as spectacular, but relents a little at the narrow inlet where the main port and town of Katapola and the second port of Aegiali lie.

Aegiali sits at the island's northern end and is more appealing as a resort. It has a good beach and is encircled by the highest mountains on the island. The enchanting Hora (also known as Amorgos) lies amid a rocky landscape high above Katapola.

There's plenty of scope for beaching, but Amorgos is much more about archaeology and the outdoor world – there's great walking, scuba diving and a burgeoning rock-climbing scene.

Getting There & Away

Connections between Amorgos and Naxos are very good with the small ferry, *Express Scopelitis*, running each day and connecting the Little Cyclades and Amorgos. The big Blue Star ferries also run to and from Piraeus and continue to Astypalea and to Rhodes, while other ferries link from Piraeus via Folegandros and Santorini.

BOAT SERVICES FROM AMORGOS

DESTINATION	PORT	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Aegiali	Katapola	50min	€4.70	1-2 daily
Donousa	Katapola	2hr 20min	€6.50	1-2 daily
Folegandros*	Katapola	2hr 25min	€56.20	1 daily
Ios	Katapola	5hr 20min	€11.50	1 weekly
Iraklia	Katapola	1¼hr-5hr	€12	2-3 daily
Kos	Katapola	5hr	€24.50	2 weekly
Koufonisia	Katapola	1hr 5min	€7.50	2-3daily
Leros	Katapola	3hr 10min	€21.50	2 weekly
Milos*	Katapola	3hr 25min	€56.20	1 daily
Naxos	Katapola	1-4hr	€7.50	1-3 daily
Paros	Katapola	4hr	€16	1-2 daily
Patmos	Katapola	2hr	€19.50	2 weekly
Piraeus	Katapola	9hr	€31	4 weekly
Piraeus*	Katapola	7hr 25min	€57	1 daily
Rhodes	Katapola	8hr	€27	2 weekly
Schinousa	Katapola	1hr 40min	€8-10.50	2-3 daily

Santorini (Thira)*	Katapola	1¼hr	€32	1 daily
Syros	Katapola	5¼hr	€29.80	4 weekly

*high-speed services

Getting Around

Buses go from Katapola to Hora (Amorgos) (€1.60, 15 minutes), to Moni Hozoviotissis (€1.80, 15 minutes), to Agia Anna Beach (€1.60, 20 minutes) and less often to Aegiali (€2.70, 30 minutes). Weekends see fewer services. There are also buses from Aegiali to the picturesque village of Langada. Schedules are posted on bus windscreens.

Cars and motorcycles are available for hire from **Thomas** (Katapola 22850 71777, Aegiali 22850 73444;). Expect to pay about €50 per day for a small car in August.

Katapola Κατάπολα

POP 485

The island's principal port, Katapola straggles round the curving shoreline of a dramatic bay in the most verdant part of the island. The fascinating and extensive remains of the ancient city of Minoa, as well as a Mycenaean cemetery, lie above the port and can be reached by a steep, surfaced road. Amorgos has also yielded many Cycladic finds; the largest figurine in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens () was found in the vicinity of Katapola.

Sleeping & Eating

Domatia owners usually meet ferries and are among the most restrained and polite in the Cyclades.

Eleni's Rooms ROOMS €€

(22850 71628/543; roomseleni@gmail.com; s/d/tr/apt €60/65/75/110) Out on its own just west of the ferry quay, these unfussy but bright and airy rooms are an excellent choice. The rooms rise through several levels and offer unbeatable views. You can even hop down in seconds for a morning swim at an adjoining beach.

Pension Sofia APARTMENTS €€

(22850 71494;; d/tr €55/80;) The charming, family-run Sofia stands amid gardens and little meadows in a quiet area of town. Rooms are fresh and colourful and have cooking facilities. The same family has well-equipped studios and apartments elsewhere in the area (€120 to €150).

Pension Galini PENSION €

(22850 71711; s/d/apt €40/55/95;) Decent rooms in a quiet area next to Pension Sofia.

Pension Amorgos PENSION €€

(22850 71013; s/d/tr €50/70/80;) Traditional hotel with bright well-kept rooms right on the waterfront.

Vitsentzos GREEK €

(dishes €5.50-9) A fine traditional restaurant on the northern side of the bay, Vitsentzos has a leisurely terrace overlooking the water. Food is classic Greek with modern influences. Seafood is by the kilo.

Mouragio SEAFOOD €

(dishes €5-9) Cheerful, and nearly always packed by mid-evening, Mouragio specialises in seafood. It's on the main waterfront near the ferry quay. Shellfish are by the kilo but reasonable dishes include a delicious fish soup for about €8.50.

Telion CAFE €

(snacks €2.50-5;) Fresh, bright colours make this cheerful waterfront cafe-bar a good spot for breakfast, coffee and evening drinks. Breakfasts are from €4 to €6.

Minos TAVERNA €

(mains €4.50-8) A small, unpretentious taverna near the west end of the waterfront, Minos offers Greek standards with a sure touch.

Corner Taverna TAVERNA €

(mains €5-11) A subtle take on Greek cuisine from tasty starters to affordable seafood and meat dishes is the rule at this attractive place at the eastern end of the waterfront.

Drinking

Moon Bar BAR

On the northern waterfront, this is the place for chilled reflection on life with reassuring views to the sea and great background sounds that range from classical through blues, rock and funk into the early hours.

Le Grand Bleu BAR

Still keeping alive the spirit of the iconic film *The Big Blue*, this popular bar plays rock, reggae and modern Greek music on the northern waterfront.

Information

Boats dock right on the waterfront. The bus station is to the left along the main waterfront, on the eastern shore of the bay.

A bank (with ATM) is midwaterfront and there's an ATM next to N Synodinos. There is a postal agency next to the Hotel Minoa on the central square.

N Synodinos (22850 71201; synodinos@nax.forthnet.gr) Sells ferry tickets and has money exchange.

Port police (22850 71259) On the central square.

A useful and informative site.

Hora (Amorgos) Χώρα (Αμοργός)

POP 414

The old capital of Hora sparkles like a snowdrift across its rocky ridge. It stands 400m above sea level and is capped by a 13th-century *kastro* atop a prominent rock pinnacle. Old windmills stand like sentinels on surrounding cliffs. There's a distinct veneer of sophistication, not least in the handful of trendy bars and shops that enhance Hora's appeal without eroding its timelessness.

The bus stop is on a small square at the edge of town where there's also car parking. There's an ATM next to a minimarket right at the entrance to Hora. The post office is at the top of the first long section of the main street, just round from the Kath Odon taverna. The island's police station (22850 71210) is halfway along the main street.

Hora's archaeology collection (9am-1pm & 6-8.30pm Tue-Sun) is on the main pedestrian thoroughfare, near Café Bar Zygós.

TOP OF THE TOWN IN AMORGOS

Standing at the highest point of Hora's main street is the beautiful Emprostiada Traditional Guest House (22850 71814, 6932248867;; [d/studios/ste](#) €100/130/150;). The original building stood beside the first water well sunk in Hora, and today the surrounding garden is a delight of old flagstones, stone walls and shaded bowers, lovingly tended and with a rare sense of timelessness. The accommodation is in individually named rooms where the well-crafted decor and furnishings merge traditional style and modern facilities with flair. Self-catering facilities are of the highest order.

Sleeping & Eating

Pension Ilias PENSION €

(22850 71277; s/tr €45/65, d €50-60, apt €80-90;) Tucked away amid a

jumble of traditional houses just down from the bus stop is this friendly family-run place where the pleasant rooms have been recently renovated.

Kafenion Kath Odon CAFE €

(*mains €4-7.50*) A quaint eatery in the lovely little *plateia* at the top end of the main street. Breakfasts are €5.50 to €9.

Café Bar Zygós CAFE €

(*snacks €3-8; 8am-3am*) Right at the cool, colourful heart of Hora, Zygos is open for breakfast, sandwiches, salads and cold plates as well as coffee and cakes, with lounge sounds by day and dance music and cocktails at night. There's a roof terrace, as the sign makes clear.

Moni Hozoviotissis Μονή της Χοζοβιώτισσας

Amorgos is defined by this iconic monastery (*8am-1pm & 5-7pm*), a dazzling white building embedded in an awesome cliff face high above the sea. It lies on the precipitous east coast below Hora. The monastery contains a miraculous icon that was found in the sea below the cliff. Entrance is free, but donations are appreciated.

Out of respect, modest dress is essential: long trousers for men and a long skirt or dress for women, who should also cover their shoulders. Wraps are no longer available at the entrance, so make sure you come prepared. This is really not the place to make a point.

From about mid-May to October there's a daily bus service to the monastery from Katapola, Hora and Aegiali.

Aegiali Αιγιάλη

POP 487

Aegiali is Amorgos' second port and has more of a resort style, not least because of the fine sweep of sand that lines the inner edge of the bay on which the village stands.

Steep slopes and impressive crags lie above the main village.

Amorgos Travel (*22850 73401;*), above the central supermarket on the waterfront, can help with a host of travel needs including ferry tickets, accommodation and island tours. Check it out for diving and walking possibilities also. Long-established Aegialis Tours (*22850 73107;*) sells ferry tickets and can organise accommodation, tours and vehicle hire.

There's a postal agency about 100m uphill from Aegialis Tours.

Tours & Activities

Ask at travel agencies about boat trips around the island (€30) and to the Little Cyclades (€40).

Amorgos Diving Center DIVING

(*22850 73611, 6932249538;*) Enthusiastic and friendly instruction can be had at this diving centre whose office also stocks sports clothes and equipment including angling gear. Diving, with equipment supplied, is €50 for one hour. A 'discover scuba-diving' session, with instruction, is €60 for three hours. A four-day open-water PADI course is €380.

Special-Interest-Holidays HIKING

(*6939820828;*) Based at Langada, this outfit organises walking holidays with very experienced and knowledgeable guides.

Sleeping

Lakki Village APARTMENTS €€

(*22850 73505;; s/d/tr incl breakfast €85/110/130, apt incl breakfast €110-145;*) This attractive, well-kept complex ambles inland from the beachfront through

lovely gardens and water features. Rooms are in Cycladic-style buildings and have colourful traditional furnishings. Top-priced apartments sleep four people.

Pension Askas PENSION €€

(22850 73333;; d €60-70, tr €65-75;) A couple of hundred metres inland from the beach on the Thalaria road is this pleasant, friendly pension in a garden setting. The well-kept rooms are bright and attractive. Breakfast (€6) can be enjoyed on a fine rooftop terrace.

Aegiali Camping CAMPGROUND €

(22850 73500;; camp sites per adult/child/tent €5.50/2.70/4) Next to Askas Taverna, the good facilities and a pleasantly shaded location make this campground a worthwhile option. Rental tents are €6.30.

Eating

For drinks and coffee, the steps leading up from the eastern end of the waterfront boast several cafe-bars. *Maestro* is a cool spot that starts with breakfast (€4.50 to €6.50) and keeps going until late into the night.

To Limani TAVERNA €

(; dishes €4.50-9) Traditional fare prepared with home-grown produce makes Limani a popular place. Local dishes include baked goat and, for fish lovers, fish soup, while vegetarians can enjoy fava beans with stuffed eggplant. For dessert the homemade orange pie is superb. There's a hugely popular Thai food night every Friday except in August. The owners also have beautiful rooms, studios and apartments from €80 to €115 high above the bay in the village of Potamos.

Restaurant Lakki GREEK €

(mains €4-9) A beach and garden setting makes the restaurant of Lakki Village a relaxing place to enjoy well-prepared Greek dishes.

Askas Taverna TAVERNA €

(mains €4.50-8) Next to Aegiali Camping and Pension Askas, this friendly taverna offers Greek food with many of the ingredients locally sourced (the family olive groves are right next door). The Amorgian lamb baked with potatoes and chopped tomatoes is a traditional favourite. They stage *rembetika* (blues songs) evenings four times a week in July and August.

Around Amorgos

On the east coast, south of Moni Hozoviotissis, is *Agia Anna Beach*, the nearest beach to both Katapola and Hora. Don't get excited; the car park is bigger than any of the little pebbly beaches strung along the rocky shoreline, and all the beaches fill up quickly. Next to the car park on the cliff top there's a small cantina selling food and drinks.

The lovely villages of *Langada* and *Tholaria* nestle amid the craggy slopes above Aegiali. The views from both are worth the trip alone. The two are linked to each other, and to Aegiali, by a signposted circular path that takes about four hours to walk. Regular buses run between the villages and Aegiali.

In *Langada*, the *Pagali Hotel* (22850 73310;; s/d €58/65, ste €98-120;) is tucked away in the lower village and has superb views. An almost Alpine-like terrace fronts the spacious rooms and studios. The hotel is a good contact point for alternative holidays that include yoga and meditation sessions, art workshops, helping on the family farm, walking and rock climbing on the neighbouring crags.

The adjoining *Nico's Taverna* (22850 73310; mains €6-8) is run by the same family that owns the *Pagali Hotel*. *Nico's* makes a strong play for sustainability, with organic ingredients from the family's own farm, including olive oil, homemade wine and

cheeses. Vegetarians should be in their element, but local goat dishes are also superb. In Tholaria, Evis Rooms (22850 73391;; s/d/tr €65/75/85) are in a lovely, quiet position at the entrance to the village and have pleasant, tidy rooms.

IOS

POP 1838

The image of Ios (Ios) as a hard-core party destination is slowly changing as a broader range of holidaymaker begins to appreciate that this is still a traditional Cycladic island, in both landscape and cultural terms. Greek life goes on sturdily beyond the wall-to-wall bars and nightclubs of Hora and the beach scene. The opening in 2010 of the excavated Bronze Age site of Skarkos has enhanced the island's appeal. More families are heading for Ios as are other visitors with a cooler take on hedonism, although the late-night action in Hora and Mylopotas is still hot.

Getting There & Away

Ios lies conveniently on the Mikonos–Santorini ferry axis and has regular connections with Piraeus.

BOAT SERVICES FROM IOS

DESTINATION	PORT	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Amorgos	Ios	50min	€4.50	1-2 daily
Anafi	Ios	3½hr	€9	5 weekly
Folegandros	Ios	1hr 5min	€7	1-2 daily
Kea (Tzia)	Ios	11½hr	€23	2 weekly
Kimolos	Ios	5½hr	€11	5-6 weekly

Kythnos	los	10½hr	€20	2 weekly
Lavrio	los	12hr 10min	€25	2 weekly
Milos	los	3½hr	€17	5-6 weekly
Mykonos	los	1hr 40min	€36	2-3 daily
Naxos*	los	45min	€25.50	1-2 daily
Paros	los	3½hr	€11	2 daily
Piraeus	los	7hr	€32.50	4-5 daily
Piraeus*	los	3hr 20min	€53-56	3 daily
Santorini (Thira)	los	1hr 20min	€8	5 daily
Santorini (Thira)*	los	40min	€18	3 daily
Sikinos	los	25min	€5	1-4 daily
Syros	los	3½hr	€16	4 weekly

*high-speed services

Getting Around

In summer crowded buses run between Ormos, Hora (€1.60) and Mylopotas Beach (€1.60) about every 15 minutes. From June to August private excursion buses go to Manganari Beach (one way €3.50) and Agia Theodoti Beach (one way €3). Buses leave at 11am and return at 4.30pm.

Caïques travelling from Ormos to Manganari cost €12 per person for a return trip (departing 11am daily). Ormos and Hora both have car and motorcycle hire that can be booked through the Plakiotis Travel Agency ([Click here](#)) and Acteon Travel ([Click here](#)).

Hora, Ormos & Mylopotas Χώρα, Ορμος & Μυλοπότας

los has three population centres, all very close together on the west coast: the port, Ormos; the capital, Hora (also known as the 'village') 2km inland by road from the port; and Mylopotas, the beach 2km downhill from Hora. The bus terminal in Ormos is straight ahead from the ferry quay on Plateia Emirou. If you don't mind the heat, it's possible to walk from the port to Hora by heading up left from Plateia Emirou, then right up a stepped path after about 100m. It's about 1.2km.

In Hora the main landmark is the big cathedral opposite the bus stop, on the other side of the dusty car park and play area. Plateia Valeta is the central square.

There are public toilets uphill behind the main square.

The road straight ahead from the bus stop leads to Mylopotas Beach.

Sights

Hora is a lovely Cycladic village with a labyrinth of narrow lanes and cubist houses. It's at its most charming during daylight hours when the bars are shut and it recaptures the atmosphere of other island towns.

Skarkos ANCIENT SITE

(*Snail*; 22860 91236; 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun Jun-Nov) los can rightly celebrate a cultural triumph in its award-winning archaeological site of Skarkos. This early- to late-Bronze Age settlement crowns a low hill in the plain just to the north of Hora. Walled

terraces surrounding the settlement have been restored and the low ruins of several Cycladic-style buildings of the period are exposed. A visitor centre is part of the development and there are interpretation boards in Greek and English.

Archaeological Museum MUSEUM

(22860 91246; Hora; admission €1, EU students free; 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun) Finds from Skarkos are displayed at this excellent museum in the town hall by the bus stop in Hora. There are also exhibits from island excavations in general.

Gaitis-Simosi Museum ART GALLERY

A remarkable art gallery, which has been 'under construction' for several years, stands on the summit of the highest hill behind Hora and remained unfinished at the time of writing. It's being built to house the works of the radical artist Yiannis Gaitis, who had a house on Ios, and his wife, the sculptor Gabriella Simosi. It is intended to also display works by other artists. The building comprises several huge gallery spaces worthy of European capitals.

Activities

Yialos Watersports WATERSPORTS

(22860 92463, 6974290990;; Gialos Beach) Banana rides (€12), canoe hire (per hour €9) and mountain-bike hire (per day €10) are all available at Yialos Watersports. You can also hire windsurfing equipment (per hour €17) or take a tube ride (€14 to €17). New attractions at Yialos include a floodlit volleyball court and the 'waterstrider', a self-propelled device that glides across water.

Mylopotas Water Sports Center WATERSPORTS

(22860 91622;; Mylopotas) This centre has snorkelling and windsurfing gear, pedal boats (per hour €15) and kayaks (per hour single/double €8/12, per day €20/25) for hire. Waterskiing (per session €30), banana rides (€12 to €15), tube rides (€10 to €25) and sailing (per hour/day €25/70) are also available. Beach volleyball and soccer rental is from €3 to €15. There is also a speedboat taxi available for hire (€10 to €30).

New Dive Diving Centre DIVING

(22860 92340;; Mylopotas;) New Dive runs a PADI 'discover scuba-diving' session (€55), plus more intensive PADI courses from €290 to €795. Speciality courses range from deep diving to underwater photography, fish identification, and underwater navigation (€250 to €350). There are also daily diving and snorkelling trips, with shore dives from €25. Internet is available for €3 per hour.

Meltemi Water Sports WATERSPORTS

(22860 91680;; Mylopotas) Windsurfing (per hour/day €15/40) is on offer at Meltemi Water Sports at the beach opposite Far Out Camping. Canoes and pedalos can be hired. Tube rides cost from €9 to €30. Meltemi runs a similar scene at Manganari Beach and has a water taxi from Mylopotas to other beaches (€15 to €25).

Sleeping

ORMOS OPMOZ

The port has several good sleeping options, reasonable eating places, a couple of handy beaches, and regular bus connections to Hora and other beaches.

Golden Sun Hotel HOTEL €€

(22860 91110;; s/d/tr incl breakfast €70/80/90;) The road from Gialos to Hora may not seem ideal sleeping territory, but this family-run hotel is located just up from the port and lies well down from the road. It overlooks open fields towards the sea. The good-sized rooms are well cared for.

Hotel Poseidon HOTEL €€

(22860 91091;; s/d/tr €75/90/117;) A very quiet and well-run hotel that lifts you high above the bustle and noise of the port, the Poseidon has terrific views from its front balconies. A flight of steps leads up to the hotel where rooms are immaculate and well equipped and there's a swimming pool.

GIALOS BEACH ΠΑΡΑΛΙΑ ΓΙΑΛΟΣ

Hotel Helena HOTEL €€

(22860 91276;; s/d/tr/apt €50/70/90/120;) Set a short distance back from the midpoint of the beach is this quiet and well-run place. It has a cool patio, kindly owners and bright, clean rooms. Breakfast is €4.50.

To Corali HOTEL €€

(22860 91272;; d/tr incl breakfast €95/105, apt €120;) These sparkling rooms are in a good position right opposite the beach and are attached to the restaurant of the same name. There's a colourful garden at the rear and the owners create a happy atmosphere.

HORA ΧΩΡΑ

Francesco's HOSTEL €

(22860 91223;; dm €15, s €40-45, d €50-60;) Long established and very well run, the famous Francesco's has clean dormitories and rooms, and is in an enviable position with great views of the bay. It's away from the centre, but is a lively meeting place for the younger international set. There's a busy bar and terrace and a big après-beach jacuzzi. Francescos is reached by going up right from the cathedral for about 30m and then going left along Odos Scholarhiou for a couple of hundred metres.

Avanti Hotel HOTEL €€

(22860 91165;; s/d/tr €80/95/120;) High above the throng on the eastern side of town are these well-kept rooms. Decor is fresh and bright and there are tea- and coffee-making facilities available. The hotel has charming public areas. The owners also run Margarita's Rooms (22860 91165; s/d/tr €55/65/90;) at the heart of Hora.

MYLOPOTAS ΜΥΛΟΠΟΤΑΣ

Hotel Nissos Ios HOTEL €€

(22860 91610;; s/d/tr €60/75/90;) This excellent place has bright and fresh rooms, and wall murals add a colourful touch. Each room has tea- and coffee-making facilities. The welcome is good-natured and the beach is just across the road. There's an outdoor jacuzzi and the hotel rents out discounted beach umbrellas to guests.

Paradise Apartments APARTMENTS €€

(22860 91622; apt €70-140;) These apartments are located a short distance away from Paradise Rooms, and are run by a member of the same family. They're located in a secluded setting and have a lovely pool and big patio. At both Paradise accommodations, guests can get a 30% to 50% reduction at Mylopotas Water Sports Center ([Click here](#)) and the New Dive Diving Center ([Click here](#)).

Paradise Rooms ROOMS €€

(22860 91621;; s/d €55/65;) The family-run rooms here are about halfway along the beachfront, and the beautiful garden is looked after with love and skill. Breakfast costs €6.

Far Out Camping, Village Hotel & Beach Club RESORT €

(22860 91468;; camp sites per adult/child €12/6, bungalows €15-22, studio €100;) There's plenty of action here, backed by wall-to-wall facilities. Meltemi Water Sports is just across the road. There's a bar, restaurant and four swimming pools. The

'bungalows' range from small tent-sized affairs to neat little 'roundhouses' with single and double beds. The studios are in a separate location and have all mod cons.

Eating

ORMOS ΟΡΜΟΣ

Peri Anemon TAVERNA €

(mains €7.50-13) A pleasant little cafe-taverna in the square next to Akteon Travel on the Ormos harbour front, where you can get snacks and Greek standards.

GIALOS BEACH ΓΙΑΛΟΣ

To Corali GREEK-ITALIAN €

(dishes €5-9) Mouth-watering wood-fired pizzas are list-toppers at this well-run eatery that's right by the beach and in front of the hotel of the same name. You can sit out at tables on the beach or eat by the lovely pool. There are pastas and salads as well, and it's a great spot for coffee, drinks and ice cream.

HORA ΧΩΡΑ

As well as Hora's raft of entertaining eateries there are fast-food outlets including gyros (meat slivers cooked on a vertical rotisserie; usually eaten with pitta bread) stands where you can get a cheap bite.

Ali Baba's THAI €

(dishes €7-12) Another great los favourite, this is the place for Thai dishes, including *pad thai* and Thai green curry, cooked by authentic Thai chefs. The service is very upbeat and there's a garden courtyard. It's on the same street as the Emporiki bank.

Pomodoro GREEK-ITALIAN €

(dishes €8-14) Spread over two floors, Pomodoro is just off the main square above Disco 69. There's a fabulous roof garden with panoramic views. Authentic wood-fired pizzas are just part of its modern Italian and Mediterranean menu. Try the Pomodora Platter for two, a generous helping of cured meats, cheeses, vegetables and olives (€10.50).

Pithari MODERN GREEK €€

(mains €9-17) Tucked away down an alleyway beside the cathedral, Pithari has a creative menu of traditional Greek cuisine given a modern twist. Try the filo-pastry pies of feta cheese with honey and sesame seeds. Also serves lunch, with pastas and other well-sourced local dishes.

Lord Byron GREEK-ITALIAN €

(dishes €7-14) Near the main square, this long-standing favourite is relaxed and intimate, and the food is a great fusion of Greek and Italian. Dishes range from marinated anchovies with garlic and balsamic vinegar to baked lamb with honey and rosemary, and a carrot and potato purée.

Porky's FAST FOOD €

(snacks €2.50-6) Fuel up with toasties, salads, crêpes and hamburgers at this relentless los survivor, just off the main square.

MYLOPOTAS ΜΥΛΟΠΟΤΑΣ

Drakos Taverna SEAFOOD €

(dishes €4.50-9) Enjoy reasonably priced fish dishes (although some species are by the kilogram) at this popular taverna that overlooks the sea at the southern end of the beach. Try the squid stuffed with feta or the seafood salad.

Bamboo Restaurant & Pizzeria GREEK €

(dishes €6.50-9.50) Run by a member of the same family that operates Hotel Nissos Ios, this pleasant place does a good line in traditional *mousakas* (baked layers of eggplant, minced meat and cheese sauce) and pizzas, plus a range of other Greek dishes. Breakfasts are €4.50 to €7.50.

Entertainment

Nightlife at the heart of Hora is a blitz. No one signs up for an early night in the tiny main square, where it gets so crowded by midnight that you won't be able to fall down, even if you want to. Be young and carefree – but also be careful.

Central venues include Blue Note , Flames Bar , Red Bull and Liquid . Outside the centre of Hora are equally popular bars with a cooler, less frenetic pace and there are some bigger dance clubs.

Scorpion's is a late-night dance-to-trance and progressive venue with laser shows, while Aftershock goes for sensation with raunchy dancers and house, trance and Greek hits. There's usually an entrance charge of about €7 that includes a first drink.

Slammer Bar BAR

(Main Sq, Hora) Hammers out house, rock and Latin, as well as multiple tequila shots; head-banging in every sense.

Superfly BAR

(Main Sq, Hora) Plays funky house tunes.

Disco 69 BAR

(Main Sq, Hora) Hard-core drinking to a background of disco and current hits.

Click Cocktail Bar-Café BAR

The big open terrace here enhances the cool style. It's open for breakfast (€6 to €7), while evenings see a choice of dozens of creative cocktails to go with a breezy mix of sounds.

Ios Club LOUNGE

Head here for a cocktail and watch the sun set to classical, Latin and jazz music from a terrace with sweeping views. It's along the pathway by Sweet Irish Dream.

Orange Bar BAR

A more easy-paced music bar playing rock, indie and Brit-pop just outside the war zone.

Information

There's an ATM right by the information kiosks at the ferry quay. In Hora, the National Bank of Greece, behind the church, and the Commercial Bank, nearby, both have ATMs.

The post office in Hora is a block behind the main road on the narrow road that leads off right by the final bend as you enter Hora coming uphill from Ormos.

Acteon Travel (22860 91343;) On the square near the quay, and in Hora and Mylopotas. Internet is €4 per hour.

Hospital (22860 91227) On the way to Gialos, 250m northwest of the quay; there are several doctors in Hora.

Plakiotis Travel Agency (22860 91221; plaktr2@otenet.gr) On the Ormos waterfront.

Port police (22860 91264) At the southern end of the Ormos waterfront, just before Ios Camping.

Around Ios

Travellers are lured to Ios by its nightlife, but also by its beaches. Vying with Mylopotas as one of the best is Manganari , a long swath of fine white sand on the south coast, reached by bus or by caique in summer (see Getting Around,).

From Ormos, it's a 10-minute walk past the little church of Agia Irini for Valmas Beach .

A 1.3km walk northwest of Ormos, Koumbara is the official clothes-optional beach. Tsamaria, nearby, is nice and sheltered when it's windy elsewhere. Agia Theodoti, Psathi and Kalamos Beaches, all on the northeast coast, are more remote. Psathi is a good windsurfing venue.

On Cape Gero Angeli, near Plakoto Beach at the northernmost tip of the island and 12km from Hora along a surfaced road, is the alleged site of Homer's Grave. Moni Kalamou, on the way to Kalamos and Manganari Beaches, stages a huge religious festival in late August and a festival of music and dance in September.

SANTORINI (THIRA)

POP 12,440

Santorini (Σαντορίνη (Θήρα)) rocks in more ways than one. Few will be unmoved by the scale of the island's 16 or so kilometres of multicoloured cliffs, which soar up over 300m from a sea-drowned caldera, the vast crater left by one of the biggest volcanic eruptions in history. Lesser islands curl around the fragmented western edge of the caldera, but it is the main island of Thira that will take your breath away with its snow drift of white Cycladic houses lining the cliff tops and, in places, spilling like icy cornices down the terraced rock.

Thira is geared to a conspicuous tourism that is underpinned by enthralling archaeology, fine dining, major wineries, front-row sunsets and a vibrant nightlife. There are even multicoloured beaches of volcanic sand. You'll share the experience for most of the year with crowds of fellow holidaymakers and day visitors from huge cruise ships, but the island somehow manages to cope with it all.

History

Minor eruptions have been the norm in Greece's earthquake record, but Santorini has bucked the trend – with attitude – throughout its history. Eruptions here were genuinely earth-shattering, and so wrenching that they have changed the shape of the island several times.

Dorians, Venetians and Turks occupied Santorini, but its most influential early inhabitants were Minoans. They came from Crete sometime between 2000 BC and 1600 BC, and the settlement at Akrotiri () dates from the peak years of their great civilisation.

The island was circular then and was called Strongili (Round One). Thousands of years ago a colossal volcanic eruption caused the centre of Strongili to sink, leaving a caldera with towering cliffs along the east side – now one of the world's most dramatic sights. The latest theory, based on carbon dating of olive-oil samples from Akrotiri, places the event 10 years either side of 1613 BC.

Santorini was recolonised during the 3rd century BC, but for the next 2000 years sporadic volcanic activity created further physical changes that included the formation of the volcanic islands of Palia Kameni and Nea Kameni at the centre of the caldera. As recently as 1956 a major earthquake devastated Oia and Fira, yet by the 1970s the islanders had embraced tourism as tourists embraced the island, and today Santorini is a destination of truly spectacular appeal.

Getting There & Away

There are several flights a day to and from Athens (€113, 45 minutes). There are also a good number of ferries each day to and from Piraeus and to and from many of Santorini's neighbouring islands.

Thira's main port, Athinios, stands on a cramped shelf of land at the base of sphinxlike cliffs and is a scene of marvellous chaos that always seems to work itself out when ferries arrive. Buses (and taxis) meet all ferries and then cart passengers up the towering cliffs through an ever-rising series of S-bends to Fira.

BOAT SERVICES FROM SANTORINI (THIRA)

DESTINATION	PORT	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Amorgos*	Santorini (Thira)	1¼hr	€32	1 daily
Anafi	Santorini (Thira)	1hr 10min	€8	5 weekly
Folegandros	Santorini (Thira)	2½hr	€9	1-2 daily
Folegandros*	Santorini (Thira)	30min	€29.50	1 daily
Ios	Santorini (Thira)	40min	€18	2-3 daily

Ios	Santorini (Thira)	1hr 35min	€8	4 weekly
Iraklio	Santorini (Thira)	4½hr	€51.50	1-2 daily
Kalymnos	Santorini (Thira)	5½hr	€30	2-4 weekly
Karpathos	Santorini (Thira)	11hr 55min	€28	2-3 weekly
Kasos	Santorini (Thira)	10hr* 14hr	€28	2-3 weekly
Kimolos	Santorini (Thira)	5½hr	€11	2 weekly
Kos	Santorini (Thira)	5hr	€30	2 weekly
Kythnos	Santorini (Thira)	12hr	€24	2 weekly
Lavrio	Santorini (Thira)	1¾hr	€29	2 weekly
Milos	Santorini (Thira)	3½hr	€17	2 weekly
Milos*	Santorini (Thira)	2hr	€39.60	1 daily
Mykonos*	Santorini (Thira)	2½hr	€50	2-3 daily
Naxos	Santorini (Thira)	2hr	€16.50	5 daily
Naxos*	Santorini (Thira)	1½hr	€37	2-3 daily
Nisyros	Santorini (Thira)	8hr	€30	2-3 weekly
Paros	Santorini (Thira)	3-4hr	€18.50	5 daily
Paros*	Santorini (Thira)	2¼hr	€45	2-3 daily
Piraeus	Santorini (Thira)	9hr	€33.50	4-5 daily
Piraeus*	Santorini (Thira)	5½hr	€58-61.50	3 daily
Rafina*	Santorini (Thira)	4¾hr	€58-62	1 daily
Rhodes	Santorini (Thira)	13½hr	€30	1-2 daily
Sikinos	Santorini (Thira)	2¾hr	€14.10	1-4 daily
Sikinos*	Santorini (Thira)	2¼hr	€8	1 weekly
Sitia (Crete)	Santorini (Thira)	7hr 25min	€25	2 weekly
Syros	Santorini (Thira)	8¼hr	€21	2 weekly
Tilos	Santorini (Thira)	9½hr	€30	2-3 weekly

*high-speed services

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

There are frequent bus connections in summer between Fira's bus station and the airport, located southwest of Monolithos Beach. Enthusiastic hotel and domatia staff meet flights, and some also return guests to the airport. A taxi to the airport costs €12.

BUS

In summer buses leave Fira every half-hour for Oia (€1.60), Monolithos (€1.60), Kamari (€1.60) and Perissa (€2.20). There are less frequent buses to Exo Gonia (€1.60) and Perivolos Beach (€2.20). In summer the last regular bus to Fira from Oia leaves at 11pm.

Buses leave Fira, Kamari and Perissa for the port of Athinios (€2.20, 30 minutes) an

hour to 1½ hours before most of the ferry departures. Buses for Fira meet all ferries, even late at night. It is wise to check port departures well in advance.

CABLE CAR & DONKEY

A **cable car** (22860 22977; *M Nomikou*) hums smoothly (every 20 minutes 6.30am to 11pm June to August) between Fira and the small port below, known as Fira Skala, from where volcanic island cruises leave. One-way cable car tickets cost €4/2 per adult/child and luggage is €2. Less frequent services operate outside the peak season. You can make a more leisurely, and aromatic, upward trip by donkey (about €5).

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

A car is the best way to explore the island during high season, when buses are intolerably overcrowded and you're lucky to get on one at all. Be very patient and cautious when driving – the narrow roads, especially in Fira, can be a nightmare. Note that Oia has no petrol station, the nearest being just outside Fira.

Two very good local hire outfits are **Damigos Rent a Car** (22860 22048, 6979968192) and, for scooters, **Zerbakis** (22860 33329, 6944531992) .

TAXI

Fira's **taxi stand** (22860 23951/2555) is in Dekigala just round the corner from the bus station. A taxi from the port of Athinios to Fira costs between €10 to €14 and a trip from Fira to Oia is from about €12 to €15. Expect to add €1 to €2 if the taxi is booked ahead or if you have luggage. A taxi to Kamari is about €12, to Perissa €16, and to Ancient Thira is about €25 one way.

Fira Φήρα

POP 2291

Santorini's main town of Fira is a vibrant, bustling place, its caldera edge layered with hotels, cave apartments, infinity pools and swish restaurants, all backed by a warren of narrow streets full of shops and even more bars and restaurants. A multitude of fellow admirers cannot diminish the impact of Fira's stupendous landscape. Views over the multicoloured cliffs are breathtaking, and at night the caldera edge is a frozen cascade of lights that eclipses the displays of the gold shops in the streets behind.

Sights & Activities

Archaeological Museum MUSEUM

(22860 22217; *M Nomikou*; *adult/student €3/2*; 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun) This museum, near the cable-car station, houses finds from Akrotiri and Ancient Thira, some Cycladic figurines, and Hellenistic and Roman sculptures.

Fira

Top Sights

B1

Sights

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Museum of Prehistoric Thera MUSEUM

(22860 23217; Mitropoleos; admission €3; 8.30am-8pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar) Near the bus station, this museum houses extraordinary finds that were excavated from Akrotiri. Most impressive is the glowing gold ibex figurine, measuring around 10cm in length and dating from the 17th century BC.

Megara Gyzi Museum MUSEUM

(22860 23077; Agiou Ioannou; adult/student €3.50/2; 10.30am-1.30pm & 5-8pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-4.30pm Sun May-Oct) The Megaro Gyzi has local memorabilia including fascinating photographs of Fira before and immediately after the 1956 earthquake.

Petros M Nomikos Conference Centre MUSEUM

(22860 23016;; adult/child €4/free; 10am-7pm May-Oct) The centre is run by the Thera Foundation and hosts major conferences, but also stages the fascinating 'Wall Paintings of Thera' exhibition, a collection of three-dimensional life-size reproductions of the finest Akrotiri wall paintings.

Folklore Museum of Santorini MUSEUM

(22860 22792; adult/child €3/free; 10am-2pm & 6-8pm Apr-Oct) Located about 600m along the east side road from Fira to Vourvoulos, this museum houses an intriguing collection that casts light on Santorini's traditions and history.

Tours

Tour companies operate various trips to and fro across the caldera. Options include a tour to the volcanic island of Nea Kameni (€15), to the volcano and hot springs (including swimming) of Palia Kameni (€20), full-day boat tours to the volcanic islets, Thirasia and Oia (€28), a sunset boat tour (€35) and a bus tour including wine tasting (€25). Book at travel agencies.

The *Thalassa*, an exact copy of an 18th-century schooner, scoots around the caldera every afternoon on a sunset buffet dinner tour (€50, from May to October), stopping for sightseeing on Nea Kameni and for ouzo on Thirasia. Most travel agencies sell tickets. Santorini's lauded wines are its crisp, clear dry whites, such as the delectable *asyrtiko*, and the amber-coloured, unfortified dessert wine Vinsanto. Most local vineyards hold tastings and tours.

A worthwhile visit is to Santo Wines (22860 22596;; *Pyrgos*) where you can sample a range of wines and browse a shop full of choice vintages as well as local products including fava beans, tomatoes, capers and preserves.

One of the most entertaining venues is the Volcan Wine Museum (22860 31322;; admission €5; noon-8pm), housed in a traditional *canava* (winery) on the way to Kamari. Admission includes an audio guide and three wine tastings. On Friday night from May to October there's a festival night (€48), which includes a visit to the museum, three tastings, a buffet, wine, live music and traditional costume dances.

Other wineries that are worth a visit include Boutari (22860 81011;; *Megalohori*), Canava Roussos (22860 31278;; *Mesa Gonia*), Hatzidakis (22860 32552;; *Pyrgos*) and Sigalas (22860 71644;; *Oia*). All of these should be contacted before visiting.

Sleeping

Few of Fira's sleeping options are cheap, and even budget places hike their prices in July and August. Some *domatia* touts at the port may claim that their rooms are in town, when they're actually a long way out; ask to see a map showing the exact location. If you're looking for a caldera view, expect to pay a much higher price than elsewhere. Many hotels in Fira, especially on the caldera rim, cannot be reached by vehicle. If you have heavy luggage, this is worth remembering, especially as there may be several flights of steps leading to and from your accommodation. Most budget and midrange places offer free transfer to port or airport and will porter your luggage to and from your accommodation. Some hotels may charge anything from €10 upwards for a transfer to the port or airport.

Aroma Suites HOTEL €€

(22860 24112;; *Agiou Mina*; s €120, d €140-160;) Overlooking the caldera at the quieter southern end of Fira, and more accessible than similar places, this boutique hotel has charming service to match its overall ambience. Stylish, modern facilities enhance traditional caldera interiors, such as in the honeymoon suite: a classic Fira cave chamber, complete with jacuzzi.

Loizos Apartments HOTEL €€

(22860 24046;; s/tr/apt €75/110/ 140, d €85-95;) One of the best places in Fira, Loizos is located in a quiet cul-de-sac, yet has the advantage of vehicular access and is only minutes from the centre of town and the caldera edge. Rooms range from standard to deluxe and all are well equipped, clean and comfortable. Those on the front upper floor have a panoramic view towards Kamari and the sea. Breakfast is €9. The same owners have cheaper accommodation (single/double €55/65) at Messaria, 2.5km southeast of Fira.

Apartments Gaby APARTMENTS €€

(22860 22057; *gabyapartments@yahoo.com*; *Nomikou*; d €65-95, tr/apt €110/120;) The best rooms here are on a series of roof terraces that guarantee sunset views, and there's a quiet and reassuring local feel that transcends Fira's surface gloss. Gaby is just beyond the Petros M Nomikos Conference Centre on the caldera-edge path

where it reaches Firostefani.

Hotel Atlantis HOTEL €€€

(22860 22232;; *Mitropoleos; s incl breakfast €175, d incl breakfast €205-315;*) The Atlantis is a handsome old building that overlooks the widest section of the caldera-edge promenade. It's full of cool, relaxing lounges and terraces, and the bright and airy bedrooms are quiet and very well equipped. Front rooms have caldera views. The price range indicates views and window or balcony options.

Karterados Caveland Hostel HOSTEL €€

(22860 22122;; *Karterados; dm incl breakfast €15-21; d without/with bathroom incl breakfast €50/70, apt incl breakfast €120;*) This new facility, opened in 2011, is based in a fascinating old winery complex in Karterados about 1km from central Fira. It was once a local tennis club and the courts are available to guests. Accommodation is in the old wine caves, all of them with creative and colourful decor and good facilities. The surrounding garden and public areas are peaceful and relaxing. There are yoga classes on offer for €7 to €35.

Maria's Rooms ROOMS €€

(22860 25143, 6973254461; *Agiou Mina; d €70-80;*) A handful of charming rooms open onto a shared terrace that has unbeatable caldera and sunset views. Rooms are small but immaculate, and blissfully peaceful.

Nonis APARTMENTS €€€

(22860 25269;; *s/d/tr/apt €140/160/180/220;*) In an elevated position on the caldera edge and right at the southern end of Fira, these bright and airy self-catering rooms are easily accessed and are only a short stroll to the town centre. There's an outdoor jacuzzi and small swimming pool.

Mill Houses BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€

(22860 27117;; *Firostefani; ste incl breakfast €210-410;*) Located on the side of the caldera at Firostefani, these superb studios and suites are full of light and Cycladic colour. The creative decor and stylish furnishings go with first-class facilities and service. A sunset view is inevitable.

Villa Roussa HOTEL €€

(22860 23220;; *Dekigala; s/d/tr €60/80/95;*) You don't have a caldera view, but this hotel is right at the heart of town and is hard to beat for value with its immaculate rooms. It even has a swimming pool.

Villa San Giorgio HOTEL €€

(22860 23516;; *s/d/tr €60/70/85;*) Not a scenic location, but very close to the centre of Fira and a good budget option with decent rooms and friendly owners. There's a communal kitchen and tea- and coffee-making facilities.

Hotel Sofia HOTEL €€

(22860 22802; *Firostefani; s/d €60/75;*) These fresh, comfy rooms at the heart of Firostefani are a pleasant alternative to the bustle of Fira. Fira's centre is about 1.5km south, along a lovely caldera-edge walkway. Breakfast is €8.

Santorini Camping CAMPGROUND €

(22860 22944;; *camp sites per adult/child/tent €12.50/7/free, dorm €20;*) Located on the eastern outskirts of town, this campground has some shade and decent facilities. There's a self-service restaurant, minimarket and pool. It's 400m east of Plateia Theotokopoulou. There are also bungalows with air-con that are priced, depending on the number of people, from €55 to €105, with one equipped for disabled

use. Hire tent with bed costs €17.50 per person.

Hotel Ketí HOTEL €€

(22860 22324;; *Agiou Mina; d €95-120, tr/ste €123/140;*) Recently refurbished, Hotel Ketí is one of the smaller 'sunset view' hotels in a peaceful caldera niche. Its attractive traditional rooms are carved into the cliffs. Half of the rooms have jacuzzis. Breakfast is €6.

Pelican Hotel HOTEL €€

(22860 23113;; *Danezi; s/d/tr/q incl breakfast €84/94/112/130;*) There's no caldera view, but rooms are comfy and well appointed at this long-standing hotel only metres from the centre of town.

Porto Fira Suites HOTEL €€€

(22860 22849;; *Agiou Mina; 2-/3-/4-person ste incl breakfast €280/350/420;*) This top-rated Fira hotel merges tradition with luxury and modern conveniences. Rooms are individually furnished and have huge stone-based beds and jacuzzis. There's a cafe-bar and restaurant and breakfasts are lush affairs.

Strass Residences HOTEL €€€

(22860 33765;; *Firostefani; studios incl breakfast €280-420;*) They even manage palm trees round the pool at this exclusive little enclave of three luxury studios, all in glorious white. It feels as if the rest of the world is miles away, but Fira is just down the road.

Eating

Tourist-trap eateries, often with overpriced, indifferent food, are still an unfortunate feature of summertime Fira. In some places singles, and even families with young children, may find themselves unwelcome in the face of pushy owners desperate to keep tables full and their turnover brisk. There are, however, excellent exceptions.

Koukoumavlos MODERN GREEK €€

(22860 23807; *mains €28-36*) Discreet in location and outstanding for cuisine, the terrace of this fine restaurant has good views, while the interior has retained the vaulted style of its original Fira mansion. An uncrowded menu offers such certainties as lobster and monkfish terrine or fillet of beef on a base of Santorinian fava beans perfumed with summer truffle, feta and marjoram ice cream. The wine list matches it all with style. Look for the wooden doorway down to the right of the Hotel Atlantis.

Ouzeri MEZEDHES €

(*Fabrika Shopping Centre; dishes €6.50-15*) Fish dishes are especially good at this central *mezedhopoleio* (restaurant specialising in mezedhes) and include mussel *saganaki* in tomato and feta sauce and a seafood platter of mixed fish. Meat dishes include *youvetsi* (veal in tomato sauce with pasta) and pork fillet in a mustard sauce. Vegetarians can enjoy *dakos* (rusks) salads and a variety of nonmeat starters.

Lithos GREEK €

(*Agiou Mina; mains €7-19.50*) Amid a swath of eateries on the caldera edge, Lithos stands out for its well-prepared dishes and attentive service. Choose from persuasive starters such as fava beans with cheese and cherry tomatoes. Salads are crisp and fresh and mains cover poultry, meat, fish and shellfish dishes.

Mama's House GREEK €

(*mains €7-18*) Down steps just before the main square is this 'institution' famed for its mega breakfasts (€6 to €8.50) and for its hearty Greek dinner favourites all enjoyed in fresh, bright surroundings and with a pleasant terrace.

Naoussa MODERN GREEK €

(22860 24869; *mains €7-28*) The cheerful enthusiasm of the chef at this long-established Fira restaurant is reflected in the good food. Fish dishes, such as the fresh sea bass, are especially well sourced and prepared and the meat and vegetarian options likewise.

Mylos Café CAFE €

(*Firostefani; snacks €3.50-7;*) Located in a converted windmill on the caldera edge, this stylish venue is the ideal place for relaxing drinks and light snacks. It has a unique circular internet area (per hour €4) on the top floor and the cafe is a wi-fi hotspot.

NRG CRÊPERIE €

(*Erythrou Stavrou; dishes €2.50-6.60*) One of the best places to stop for a snack at the heart of Fira, this popular little place offers crêpes, sandwiches, tortillas and an ever-popular Indian curry selection (€6), as well as a range of ice cream, coffee and smoothies.

Nikolas TAVERNA €

(*Erythrou Stavrou; dishes €6-9*) Nikolas just keeps on flying the flag for the traditional taverna, at the heart of glitzy Fira. No-nonsense service supplies such no-nonsense dishes as grilled calamari and veal *stifadho*.

Drinking

Drink prices can be cranked up in Fira, even for beer, never mind the stellar cocktail prices. You're often paying for the view, so don't glaze over too early.

Vythos CAFE €

() A local favourite, at the heart of the central square, Plateia Theotokopoulou, Vythos is a great place for coffee and other drinks while watching Fira pass by.

Kira Thira BAR

(*Erythrou Stavrou*) The oldest bar in Fira and one of the best. Smooth jazz, ethnic sounds and occasional live music fill out the background beneath the barrel roof. It lies between two streets and there are entrances from both sides. Locals always enter by a certain entrance, but they're not telling.

Tropical BAR

(*Marinatou*) Nicely perched just before the caldera edge, Tropical draws a vibrant crowd with its seductive mix of rock, soul and occasional jazz, plus unbeatable balcony views.

Franco's Bar COCKTAIL BAR

(*Marinatou*) Check your cuffs for this deeply stylish and ultimate sunset venue below the caldera edge. Music means classical only. Drinks of all brands, especially the expensive cocktails, match the sheer elegance and impeccable musical taste.

Entertainment

After midnight Erythrou Stavrou fires up the clubbing caldera of Fira.

Enigma CLUB

(Erythrou Stavrou) A Fira top spot with three bars and a big dance space, this is the catwalk clientele's favourite spot amid cool decor and full-on sounds from house to mainstream hits.

Koo Club CLUB

(Erythrou Stavrou) Several bars with variable moods rise through the levels here. Sounds are soft house, trance and Greek hits, and you're never alone.

Tithora CLUB

(off Danezi) Fira's rock venue 'underneath the arches', where you can bliss out to big sounds.

Shopping

So much shopping, so little time, for the flood of cruise-ship passengers who forage happily through Fira's glitzy retail zones. You can get everything from Armani and Versace to Timberland and Reef – at glitzy prices, too.

Jewellery and gold shops are legion. The merchandise gleams and sparkles, though prices may dull the gleam in your eye. There are also more individualistic venues.

New Art CLOTHING

(Erythrou Stavrou & Fabrika Shopping Centre) Forget the standard painted-on T-shirts. If you want quality to take back home, the subtle colours and motifs of designer Werner Hampel's tees have real style.

Leoni Atelier ARTS & CRAFTS

(Firostefani) For art lovers, the studio and gallery of the internationally acclaimed artist Leoni Schmiedel is a worthwhile visit. Here, the artist creates her nuanced and multilayered collages that are inspired by Santorini's geology, natural elements and intense colours. The studio is reached by heading north past the windmill in Firostefani and then by following signs to the left.

Books & Style BOOKS

(Dekigala) An excellent range of books in various languages. There's a great selection of volumes on Greece as well as travel guides, children's books and novels.

Information

Fira doesn't have an EOT (Greek National Tourist Organisation) or tourist police.

Toilets are north of Plateia Theotokopoulou near the port police building. You may need to brace yourself (they're of squat vintage). Bring your own paper.

Emergency

Hospital (22860 22237) On the road to Kamari. A new hospital at Karterados was nearing completion at the time of writing.

Police station (22860 22649; *Karterados*) About 2km from Fira.

Port police (22860 22239; *25 Martiou*) North of the square.

Internet Access

PC World (*Plateia Theotokopoulou*; per hr €2.50; 11am-7pm) A good range of services.

Money

There are numerous ATMs scattered around town.

Alpha Bank (*Plateia Theotokopoulou*) Represents American Express and has an ATM.

National Bank of Greece (*Dekigala*) South of Plateia Theotokopoulou, on the caldera side of the road. Has an ATM.

Post

Post office (*Dekigala*)

Travel Agencies

Aegean Pearl (22860 22170;; *Danezi*) A helpful agency that sells all travel tickets and can help with accommodation, car hire and excursions.

Pelican Tours & Travel (22860 22220; fax 22860 22570; *Plateia Theotokopoulou*) Sells ferry tickets and can book accommodation and excursions.

Dakoutros Travel (22860 22958;; *Dekigala*) Main street, just before Plateia Theotokopoulou.

Oia Oía

POP 962

Fira is the bustling centre of Santorini life, but the island has a number of other settlements, many with their traditional style intact. A cliff edge walkway and road ramble north from Fira through a series of linked settlements to the lovely village of Oia (ee -ah), known locally as Pano Meria, on the northern tip of the island. The village reflects the renaissance of Santorini after the devastating earthquake of 1956. Restoration work and upmarket tourism have transformed Oia into one of the loveliest villages in the Cyclades. Serious overcrowding is the price that Oia pays in high summer because of this, especially at sunset when huge crowds congregate. Built on a steep slope of the caldera, many of its dwellings nestle in niches hewn into the volcanic rock.

Sights & Activities

Maritime Museum MUSEUM

(22860 71156; adult/student €3/1.50; 10am-2pm & 5-8pm Wed-Mon) This museum is located along a narrow lane that leads off right from Nikolaou Nomikou. It's housed in an old mansion and has endearing displays on Santorini's maritime history.

Ammoudi PORT

This tiny port with good tavernas and colourful fishing boats lies 300 steps below Oia at the base of blood-red cliffs. It can also be reached by road. In summer, boats and tours go from Ammoudi to Thirasia daily; check with travel agencies in Fira for departure times.

Sleeping

Chelidonia Traditional Villas APARTMENTS €€

(22860 71287;; Nikolaou Nomikou; studios & ap €180-210;) Traditional cliff-side dwellings that have been in the owner's family for generations offer a grand mix of old and new at Chelidonia. Buried beneath the rubble of the 1956 earthquake, the rooms have been lovingly restored. Modern facilities are nicely balanced by the occasional fine piece of traditional furniture and each unit has a kitchenette. Some places are reached by several flights of steps.

Perivolos LUXURY HOTEL €€€

(22860 71308;; ste €620-1600;) Ultimate caldera-edge accommodation at over-the-edge prices. This is one of Greece's most renowned hotels, however, and features beautiful rooms with vaulted ceilings, individual terraces and kitchenettes. Breakfast, of rare quality, is included. There's a wellness studio, bar and restaurant, and infinity pool.

Oia Youth Hostel HOSTEL €

(22860 71465;; dm incl breakfast €18; May-mid-Oct;) One of the best-run hostels you'll hope to find. There's a small bar and a lovely rooftop terrace with great views. Internet is €2 per hour. To find the hostel, keep straight on from the bus terminus for about 100m.

Eating

1800 MODERN EUROPEAN €€€

(Nikolaou Nomikou; dishes €13-35) A slow-food ethos and enthusiasm for the finest Mediterranean cuisine makes this one-time sea captain's mansion a top choice. Sea bass with an aromatic spell of quinoa, artichoke and fennel purée sets the standard for a creative menu. The cellar has the best of Santorini and Greek wines.

Skala MODERN GREEK €

(*Nikolaou Nomikou*; dishes €8.50-14) Watch life pass up and down to Ammoudi from the high ground of Skala's lovely terrace. Subtle international touches enhance the traditional Greek dishes here, such as octopus in Vinsanto wine, and chicken fillet with cream and pistachios. The mezedhes are special. Try the cheese pies with added onion and pine nuts.

Katina SEAFOOD €€

(*Ammoudi*; dishes €4.50-14) A stand-out fish taverna right on the water's edge at Ammoudi, Katina's has built a strong reputation over the years without sacrificing its family atmosphere and cheerful service. Fish are by the kilo, so can be quite pricey. You choose what you want from the display. There's a choice of vegetarian and meat dishes, too.

Nectar MODERN EUROPEAN €€

(€13.80-28.50) Quality cuisine, creative salads and main dishes such as stuffed lamb, plus some seriously fine wines, ensure a rewarding meal at this attractive eatery.

Ambrosia MODERN GREEK €€

(; mains €21-30) Ambrosia presents a swath of handsome dishes from starters of Santorini fava-bean purée with grilled octopus and caramelised onions to grilled fillet of sea bream in a lemon and caper sauce. The wine list matches it all.

Shopping

Atlantis Books BOOKS

(22860 72346;; *Nikolaou Nomikou*) A fascinating and well-stocked little bookshop run with flair and enthusiasm by an international group of young people. Cultural events are sometimes staged here.

Information

From the bus terminal, head left and uphill to reach the rather stark central square and the main street, Nikolaou Nomikou, which skirts the caldera.

ATMS can be found on Main St and also by the bus terminus.

NSTravel (22860 71199;) In the bus terminal square; sells ferry tickets and can arrange accommodation and car hire.

Around Santorini

Santorini is not all about the caldera edge. The island slopes gently down to sea level on its eastern and southern sides and here you'll find dark-coloured beaches of volcanic sand at popular resorts such as Kamari and Perissa. Inland lie charming traditional villages such as Vourvoulos, to the north of Fira, and Pyrgos and Megalohori to its south. Ancient Thira, above Kamari, is a major site and a worthy alternative.

Sights

Ancient Thira ANCIENT SITE

(admission €4; 8am-2.30pm Tue-Sun) First settled by the Dorians in the 9th century BC, Ancient Thira consists of Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine ruins and is an atmospheric and rewarding site to visit. The ruins include temples, houses with mosaics, an *agora* (market), a theatre and a gymnasium. There are splendid views from the site. From March to October Ancient Thira Tours (22860 32474; *Kamari*) runs a bus every hour from 9am until 2pm, except on Monday, from Kamari to the site. If driving, take the surfaced but narrow, winding road from Kamari for just over 1km. From Perissa, on the other side of the mountain, a hot hike up a dusty path on sometimes rocky, difficult ground takes a bit over an hour to the site.

Ancient Akrotiri ANCIENT SITE

(22860 81366) Excavations at Akrotiri, the Minoan outpost that was buried during the catastrophic eruption of circa 1613 BC, began in 1967 and have uncovered an ancient city beneath the volcanic ash. Buildings, some three storeys high, survive. Outstanding finds are the stunning frescoes and ceramics, many of which are now on display at Fira's archaeological museum () and the Museum of Prehistoric Thera (). At the time of writing the site was closed for remedial work. There are optimistic suggestions that the site may reopen in May 2012. See the 'archaeological sites' section of and check thoroughly on arrival at Santorini before making a bus or taxi journey to the site.

Art Space GALLERY

(22860 32774; *Exo Gonia*) This unmissable gallery is just outside Kamari, in Argyros Canava , one of the oldest wineries on the island. The atmospheric old wine caverns are hung with superb artworks, while sculptures transform lost corners and niches. The collection is curated by the owner and features some of Greece's finest modern artists. Winemaking is still in the owner's blood, and part of the complex is given over to producing some stellar vintages. A tasting of Vinsanto greatly enhances the whole experience.

Beaches

At times, Santorini's black-sand beaches become so hot that a sun lounge or mat is essential. The best beaches are on the east and south coasts.

One of the main beaches is the long stretch at Perissa , a popular destination in summer. Perivolos and Agios Georgios , further south, are more relaxed. Red Beach , near Ancient Akrotiri, has high red cliffs and smooth, hand-sized pebbles submerged under clear water. Vlyhada , also on the south coast, is a pleasant venue.

Kamari (pop 1351) is 10km from Fira and is Santorini's best-developed resort. It has a long beach of black sand, with the rugged limestone cliffs of Cape Mesa Vouno framing its southern end with the site of Ancient Thira on its summit. The beachfront road is dense with restaurants and bars. Things get very busy in high season. Other less appealing but quieter beaches lie to the north at Monolithos .

On the north coast near Oia, Paradise and Pori are both worth a stop.

Sleeping

The main concentration of rooms can be found in and around Kamari and Perissa.

Aegean View Hotel HOTEL €€

(22860 32790;; *Kamari; studios/apt/ste incl breakfast €130/150/170;*)
Tucked below the limestone cliffs high above Kamari, this outstanding hotel has spacious studios and apartments superbly laid out and with first-class facilities, including small kitchen areas. There's a lift (elevator) to some rooms.

Stelio's Place PENSION €€

(22860 81860;; *Perissa; d/tr/q €70/100/120;*) In a great position set back from the main drag but barely a minute from the beach, and with immaculate, well-appointed rooms. Prices can drop below half in the low season.

Hotel Drossos HOTEL €€

(22860 81639;; *Perissa; s/d/tr incl breakfast €102/112/132, apt €165;*)
Behind the simple facade of this fine hotel lies a lovely complex of rooms and studios with stylish decor and furnishings. The same management has other decent hotels in the area.

Hotel Matina HOTEL €€

(22860 31491;; *Kamari; s/d/tr/apt incl breakfast €108/116/144/172;*) A

very well run independent hotel, the Matina has spacious, brightly decorated rooms and is set back from the road in quiet grounds.

Narkissos Hotel HOTEL €

(22860 34205; Kamari; s/d incl breakfast €45/55;) A decent option with well-kept rooms, friendly service and a good breakfast to set you off, the Narkissos is at the southern end of town.

Eating

Most beaches have a range of tavernas and cafes.

Mario No 1 MODERN GREEK €€

(22860 32000; Agia Paraskevi, Monolithos; dishes €6.50-22) Right on the beach at Monolithos, near the airport, is this outstanding restaurant, one of Santorini's best. Fish is by the kilo and you can select shellfish from a display. There's a great list of mezedhes such as mussel *saganaki* or sweet red peppers stuffed with feta, garlic, tomato and parsley. Meat dishes include roast lamb with rosemary and proper *mousakas* .

CYCLADIC CUISINE AT ITS FINEST

Santorini's internationally acclaimed restaurant, Selene (22860 22249; dishes €14-31) , once based in Fira, has moved to the lovely hill-top village of Pyrgos in the very heart of Santorinian farming and culinary culture. Selene's handsome new premises incorporates restaurant, cafe and wine bar, and stands above the Drosos-Chrysos Rural and Folklore Museum, a fitting juxtaposition. Selene's visionary proprietor, Giorgos Hatziyannakis, his chef, Konstantina Faklari, and their staff continue to fly the flag for creative cuisine based on Cycladic produce and unique local ingredients such as Santorini's small tomatoes and fava beans. In keeping with the Selene ethos creative changes are always being made to the menu, but signature dishes such as the green salad accented with strawberries and *xinomyzithra* cheese in a basil crust, or mains such as lamb with wild greens and lemon foam, give some idea of the quality and creativity. The cafe and wine-bar menu is every bit as inventive – think fava-bean tart with egg and tomatoes – but less expensive. A cellar of the finest wines, especially Santorinian vintages, enhances the experience, and Giorgos Hatziyannakis continues to run his popular cooking courses and other culinary activities at Pyrgos.

Taverna Roza TAVERNA €

(*Vourvoulos*; mains €5.50-11) A classic village taverna in Vourvoulos, Roza's offers excellent traditional dishes such as rabbit *stifadho* and tasty fava-bean dolmadhes using local produce. There's a cheerful, homey atmosphere, not least created by friendly family members, and the local wine is very persuasive.

Amalthia TAVERNA €

(*Kamari*; dishes €3.50-12) A long-established local favourite, Amalthia is a couple of blocks inland at the southern end of Kamari and there's a lovely garden area and a terrace with barbecue. There are well-prepared Greek dishes (the lamb is particularly good) and a range of pastas.

Mistral SEAFOOD €

(*Kamari*; mains €5.50-15) Seafood is what this classic *psarotaverna* is all about. Fish plates for two are about €30 and the likes of bream and red mullet are by the kilo.

Lolos TAVERNA €

(*Kamari*; mains €7.50-15.50) Brace yourself for a post-lunch game of tennis – or not – at this cheerful place where the adjoining tennis court is available to guests. Fill up first with tasty veal *stifadho* , onions and tomatoes, or lamb *kleftiko* with vegetables and feta.

Information

Lisos Tours (22860 33765; lisostours@san.forthnet.gr) is especially helpful and has an office on the main road into Kamari, and another just inland from the centre of the beach. It sells ferry tickets and can organise accommodation and car hire. All kinds of tours can be arranged and there's internet access and a bureau de change.

Thirasia & Volcanic Islets Θηρασία & Ηφαιστειακές Νησίδες

Unspoilt Thirasia (population 268) was separated from Santorini by an eruption in 236 BC. The cliff-top *hora* (main town), Manolas, has tavernas and domatia. It's an attractive place, noticeably more relaxed and reflective than Fira could ever be. Thirasia is a stop on a couple of main ferry routes to and from Athinios a few times a week (€2, 20 minutes).

The unpopulated islets of Palia Kameni and Nea Kameni are still volcanically active and can be visited on various boat excursions from Fira Skala and Athinios (see). A day's excursion taking in Nea Kameni, the hot springs on Palia Kameni, Thirasia and Oia is about €28.

ANAFI

POP 273

Anafi (Ανάφη) lies a mere 19km east of Santorini, a tiny island perched on a distant horizon somewhere between a dream of old Greece and a modern-day holiday delight. A slow-paced traditional lifestyle and striking Cycladic landscapes are the marks of this endearing place. There are few other visitors outside high summer, although Anafi is growing in popularity.

Sights

There are several lovely beaches near Agios Nikolaos. Palm-lined Klissidi, a 1.5km walk to the port, is the closest and most popular.

Anafi's main sight is the monastery of Moni Kalamiotissas, 9km by road from Hora or reached by a more appealing 6km walk along a path. It's in the extreme east of the island, near the meagre remains of a Sanctuary to Apollo and below the summit of the 470m Monastery Rock, the highest rock formation in the Mediterranean Sea, outstripping even Gibraltar. The walk to the monastery is a rewarding expedition, but it's a fairly tough trip in places and is a day's outing there and back. There is also a ruined Venetian *kastro* at Kastelli, east of Hora.

Sleeping

Many of the rooms in Hora have good views across Anafi's rolling hills to the sea and to the great summit of Monastery Rock.

Domatia owners prefer long stays in high season, so if you're only staying one night you should take whatever you can get (or book ahead).

Apollon Village Hotel APARTMENTS €€

(22860 28739;; s/d/tr/apt/q €70/95/115/115/130; *May-Sep;*) Rising in tiers above Klissidi Beach, these lovely individual rooms and studios, each named after an Olympian god and with glorious views, are outstanding value. The Blue Cafe-Bar is a cool adjunct to the hotel with homemade sweets and pastries on offer.

Margarita's Rooms ROOMS €

(22860 61237; *anafi1@hotmail.com;* s/d €50/60) Right by the beach and next to Margarita's cafe, these pleasant little rooms hark back to the Greek island life of quieter times.

Panorama PENSION €

(22860 61292) Clean, basic rooms with 'panoramic' balcony views.

Paradise PENSION €

(22860 61243) Simple but comfortable rooms with views over the island.

Villa Galini PENSION €

(22869 61279;) In a quiet position below the main village.

Eating

There are several tavernas in Hora, all of which are on the main street.

Liotrivi TAVERNA €

(*mains €4-9*) Fresh fish dishes (by the kilo), with the catch supplied from the family's boat; just about everything else, from eggs to vegetables and honey, comes from their garden.

Armenaki TAVERNA €

(*mains €5-6.50*) Greek traditional food at this very traditional taverna is enhanced by an airy terrace and the pleasure of live bouzouki music on summer evenings.

Margarita's TAVERNA €

(*Klissidi; mains €6-10.50*) A sunny little terrace overlooking the bay at Klissidi makes for enjoyable eating here. Pork with mushrooms in a lemon sauce is a particularly tasty option. Breakfasts are €2.50 to €5.

Information

The island's port is Agios Nikolaos. From here, the main village, **Hora**, is a 10-minute bus ride up a winding road, or a 1km hike up a less winding but steep walkway. In summer a bus runs every two hours from about 9am to 11pm and usually meets boats. Hora's main pedestrian thoroughfare leads uphill from the first bus stop and has most of the domatia, restaurants and minimarkets.

There is an ATM in a kiosk just past a public telephone halfway along the harbour front, on the left.

There is a postal agency that opens occasionally, next to Panorama at the entrance to Hora.

You can buy ferry tickets at the **travel agency** (22860 61408) in Hora's main street next to Roussou minimarket or at an office on the harbour front before ferries are due.

Getting There & Away

Anafi may be out on a limb and you can still face a challenge getting there out of season, but in summer the island has reasonable connections to Piraeus, Santorini, Sikinos, Folegandros, Naxos, Paros and even Syros.

BOAT SERVICES FROM ANAFI

DESTINATION	PORT	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Folegandros	Anafi	4hr 20min	€12	5 weekly
Ios	Anafi	3hr 25min	€9	5 weekly
Karpathos	Anafi	6¼hr	€18	5 weekly
Kea (Tzia)	Anafi	14hr 10min	€28	2 weekly
Kythnos	Anafi	13hr 10min	€25	2 weekly
Naxos	Anafi	5½hr	€14.30	5 weekly
Paros	Anafi	6hr 35min-9hr	€17	3-4 weekly
Piraeus	Anafi	11hr 20min	€31	3 weekly

Rhodes	Anafi	12hr	€25	5 weekly
Santorini (Thira)	Anafi	1½hr	€8	5 weekly
Sikinos	Anafi	4hr	€10	4 weekly
Syros	Anafi	9hr 35min	€19	4 weekly

Getting Around

A small bus takes passengers from the port up to Hora. Caiques serve various beaches and nearby islands.

SIKINOS

POP 238

Lonely Sikinos (see -kee-noss; Σίκινοϛ) is another attractive escape from the clamour of Ios and Santorini, yet this lovely island is not much smaller than Santorini. It has a mainly empty landscape of terraced hills that sweep down to the sea. The main clusters of habitation are the port of Alopronia, and the linked inland villages of Hora and Kastro. The latter are reached by a 3.4km winding road that leads up from the port. There's a post office at the entrance to Kastro, and a National Bank of Greece ATM in the central square of Kastro. The medical centre is next door to the ATM. Ferry tickets can be bought in advance at Koundouris Travel (22860 51168, 6936621946) . There is a petrol station outside Alopronia on the road to Kastro. You can hire scooters here for about €15 to €20.

Sights

Kastro , so named from an original Venetian fortress of the 13th century of which little physical sign remains, is a charming place, with winding alleyways between brilliant white houses. At its heart is the main square with a central war memorial surrounded by peaceful old buildings, one with ornate stone window frames and sills long since whitewashed over. On one side is the Church of Pantanassa .

On the northern side of Kastro, the land falls sharply to the sea and the shells of old windmills punctuate the cliff edge. A flight of whitewashed steps leads up to the once-fortified church of Moni Zoödohou Pigis above the town.

To the west of Kastro, above steeply terraced fields and reached by an equally steep flight of steps, is the reclusive Hora, where numerous derelict houses are being renovated.

From the saddle between Kastro and Hora, a surfaced road leads southwest to Moni Episkopis (*admission free; 6.30pm-8.30pm*). The remains here are believed to be those of a 3rd-century-AD Roman mausoleum that was transformed into a church in the 7th century and then became the monastery Moni Episkopis 10 centuries later. From here you can climb to a little church and ancient ruins perched on a precipice to the south, from where the views are spectacular.

Caïques (about €6) run to good beaches at Agios Georgios, Malta (which boasts ancient ruins on the hill above) and Karra. A surfaced road leads to Agios Georgios and surrounding beaches. Buses run to these beaches from Alopronia in summer. Katergo, a swimming place with interesting rocks, and Agios Nikolaos Beach are both within easy walking distance of Alopronia.

Sleeping & Eating

There are several accommodation options at the port, but Hora is a more worthwhile place to stay. There's a minimarket next to Lucas in Alopronia and another in Kastro.

Porto Sikinos HOTEL €€

(22860 51220;; Alopronia; s/d/tr incl breakfast €107/135/177;) The nearest thing to a traditional-style hotel on Sikinos, and the most expensive, this place is just up from the port. The pleasant, well-equipped rooms rise in a series of terraces and have far-reaching balcony views. There's also a bar and restaurant.

Lucas Rooms ROOMS €

(22860 51076;; Alopronia; d/studios €55/85;) Two locations are on offer here and rooms are decent and clean. One set of rooms is on the hillside, 500m uphill from the port. The studios are on the far side of the bay from the ferry quay and have dreamy views of the beach.

Kastro Studios STUDIOS €€

(22860 51026/283; Kastro; r €80;) High up in Kastro, these two very well-appointed self-catering places with great views are a good option.

Persephone's Rooms ROOMS €€

(22860 51229; Kastro; s/d/tr €40/60/70) Persephone's offers decent studio-type places.

Rock TAVERNA €

(Alopronia; dishes €3-8.50) High above the ferry quay is this seasonal cafe and pizza place, where you can also chill into the early hours (sometimes to live music). There are rooms here as well, with doubles priced at about €45 to €60.

Lucas Taverna TAVERNA €

(Alopronia; dishes €6-13) For eating out in Alopronia try Lucas Taverna, just up from the port, for Greek standards without frills and fish by the kilo.

To Steki tou Garbi TAVERNA €

(Kastro; dishes €4-8) This is a worthwhile traditional grill house just around the corner from Koundouris Travel.

To Iliovasilema TAVERNA €

(Kastro; mains €4.50-8) This place has outstanding views from its big terrace.

Kastro Bar CAFE €

(22860 51026) For cool ambience the Kastro Bar is on the way to Moni Zoödohou Pigis. Coffee, drinks and ice cream are the mainstay and Greek music the style.

Getting There & Around

The local bus meets all ferry arrivals and runs between Alopronia and Hora/Kastro (€1.40, 20 minutes) every half-hour in August, but less frequently at other times of the year. A timetable is sometimes posted near the minimarket. It's wise to be in good time at the departure point.

BOAT SERVICES FROM SIKINOS

DESTINATION	PORT	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Anafi	Sikinos	4hr	€10	4 weekly
Folegandros	Sikinos	40min	€5	1-3 daily
Ios	Sikinos	20min	€5	1-4 daily
Kea (Tzia)	Sikinos	11hr	€24	2 weekly
Kythnos	Sikinos	10¼hr	€18	2 weekly
Naxos	Sikinos	2¼hr	€8	4 weekly

Paros*	Sikinos	3hr 10min	€15.10	1-2 daily
Piraeus	Sikinos	8hr 25min	€31	4 weekly
Santorini (Thira)	Sikinos	1¾hr	€8	4 weekly
Syros	Sikinos	7hr	€13	1-3 daily

*high-speed services

FOLEGANDROS

POP 667

Folegandros (fo- *leh* -gan-dross, Φολέγανδρος) lies on the southern edge of the Cyclades with the Sea of Crete sweeping away to its south. The island has an ethereal beauty, enhanced by its main settlement, the cliff-top Hora, one of the most appealing villages in the Cyclades. Folegandros is barely 12km in length and just under 4km at its widest. Agios Eleftherios (414m) is the highest point of the island. Cruel history lies beneath the skin on Folegandros, however. The remoteness and ruggedness of the island made it a place of exile for political prisoners from Roman times to the 20th century and as late as the military dictatorship of 1967–74. Today, the seductive charm of Folegandros transcends this sometimes dark past.

Boats dock at the little harbour of Karavostasis, on the east coast. The only other settlement of any size is Ano Meria, 4km northwest of Hora. There are several good beaches, but be prepared for strenuous walking to reach some of them.

Getting There & Away

Once poorly served by ferries, Folegandros (at least in summer) has good connections with Piraeus through the western Cyclades route. It even has connections to Santorini

and as far as Amorgos in the high season.

BOAT SERVICES FROM FOLEGANDROS

DESTINATION	PORT	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Amorgos*	Folegandros	3hr 20min	€59.60	1 daily
Anafi	Folegandros	4¾hr	€13	5 weekly
Ios	Folegandros	1hr 5min	€8	1-2 daily
Kea (Tzia)	Folegandros	10hr 10min	€22	2 weekly
Kimolos	Folegandros	1hr 20min	€7	5 weekly
Koufonisia*	Folegandros	3½hr	€56.20	1 daily
Kythnos	Folegandros	7¼hr	€19	2 weekly
Milos	Folegandros	2½hr	€9	5 weekly
Milos*	Folegandros	1¼hr	€29.60	4 weekly
Naxos	Folegandros	5hr 35min	€39.70	4 weekly
Piraeus	Folegandros	13hr	€32	4 weekly
Piraeus*	Folegandros	4hr	€54-59.60	1-3 daily
Paros	Folegandros	4-6hr	€10	5 weekly
Santorini (Thira)	Folegandros	2½hr	€9	1-3 daily
Santorini (Thira)*	Folegandros	30min	€29.50	1 daily
Serifos	Folegandros	7hr 40min	€19	5 weekly
Sifnos	Folegandros	4½hr	€17	1-3 daily
Sifnos*	Folegandros	1hr	€20	4 weekly
Sikinos	Folegandros	40min	€6	1-3 daily
Syros	Folegandros	5hr 10min	€15	4 weekly

*high-speed services

Getting Around

The local bus meets all ferry arrivals and takes passengers to Hora (€1.50). From Hora there are buses to the port one hour before all ferry departures. Buses from Hora run hourly in summer to Ano Meria (€1.80) and divert to Angali Beach (€2). The bus stop for Ano Meria is located on the western edge of Hora.

There is a **taxi service** (22860 41048, 6944693957) on Folegandros. Fares to the port are about €6 to €9, to Ano Meria €10, and to Angali Beach €9 to €13.

You can hire cars from a number of outlets in high season for about €60 per day, and motorbikes from about €25 per day. Rates can drop by half outside high season.

In summer, small boats regularly ply between beaches.

Karavostasis Καρaboστάσις

POP 55

Folegandros' port is a sunny place with a pleasant pebble beach. Within a kilometre north and south of Karavostasis lies a series of other beaches, all enjoyable and easily reached by short walks. In high season, boats leave Karavostasis for beaches further afield.

Sleeping & Eating

There are a couple of tavernas at the port serving fairly standard dishes, and a couple of good beachside bars. For enduring character, Evangelos is right on the beach and is the place for relaxed drinks, snacks and great conversation.

Aeolos Beach Hotel HOTEL €€

(22860 41205;; d/tr €85/100) Just across from the beach in a peaceful garden is this very pleasant hotel that has good-sized well-appointed rooms. Breakfast is €8.

Anemi LUXURY HOTEL €€€

(22860 41610;; d incl breakfast €320-370, ste incl breakfast €450-720;)

Built in recent years behind the port, this attractive complex of luxury villas reflects Cycladic architecture in a successful modern context. Decor and furnishings extend the modernist theme and each villa is individually styled. There are spacious public areas, private pools for some of the villas, and a large general pool and bar area.

Kalia Kardi TAVERNA €

(mains €5-10) An excellent traditional taverna on the upper terrace of the harbour road, the name translates encouragingly as 'Good Heart'. Appetising food includes tasty spinach pies for starters, and mains such as fish soup. Breakfasts are €2.50 to €6.

Hora (Folegandros) Χώρα (Φολέγανδρος)

POP 374

A major feature of Hora is its medieval *kastro* with its attractive main street flanked by traditional houses; but the rest of the village is also a delight. The meandering main street winds happily from leafy square to leafy square. The village proper starts at Plateia Pounta, from where the pedestrianised street leads on to Plateia Dounavi and then to Plateia Kontarini, Plateia Piatsa and, finally, to Plateia Maraki. On its north side, Hora stands on the edge of a formidable cliff.

Sights

Hora is a pleasure to wander through. The medieval *kastro*, a tangle of narrow streets spanned by low archways, dates from when Marco Sanudo ruled the island in the 13th century. The wooden balconies of the houses blaze with bougainvillea and hibiscus. The extended village, outside the *kastro*, is just as attractive. From Plateia Pounta and the bus turnaround, a steep zigzag path leads up to the large church of the Virgin, Panagia (6pm-8pm), which sits perched on a dramatic cliff top above the town.

Tours

Boat trips around the island (per adult/child including lunch €28/10) and to nearby Sikinos (per adult/child €22/11) can be booked through Diaplous Travel and Sottovento Tourism Office.

Sleeping

In July and August most domatia and hotels will be full, so book well in advance.

Anemomylos Apartments HOTEL €€€

(22860 41309;; d €180-230;) A prime cliff-top location ensures awesome views from the seaward-facing rooms of this stylish complex and from its lovely terraces. Rooms are elegant and fine antiques add to the ambience.

Anemomylos is just up from the bus turnaround. One unit is equipped for use by those with disabilities.

Aegeo HOTEL €€

(22860 41468;; s/d/tr €80/95/120;) Located on the outskirts of town, Aegeo captures the classic Cycladean style with its central courtyard area, all white and blue and draped with crimson bougainvillea. Rooms are immaculate and bright.

Pounta Traditional Houses HOUSES €€

(22860 41063; houses from €100) Located just outside the village, these are proper Folegandrian houses rather than studios or apartments. They have a great deal of character and are in fine settings.

Evgenia HOTEL €€

(22860 41006;; s/d/ste €60/75/110;) These clean and well-kept rooms and studios are right at the entrance to Hora.

Eating

Pounta TAVERNA €

(*Plateia Pounta; dishes €6-11*) In Pounta's garden setting there's an inescapable sense of an older Greece, and the courteous service underlines this. The traditional food is excellent, from breakfasts starting at €5 to evening meals of rabbit *stifadho* or a delicious casserole of artichoke hearts, onions, dill, carrots and potatoes in an egg and lemon sauce. It's all served on lovely crockery made by one of the owners, Lisbet Giouri; you can buy examples of her work.

Eva's Garden MODERN GREEK €€

(*mains €9-25*) Eva's brings an added international flair to Folegandros cuisine. Starters include fava-bean purée with onion and parsley, while mains include crayfish and saffron risotto and pork fillet in smoked cheese sauce with potato purée. The complementary wine list includes Argiros vintages from Santorini. Keep right beyond Plateia Kontarini.

Melissa TAVERNA €

(*Plateia Kontarini; mains €5-9*) Good food is matched by charming owners. The island speciality of *matsata* (the locals' name for handmade pasta) with meat of your choice is always worthwhile, as is the fish soup. Vegetarians will relish the stuffed cabbage.

Zefiros MEZEDHES €

(*dishes €6.50-12*) A great *ouzerie* and *mezedhopoleio* with a challenging selection of ouzo varieties. There are mezedhes plates for two at €20, as well as mixed small plates, and dishes such as lamb in vine leaves and shrimp *saganaki*. Keep left beyond Plateia Kontarini.

Drinking & Entertainment

Folegandros has some stylish cafe-bars such as *Caffé de Viaggiatori*, next door to Sottovento Tourism Office and offering Italian wines and finger food. Deeper into Hora is *To Mikro*, a good place for coffee, crêpes and cakes by day and cocktails at night. At Hora's very own 'West End' is a clutch of colourful music bars starting with *Greco Café-Bar*, with a great mix of sounds from a stock of over 1000 CDs, all against a backdrop of vivid murals. Next door are *Avli Club* for early evening lounge music and later rock, disco, Latin and Greek; and *A Liar Man* for reggae, world music and soul, and a hammock garden with scenic views.

A Folegandros local drink is *rakomelo* – heated *raki* with honey and cloves. One of the best bars to enjoy it and get into the spirit of things is *Astarti*, next to the Melissa taverna on Plateia Kontarini.

Information

Folegandros does not have an official tourism office. A good source of information is the

Sottovento Tourism Office and their website.

There's an ATM on the far side of Plateia Dounavi, next to the community offices. The post office is on the port road, 200m downhill from the bus turnaround.

Travel agencies can exchange travellers cheques.

Diaplous Travel (22860 41158;; *Plateia Pounta*) Helpful and efficient agency – sells ferry tickets, exchanges money and handles moneygrams. It also arranges boat trips. Internet access costs €1 per 15 minutes. There is also an office at Karavostasis.

Maraki Travel (22860 41273; fax 22860 41149; *Plateia Dounavi*; 10.30am-noon & 5-9pm) Sells ferry tickets and exchanges money. There is also an office at Karavostasis.

Medical Centre (22860 41222; *Plateia Pounta*)

Police station (22860 41249) Straight on from Plateia Maraki.

Sottovento Tourism Office (22860 41444;) On Plateia Pounta; doubles as the Italian consulate and is very helpful on all tourism matters, including accommodation, international and domestic flights, and boat trips.

Ano Meria Άνω Μεριά

POP 293

The settlement of Ano Meria is a scattered community of small farms and dwellings that stretches for several kilometres. This is traditional Folegandros where tourism makes no intrusive mark and life happily wanders off sideways.

The folklore museum (*admission €1.50; 5pm-8pm*) is on the eastern outskirts of the village. Ask the bus driver to drop you off nearby.

There are a couple of colourful traditional tavernas in Ano Meria, including I Synantisi (*dishes €4-8*), also known as Maria's, and Mimi's (*dishes €4*). The speciality is *pastitsio* (lamb with macaroni and tomatoes).

Around Folegandros

For Livadi Beach, 1.2km southeast of Karavostasis, take the 'bypass' road just past the Anemi Hotel and follow it around the coast. Katergo Beach is on the southeastern tip of the island and is best reached by boat from Karavostasis.

The sandy and pebbled Angali beach, on the coast opposite to Hora, is a popular spot, now with a surfaced road to it and a bus turnaround. There are some rooms here and reasonable tavernas.

About 750m west of Angali over the hill along a footpath is Agios Nikolaos, a clothes-optional beach. A number of beaches can be reached from where the road ends beyond Ano Meria. Livadaki Beach is a 1.5km hike from the bus stop near the church of Agios Andreas at Ano Meria. Boats connect these west-coast beaches in high season. Agios Georgios Beach is north of Ano Meria and requires another demanding walk. Have tough footwear, sun protection and, because most beaches have no shops

as, make sure you take food and water.

In July and August, weather permitting, excursion boats make separate round trips from Karavostasis to Katergo (€8), from Angali to Agios Nikolaos (€4), and from Angali to Livadaki Beach (€8), every half hour between 11am and 7pm.

MILOS

POP 4771

Milos (*mee* -loss; Μηλος) has a dramatic coastal landscape with colourful and surreal rock formations that reflect the island's volcanic origins. It also has hot springs, the most beaches of any Cycladic island and some compelling ancient sites.

The island has a fascinating history of mineral extraction dating from the Neolithic period when obsidian was an important material and was even exported to the Minoan world of Crete. Today Milos is the biggest bentonite and perlite production and processing centre in the EU.

Filakopi, an ancient Minoan city in the island's northeast, was one of the earliest settlements in the Cyclades.

The island's most celebrated export, the beautiful *Venus de Milo* (a 4th-century-BC statue of Aphrodite, found in an olive grove in 1820) is far away in the Louvre (allegedly having lost its arms on the way to Paris in the 19th century).

Getting There & Away

There are two flights weekly between Milos and Athens (€41, 40 minutes). These are often quite heavily booked ahead. Milos is on the same Western Cyclades ferry routes as its northern neighbour Serifos.

BOAT SERVICES FROM MILOS

DESTINATION	PORT	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Amorgos	Milos	5¼hr	€56.20	1 daily
Folegandros	Milos	2½hr	€9	5 weekly
Folegandros*	Milos	1¼hr	€29.80	4 weekly
Ios	Milos	3hr 35min-6¾hr	€16	5-6 weekly
Iraklio	Milos	9hr 25min	€24	3 weekly
Kimolos	Milos	1hr	€5	8 weekly
Kythnos	Milos	3¾hr	€18	1-2 daily
Naxos	Milos	2¼hr	€56.20	4 weekly

Paros	Milos	4¼hr	€14	4 weekly
Piraeus	Milos	8hr	€33	1-2 daily
Piraeus*	Milos	2hr 50min	€54	2-3 daily
Santorini (Thira)	Milos	4hr	€18	2 weekly
Santorini (Thira)*	Milos	2hr	€39.60	1 daily
Sifnos	Milos	3hr 40min	€8	1-2 daily
Sifnos*	Milos	1hr	€15	1-2 daily
Serifos	Milos	3hr	€8	1-2 daily
Serifos*	Milos	1½hr	€16	1-3 daily
Syros	Milos	5hr	€15	5 weekly

*high-speed services

Getting Around

There are no buses to the airport (south of Papikinou), so you'll need to take a **taxi** (22870 22219) for about €10, plus €0.30 per piece of luggage, from Adamas. A taxi from Adamas to Plaka is €8 and from Adamas to Pollonia about €13; add €1 for evening trips. **Taxi Andriotis** (6942590951) is a friendly service.

Buses leave Adamas for Plaka and Trypiti every hour or so. Buses run to Pollonia (four daily), Paleohori (three daily), Provatas (three daily) and Achivadolimni (Milos) Camping, east of Adamas (three daily). All fares are €1.60.

Cars, motorcycles and mopeds can also be hired from places along the waterfront. A helpful outfit is **Giourgas Rent a Car** (22870 22352, 6937757066; giourgas@otenet.gr), reached by heading east from the ferry quay, going inland from where the waterfront road crosses a dry river bed and then turning right after several hundred metres.

Adamas Αδάμας

POP 1391

Plaka is the capital of Milos and the most appealing of all the settlements, but the pleasant, lively port of Adamas has most of the accommodation, shops and general services, plus a diverting waterfront scene.

Sights & Activities

Milos Mining Museum MUSEUM

(22870 22481;; *adult/ concession* €3/1.50; 9am-2pm & 5-9pm Jul–mid-Sep) This museum is a must for mining enthusiasts and has plenty of interest for everyone. Opening hours are reduced outside high season. It's about 600m east of the ferry quay.

Ecclesiastical Museum of Milos MUSEUM

(22870-22252;; 9.15am-1.15pm & 6.15-10.15pm Mon-Sat) Tucked away behind the junction where the water-front road turns inland is this small but intriguing religious museum housed in the Church of the Holy Trinity. It boasts some fine icons and other artefacts. Donations are welcomed.

Milos Diving Center DIVING

(22870 41296;) Dive courses are offered by this centre, based at Pollonia. It's a member of the International Association for Handicapped Divers.

Kayak Milos KAYAKING

(22870 23597;) Organises day trips for €65 per person, including picnic lunch.

Longer expeditions and week-long packages are also available.

Tours

Around Milos Cruise SIGHTSEEING TOURS

(6944375799; tours €30; May-Sep) Cruise on the wooden-hulled *Captain Yiangos* departing daily at 9am, stopping at beaches around the island and pausing at Kimolos for lunch. Return is about 6pm. Buy tickets on the waterfront.

Sleeping

In summer, lists of available domatia are given out at the tourist office on the quay.

Terry's Rooms APARTMENTS €

(22870 22640; teristur@otenet.gr; d €50, apt €100-120;) A great option, these homey rooms and lovely apartments are in a quiet location above the harbour and are a nice mix of traditional and modern. Follow directions for Terry's Travel Services (see [Click here](#)).

Hotel Delfini HOTEL €€

(22870 22001;; s/d/tr €60/ 80/95; Apr-Oct;) A pleasant, comfortable hotel with comfortable rooms and facilities. Neighbouring hotels have rather stolen the view, but there's a lovely terrace and a warm ambience. Hotel Delfini is to the west of the ferry quay and is tucked in behind the Lagada Beach Hotel. Breakfast is €5.

Studios Helios APARTMENTS €€

(22870 22258; heaton.theologitis@utanet.at; apt €90-100; early May–mid-Oct;) In an enviable location, rising through terraces and high above the port, are these stylish, self-catering apartments for two or four people.

Achivadolimni (Milos) Camping CAMPGROUND €

(22870 31410;; Achivadolimni; camp sites per adult/child/tent €7/4/4, bungalows €68-131;) This campground has excellent facilities, including a restaurant, bar and bike hire. It's 4.5km east of Adamas; to get here, follow the signs along the waterfront from the central square or take the bus (see Getting Around, [Click here](#)).

Eating

Navigo Taverna SEAFOOD €

(mains €5.50-18) Long-established and popular with locals, Navigo maintains its high reputation for seafood. The mussel salad and sea urchin salad are more than worth it. Some fish are by the kilo. Head east along the waterfront beyond the Portiani Hotel.

Taverna Barko TAVERNA €

(dishes €5.60-12.50) A classic *mezedhopoleio* . On the road to Plaka, near the outskirts of town, Barko serves local dishes such as *briam* (oven-baked vegetable casserole), *gigantes* (a bean dish), Milos cheese pie and octopus in wine.

Il Greco ITALIAN €

(mains €7-14.60) A pleasant little Italian food joint located just after the main road turns inland. It offers a varied menu of pasta and pizza with signature dishes such as fresh seafood ravioli and penne with chicken, cream, sweet peppers and smoked *scamorza* (cheese).

Flisvos TAVERNA €

(dishes €6.50-18) Fish is by the kilogram at this busy waterfront taverna, just east of the ferry quay. It serves Greek specialities, such as lamb in lemon sauce, the salads are crisp and fresh, and the cheese and mushroom pies are tasty.

Entertainment

Halfway up the first staircase along from the ferry quay are a couple of popular music bars including Ilori and Vipera Lebetina , playing disco, pop and Greek music during July and August.

Further uphill, opposite Villa Helios, the stylish Akri is in a beautiful location with a fine terrace overlooking the port. Music favours ethnic, funk and easy listening.

Information

ATMs can be found along the main harbour front and in the main square. The post office is along the main road, 50m from the main square, on the right.

Internet Info (22870 23218; per 30min €1.50; 10am-midnight) Located in the main street, just inland and on the right.

Municipal Tourist Office (22870 22445; 9am-midnight mid-Jun–mid-Sep) Opposite the quay. Luggage can be left at your own risk. Outside main season the office opens for boat arrivals.

Police station (22870 21378) On the main square, next to the bus stop.

Port police (22870 22100) On the waterfront.

Riva Travel (22870 24024) On the waterfront. Sells ferry tickets and arranges car hire.

Terry's Travel Services (22870 22640;) Knowledgeable and helpful service goes with a great love of the island here. Can help with accommodation, car hire, kayaking and sailing trips, diving and much more. Head left from the ferry quay and, just past the bend in the road, go right up a lane.

Plaka & Trypiti Πλάκα & Τρυπητή

Plaka (population 877), 5km uphill from Adamas, is a typical Cycladic town with white houses rambling along the edge of an escarpment and labyrinthine lanes throughout. There are great sunset views from Plaka's western edge. The village merges with the settlement of Trypiti (population 489) to the south and rises above a sprawl of converging settlements, yet it has a distinctive and engaging character.

Plaka is built on the site of Ancient Milos, which was destroyed by the Athenians and rebuilt by the Romans.

Sights & Activities

Archaeology Museum MUSEUM

(22870 21629; adult/child €3/2; 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun Jun-Sep) This museum is in Plaka, just downhill from the bus turnaround. It's in a handsome old building and contains some riveting exhibits, including a plaster cast of *Venus de Milo* that was made by Louvre craftsmen – as a sort of *Venus de Mea Culpa*, perhaps, considering the French 'appropriated' the original. Best of all is a perky little herd of tiny bull figurines from the Late Cycladic period. The museum opens from October to May by appointment only.

Milos Folk and Historic Arts Museum MUSEUM

(22870 21292; adult/child €3/1.50; 10am-1pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sun Jun-Sep, 7pm-10pm Mon Jul-Aug) This museum has fascinating exhibits, including traditional costumes, woven goods and household artefacts, all housed within a series of traditionally furnished rooms. It's signposted from the bus turnaround in Plaka. Outside the summer season, the museum is open evenings only.

Frankish Kastro ANCIENT SITE

From the bus turnaround, follow signs for the path that climbs to the Frankish Kastro,

built on the ancient acropolis and offering panoramic views of most of the island. The 13th-century church, *Thalassitras*, is inside the walls.

Roman Ruins ANCIENT SITE

There are some Roman ruins near Trypiti, including Greece's only Christian catacombs (22870 21625; admission €2; 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun). The site was closed for some time, but has been skilfully renovated. Stay on the bus towards Trypiti and get off at a T-junction by a big signpost indicating the way. Follow the road down for about 500m to where a track (signed) goes off to the right. This leads to the rather forlorn, but somehow thrilling, spot where a farmer found the *Venus de Milo* in 1820; you can't miss the huge sign. A short way further along the track is the well-preserved ancient theatre, which hosts the Milos Festival each summer. Back on the surfaced road, head downhill to reach the 1st-century catacombs.

Sleeping & Eating

All of the following places are located in Plaka.

Archondoula Karamitsou Studios APARTMENTS €€

(22870 23820;; ste €65-85) There are impressive views from these self-catering rooms, which are full of local craftwork and island antiques.

Windmill of Karamitsos APARTMENT €€€

(6945568086; kaliopakavaliou@yahoo.gr; r €170) A fascinating and unique sleeping experience can be had at this converted windmill, which has a separate cooking and eating annexe. It's in a peaceful position on a hill top, of course, with panoramic views.

Betty's Rooms ROOMS €€

(22870 21538; d/tr €80/95) You get sunset views as glorious as Santorini's from this welcoming family house at Plaka's cliff edge.

Archondoula TAVERNA €

(dishes €7-15;) All the family is involved at this great *mezedhopoleio*. The food is classic Greek across a range of favourites from fresh salads to beef with honey sauce. Vegetarians will love the grilled vegetables with *manouri* cheese. Head along the main street from the bus turnaround in Plaka. There's also free wi-fi.

Around Milos

The village of Klima, below Trypiti and the catacombs, was the port of Ancient Milos. It's a picturesque fishing village with a lovely little harbour. Whitewashed buildings, with coloured doors and balconies, have boathouses on the ground floor and living quarters above.

Plathiena is a fine sandy beach below Plaka to the north. On the way to Plathiena you can visit the fishing villages of Areti and Fourkovouni.

At Sarakiniko are snow-white rock formations and natural terraces. Pollonia, on the north coast, is a fishing village-cum-resort with a beach and domatia. The boat to Kimolos departs from here.

The beaches of Provatas and Paleohori, on the south coast, are long and sandy, and Paleohori has hot springs.

KIMOLOS

POP 769

Kimolos (Κίμωλος) feels like a genuine step back in time. Perched off the northeast tip of Milos, it receives a steady trickle of visitors, especially day-trippers arriving from Pollonia. The boat docks at the port of Psathi, from where it's 1.5km to the pretty capital of Hora. The medieval Kastro, embedded at the heart of Hora, is a mazelike

joy. Albeit in ruins, there are surviving walls and restoration work is ongoing. There's an ATM by the town hall in Hora.

The fascinating Folk and Maritime Museum of Kimolos (22870 51118) is located in the Kastro in a lovely old house.

Beaches can be reached by caïque from Psathi. At the centre of the island is the 364m-high cliff on which sits the fortress of Paleokastro .

There are domatia, tavernas, cafes and bars enough in Hora and Psathi. Domatia owners meet ferries. Expect to pay rates of about €40/60 per single/double.

The taverna To Kyma (*dishes €5-14*) , on the beach at Psathi is excellent for seafood and also offers meat mains and locally sourced vegetarian dishes such as *kolokithenia* (zucchini pies).

There is one petrol station on Kimolos; it's about 200m to the north of Psathi.

Getting There & Away

Kimolos shares much the same regular ferry schedules as Milos (see [Click here](#)). A car ferry goes daily to and from Pollonia on Milos, departing from Kimolos at 8am, 10am, 1.15pm, 5.30pm and 10pm (€2, 20 minutes).

A BENT FOR CYCLADIC TRAVEL

Long before the hip lotus eaters of the 1960s discovered their dream world in the Greek islands, a redoubtable pair of travellers had been thoroughly 'doing' the Cyclades during the late 19th century. James Theodore Bent and his wife, Mabel, travelled extensively throughout the Aegean, 'researching' the cultural life of the islands as much as their archaeology. J Theodore's 1885 book , *The Cyclades: Or Life Among the Insular Greeks* , is a quirky masterpiece and is essential reading if you want to appreciate the realities of the late-19th-century Greek islands – and the Bent's often eccentric reflections. A full edition is published by Archaeopress () . An abridged edition, published by Anagnosis () may sometimes be found in bookshops on bigger islands such as Santorini.

SIFNOS

POP 2442

Sifnos (see -fnoss; Σίφνος) captivates the visitor with its hidden charms. It seems a barren place of rugged hills as you approach by sea, until the port of Kamares appears, as if by magic. Beyond the port and between the flanking slopes of the mountains lies an abundant landscape of terraced olive groves and almond trees, of oleanders and juniper and aromatic herbs covering the gentler slopes. The main settlement of Apollonia and the scenic village of Kastro have great appeal, and plenty of unspoiled paths link the island villages. Walking on Sifnos is particularly satisfying. The Anavasi map series *Topo 25/10.25 Aegean Cyclades/Sifnos* is useful for footpath details. During the Archaic period (from about the 8th century BC) the island was very wealthy because of its gold and silver resources, but by the 5th century BC the mines were exhausted and Sifnos' fortunes were reversed. The island has a tradition of pottery making, basket weaving and cooking.

Getting There & Away

Sifnos is on the Piraeus–Western Cyclades ferry route and has good summer connections south to Serifos, Milos and Folegandros, and with Santorini and Amorgos.

BOAT SERVICES FROM SIFNOS

DESTINATION	PORT	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Folegandros	Sifnos	4½hr	€7	1-3 daily
Folegandros*	Sifnos	1hr	€20	4 weekly
Kimolos	Sifnos	½hr	€12	5 weekly
Milos	Sifnos	3hr 40min	€8	1-2 daily
Milos*	Sifnos	1hr	€15	1-3 daily
Paros	Sifnos	3½hr	€9	3 weekly

Piraeus	Sifnos	5¼hr	€31	2 daily
Piraeus*	Sifnos	2hr 40min	€48	3 daily
Santorini (Thira)	Sifnos	7hr 20min	€13.50	2 weekly
Serifos	Sifnos	25min	€7	1-2 daily
Serifos*	Sifnos	25min	€14	1-2 daily
Syros	Sifnos	5hr 20min	€13	5 weekly

*high-speed services

Getting Around

Frequent buses link Kamares with the island's main town, Apollonia (€1.50), with some services continuing on to Artemonas (€1.50), Kastro (€1.50), Vathy (€2.10), Faros (€1.50) and Platys Gialos (€2.10).

Taxis (22840 31347) hover around the port and Apollonia's main square. Fares from Kamares are €7 to Apollonia, €16 to Platys Gialos and €18 to Vathy. Add €2 if booking ahead. Cars can be hired from **Stavros Hotel** (22840 31641) in Kamares and from **Apollo Rent a Car** (22840 32237) in Apollonia, starting at about €40 per day.

Kamares Καμάρες

POP 186

The port of Kamares (kah- mah -res) always seems to have a holiday atmosphere, not least because of its large beach and the narrow, bustling beachside road with its waterfront cafes, tavernas and colourful mix of shops. The bus stop is by the tamarisk trees just past the inland end of the ferry quay.

Sleeping & Eating

Domatia owners rarely meet boats and in high season it's best to book ahead.

Camping Makis CAMPGROUND, APARTMENTS €€

(22840 32366, 6945946339;; *camp sites per adult/child €7/4, apt €70-210; Apr-Nov;*) This quiet and friendly campground is just behind the beach. The well-equipped apartments have recently been refurbished to a very high standard. There's an outdoor cafe, a barbecue and communal kitchen area, a minimarket and a laundry.

Simeon APARTMENTS €€

(22840 31652;; *s/d/tr €50/70/80, apt €110-150; Apr-Oct;*) The front balconies at this place high above the port have stunning views down across the bay and along the beach to soaring mountains beyond. Rooms have tea- and coffee-making facilities and apartments are fully self-catering.

Stavros Hotel HOTEL €€

(22840 31641/3383;; *s/d/tr €55/70/75;*) Main street's Stavros has bright and comfy rooms. Attached to the hotel is an information office that can arrange car hire and has a book exchange. The same family owns Hotel Kamari (22840 33383) on the outskirts of Kamares on the road to Apollonia – rooms here are €40/50/55 per single/double/triple.

Hotel Afroditi B&B €€

(22840 31704;; *s/d/tr incl breakfast €70/91/114;*) The welcoming, family-run Afroditi is across the road from the beach. Rooms are a decent size and breakfast on the verandah is a definite plus. There are sea views to the front and mountain views to the rear.

Café Stavros CAFE €

(*snacks €2.50-5.50*) Overlooking the water halfway along the main street is this

relaxing place, ideal for people-watching. It does filling breakfasts for about €4.50 to €10.

O Symos TAVERNA €

(dishes €4.50-9) Among the choice of waterfront tavernas, this popular place uses locally sourced ingredients and offers favourites such as *revythia* (chickpea) soup.

Posidonia CAFE €

(dishes €5-9) Another popular eatery is the family-run Posidonia, where you can get breakfast for about €6.

Information

There are toilets near the tourist office, plus an ATM booth.

Municipal tourist office (22840 31977/975;) Opposite the bus stop is this very helpful and well-organised office. Opening times vary depending on boat arrivals. It sells ferry tickets and can find accommodation anywhere on the island. There's luggage storage (per item €1) and you can buy useful information sheets about the island as well as bus and boat timetables.

Apollonia Απολλωνία

POP 1593

The 'capital' of Sifnos is situated on the edge of a plateau 5km uphill from the port. Constant traffic seems to be the norm through Apollonia's busy central square, but step away from the main road onto the pedestrian street of Odos Prokou (also known as Steno because of its narrowness), behind the Museum of Popular Art, and Apollonia is transformed by Steno's cafes, bars, clubs, shops and eateries.

There is a large free car park at the entrance to the village and an ATM by the bus stop. The Piraeus Bank and National Bank of Greece (both with ATMs) are just around the corner from the Kamares stop on the road to Artemonas; the police station is another 50m beyond.

The quirky Museum of Popular Art (22840 31341; admission €1; 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun) on the central square contains a splendid confusion of old costumes, pots, textiles and photographs that could keep you going for hours.

Sleeping & Eating

Mrs Dina Rooms ROOMS €€

(22840 31125, 6945513318; s/d/tr/q €50/60/ 70/80;) There's a cheerful atmosphere at this pleasant little complex of rooms that is bedecked with flowers. It's located a couple of hundred metres along the road south towards Vathy and Platys Gialos. The rooms are well above the road and have views towards Kastro.

Hotel Artemon HOTEL €€

(22840 31303;; Artemonas; s/d/tr €65/75/90;) In Artemonas, 2km uphill from Apollonia, is this old-style, unvarnished, but very reasonable hotel that has enough rooms to make it a possible bet in August, if you haven't booked ahead. Front rooms overlook the main road.

Lempesis GREEK €

(Artemonas; mains €5.50-9) Part of the Hotel Artemon, this restaurant is a local favourite, not least for its terrific baked meats and dishes like *revythia* soup, *exochiko* (lamb in pastry with cheese) and chicken in lemon sauce. The house wine is very good indeed.

Apostoli to Koutouki MODERN GREEK €

(dishes €8.50-14) Signature dishes such as beef baked in a clay pot with tomatoes, aubergine, cheese and wine complement fish dishes by the kilo at this long-established place on Apollonia's pedestrianised main street.

Around Sifnos

Not to be missed is the walled cliff-top village of Kastro, 3km from Apollonia. The former capital, it is a magical place of buttressed alleyways and whitewashed houses. It has a modest archaeological museum (22840 31022; admission free; 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun).

Buses go to Kastro from Apollonia, but you can also walk there, mainly on old paved pathways. The start of the path is 20m to the right (Vathy road) from the T-junction in Apollonia. Go right down some steps and then through a tunnel beneath the road. A pleasant path circumnavigates Kastro and is especially scenic on its northern side. Midway round the northern side is the gallery and workshop of the gifted Athens artist and jeweller 'Maximos' Panagiotis Fanariotis, whose speciality is handmade jewellery in original gold and silver motifs. Prices for these lovely pieces are very reasonable and the gallery also displays the artist's hand-painted ceramics, paintings and greetings cards.

About 4km south of Kastro is the beautiful location of the handsome monastery of Hrysopigis with adjacent beaches.

At the heart of the island, about 2km south of Apollonia, is the newly excavated hill-top site of the Acropolis of Agios Andreas (22840 31488; admission free; 8.30am-3pm). The acropolis dates from the Mycenaean period of about the 13th century BC. This is a splendid site with most of its defensive wall intact and there is a small museum. The adjacent Church of Agios Andreas dates from about 1700. There's a new surfaced road all the way to the site.

Platys Gialos, 6km south of Apollonia, has a big, generous beach, entirely backed by tavernas, domatia and shops. The bus terminates at the beach's southwestern end.

Faros is a cosy little fishing hamlet with a couple of nice beaches nearby, including Fasolou, reached up steps and over the headland from the bus stop.

Vathy, on the west coast, is an attractive and low-key village within the curved horns of an almost circular bay.

Sleeping & Eating

KASTRO ΚΑΣΤΡΟ

Rafeletou Apartments APARTMENTS €€

(22840 31161, 6946874360;; d €45-80, tr €70-95, apt €120-140) For an authentic Kastro experience, these family-run apartments at the heart of the village are in traditional Sifniot houses. Some of the rooms and all the apartments have sea views, while cheaper rooms are at the heart of Kastro.

Maximos ROOMS €

(22840 33692; r €50) A tiny terrace with unbeatable sea views comes with this quirky little room above Maximos' gallery, located on the northern side of Kastro.

Leonidas TAVERNA €

(mains €5.50-15) With great views to north and south, this popular place offers tasty local dishes, from chickpea croquettes to *mastelo* (grilled cheese).

PLATYS GIALOS ΠΛΑΤΥΣ ΓΙΑΛΟΣ

Hotel Efrosini HOTEL €€

(22840 71353;; s/d/tr incl breakfast €65/95/117;) Right on the beach, this bright and well-kept hotel is one of the best on the Platys Gialos strip. The small balconies overlook a leafy courtyard.

Ariadne Restaurant MODERN GREEK €

(mains €6-16) One of the best restaurants on Sifnos, the Ariadne takes great care with

both the sourcing of its ingredients and with its preparation. The simple but delicious wild caper salad is a fine prelude to lamb in red-wine sauce with herbs or the veal baked in a clay pot. Fish is by the kilo, but you can settle for a reasonably priced seafood risotto or fish soup for €15.

VATHY BAΘY

Vathy has a fair choice of beachfront tavernas, such as Oceanida and Manolis , offering reliable Greek dishes.

Areti Studios APARTMENTS €€

(22840 71191; d/apt €60/100;) Just in from the beach and amid olive groves and a lovely garden, rooms here are clean and bright and some have cooking facilities. If you are driving, the approach is down a rough and at times very narrow track that goes off left just before the main road ends.

SERIFOS

POP 1414

Serifos (*seh* -ri-fohs; Σέριφος) has a raw and rugged beauty that is softened by green folds in its rocky hills. The traditional *hora* is a dramatic scribble of white houses that crowns a high and rocky peak, 2km to the north of the port of Livadi. It catches your eye the minute the port comes into sight.

In Greek mythology, Serifos is where Perseus grew up and where the Cyclops were said to live. The island, in real time, was brutally exploited for iron ore during the 19th and 20th centuries and the rough remains of the industry survive.

There is some fine walking on Serifos and the Anavasi map series *Topo 25/10.26 Aegean Cyclades/Serifos* is useful.

Getting There & Away

Like Sifnos, Serifos is on the Piraeus–Western Cyclades ferry route and has good summer connections south to Sifnos, Milos and Folegandros, and even with Santorini and Amorgos.

BOAT SERVICES FROM SERIFOS

DESTINATION	PORT	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Andros	Serifos	4hr 50min	€12	2 weekly
Folegandros	Serifos	7hr 40min	€19	5 weekly
Folegandros*	Serifos	2hr 5min	€24	4 weekly
Kimolos*	Serifos	1hr 10min	€19	5 weekly
Kythnos	Serifos	1hr 20min	€13	1-2 daily

Milos	Serifos	4hr 40min	€16	1-2 daily
Milos*	Serifos	1½hr	€16	1-3 daily
Paros	Serifos	2½hr	€10.10	2 weekly
Piraeus	Serifos	5hr	€24	2 daily
Piraeus*	Serifos	2¼hr	€43	3 daily
Santorini (Thira)	Serifos	9hr	€19	2 weekly
Sifnos	Serifos	50min	€11	1-2 daily
Sifnos*	Serifos	25min	€14	1-2 daily
Syros	Serifos	4hr 20min	€9	2 weekly
Tinos	Serifos	2hr 55min	€14	2 weekly

*high-speed services

Getting Around

There are frequent buses between Livadi and Hora (€1.60, 15 minutes); a timetable is posted at the bus stop by the yacht quay. A taxi to Hora costs €7. Vehicles can be hired from Krinas Travel in Livadi.

Livadi Λιβάδι

POP 537

The port town of Serifos is a fairly low-key place where, in spite of growing popularity, there's still a reassuring feeling that the modern world has not entirely taken over. Just over the headland that rises from the ferry quay lies the fine, tamarisk-fringed beach at Livadakia . A walk further south over the next headland, Karavi Beach is the unofficial clothes-optional beach.

Sleeping & Eating

The best accommodation is on and behind Livadakia Beach, a few minutes' hike from the quay. Most owners pick up at the port by arrangement.

Coralli Camping & Bungalows CAMPGROUND, BUNGALOWS €

(22810 51500;; camp sites per adult/child/tent €8/4/6, bungalows €65-110;)

In an exclusive location right behind Livadakia Beach, this very well-equipped and well-run campground is shaded by tall eucalypts. The bungalows have been refurbished recently to the highest standard and have mountain or sea views. There's also a restaurant (*mains* €5-10) , and a minimarket, community kitchen and barbecue for campers. The pool and bar area are very cool. A minibus meets all ferries. The nearby self-catering Coralli Apartments (22810 51500; apt €80-120;) are of an equally high standard.

Medousa HOTEL €€

(22810 51128;; s/d/tr €50/70/75;) An open outlook is just one advantage of this friendly place that stands above a lovely garden and has views of nearby Livadakia Bay and distant Sifnos. Rooms are comfy and each has a little hotplate and tea- and coffee-making facilities.

Alexandros-Vassilia APARTMENTS €€

(22810 51119;; d/tr/apt €85/105/130;) A rose-fragrant garden right on the beach makes this place a happy choice. Rooms are a good size and are clean and well equipped (apartments have cooking facilities). The garden taverna does sturdy Greek staples for €6.50 to €10.50.

Metalleio MODERN GREEK €€

(22810 51755; mains €10-15) Tucked away on the road beyond the waterfront, Metalleio has increased its focus on quality cuisine with creative dishes from various Cycladean islands, such as *matsata* (Folegandrian pasta with smoked pork, tomatoes and *graviera* (cheese) from Naxos). Salads and starters are equally inventive.

Takis TAVERNA €

(mains €5.50-12.50) Offers reliable local standard fare.

Passaggio TAVERNA €

(mains €7-14) Traditional cuisine with international touches.

Drinking & Entertainment

Metalleio BAR

(8.30pm-late) For an eclectic array of sounds from around the world, including jazz, funk, Afro, Asian groove and Latin, Metalleio is the top spot. Live performances also feature.

Yacht Club Serifos BAR

(7am-3am) The waterfront Yacht Club Serifos has a cheerful buzz and plays lounge music by day and mainstream rock, disco and funk late into the night.

Anemos Café CAFE

At the inner end of the ferry dock, Anemos has great views of the distant Hora from a sunny balcony.

There are several music bars in the central waterfront area such as Shark and Edem that play mainly Greek sounds.

Information

A useful website is.

There is an Alpha Bank (with ATM) located on the waterfront and an ATM under the bakery sign opposite the yacht quay.

The post office is midway along the road that runs inland from opposite the bus stop.

Krinas Travel (22810 51488;) Just where the ferry quay joins the waterfront road, this helpful agency sells ferry tickets and organises car (per day €50), scooter (per day €22) and quad bike (per day €28) hire. It also has internet access at €2 per half-hour and a book exchange.

Port police (22810 51470) Up steps just beside Krinas Travel.

Hora (Serifos) Χώρα (Σέριφος)

The *hora* of Serifos spills across the summit of a rocky hill above Livadi and is one of the most striking of the Cycladic capitals. Ancient steps lead up from Livadi, though they are fragmented by the snaking road that links the two. You can walk up but, in the heat of summer, going up by bus and then walking back down is wiser. There's a post office just up from the bus turnaround.

Just up from Hora's bus terminus, steps climb into the maze of Hora proper and lead to the charming main square, watched over by the imposing neoclassical town hall. From the square, narrow alleys and more steps lead ever upwards to the remnants of the ruined 15th-century Venetian Kastro from where the views are spectacular.

Hora has a small archaeological collection (22810 51138; admission free; 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun) displaying fragments of mainly Hellenic and Roman sculpture excavated from the *kastro*. Exhibits are sparse and the museum tiny, but it is a pleasure to visit. Panels in Greek and English spell out fascinating details, including the legend of Perseus.

There is a pleasant walk on a fine cobbled pathway that starts just above the archaeological museum and leads up the mountain to the little church of Agios

Georgios . The views are superb.

Sleeping & Eating

I Apanemia ROOMS €

(22810 51517, 6971891106; s/d €40/45;) You'll find excellent value at this good-natured, family-run place. The decent, well-equipped rooms (tea- and coffee-making facilities included) have front balcony views down towards the distant sea and side views towards Hora.

Stou Stratou MEZEDHES €

(plates €4-24) The tradition of the *mezedhopoleio* is alive and well at this charming place in the pretty main square. There are tasty mezedhes such as fennel pie, and a choice that includes a vegetarian plate or a mixed plate of Cretan smoked pork, ham, cheese, salami, stuffed vine leaves, feta, potato, tomatoes and egg that will keep two people more than happy. Breakfasts are €3 to €7.50 and there are ice creams, homemade cakes and cocktails. The menu is more like a book and features the work of famous artists and writers such as El Greco and Picasso, Cafavy and Apollinaire.

Around Serifos

About 1.5km north of Livadi along a surfaced road is Psili Ammos Beach . A path from Hora heads north for about 4km to the pretty village of Kendarhos (aka Kallitsos), from where you can continue by a very windy road for another 3km to the 17th-century fortified Moni Taxiarchon , which has impressive 18th-century frescoes. The walk from Hora to the monastery takes about two hours. You will need to take food and water, as there are no facilities in Kendarhos.

KYTHNOS

POP 1608

Kythnos (Κύθνος) is not necessarily high on the must-see list of foreign holidaymakers, but is a favourite of mainland Greeks and something of a weekend destination for 'gin palace' motor cruises also. Yet this is a Greek island of rare character, in spite of its rather dull port, and it has an easygoing lifestyle. The capital, Hora, is an endearing place and the very traditional village of Dryopida is rewarding.

Getting There & Away

Kythnos has reasonable connections with daily ferries to and from Piraeus and several ferries a week to Lavrio. Onward connections to islands to the south are fairly regular in summer.

BOAT SERVICES FROM KYTHNOS

DESTINATION	PORT	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Andros	Kythnos	5hr 40min	€10	2 weekly
Folegandros	Kythnos	11hr 25min	€16	1 weekly
Ios	Kythnos	8hr 10min	€23	5-6 weekly
Kimolos	Kythnos	11hr 10min	€18	2 weekly
Milos	Kythnos	3¼hr-4hr	€18	1-2 daily

Paros	Kythnos	7hr 40min	€18.50	2 weekly
Piraeus	Kythnos	3hr 10min	€20	1-2 daily
Serifos	Kythnos	1hr 20min	€15	1-2 daily
Sifnos	Kythnos	2½hr	€15	1-2 daily
Syros	Kythnos	2hr	€10	4 weekly

Getting Around

There are regular buses in high summer from Merihas to Dryopida (€1.60), continuing to Kanala (€2.80) or Hora (€1.60). Less regular services run to Loutra (€2.80). The buses supposedly meet the ferries, but usually they leave from the turn-off to Hora in Merihas. During term-time the only buses tend to be school buses.

Taxis (22810 32883, 69442 71609) are a better bet, except at siesta time. Hora is about €9 and Dryopida €7.

A **taxi-boat** (6944906568) runs to and from local beaches in summer and costs about €10 for a round trip.

Merihas Μέριχας

POP 289

Merihas (*meh* -ree-hass) does not have a lot going for it other than a bit of waterfront life and a slightly grubby beach. There are better beaches within walking distance north of the quay at Episkopi and Apokrousi .

Sleeping & Eating

Domatia owners usually meet boats and there are a number of signs along the waterfront advertising rooms. A lot of places block-book during high season and there is some reluctance towards one-night stopovers. You should definitely book ahead for July and August.

Studios Maria Gonidi APARTMENTS €€

(22810 32324; s/d/tr €50/60/70;) Over on the far side of the bay with lofty views, these are a top choice. Spacious, sparkling rooms have full self-catering facilities. However, during July and August there's little chance of securing short stays. Only Greek is spoken.

Kamares Anna Gouma Rooms ROOMS €€

(22810 32105, 6949777884; s/d €55/65;) Good-sized rooms, across the bay from the ferry quay.

Ostria SEAFOOD €

(*mains* €6-15) Just along from the ferry quay, Ostria is the place for fish, with fish soup or a portion of anchovies as favourites.

Taverna to Kandouni TAVERNA €

(*mains* €6-14) On the southern bend of the waterfront, Kandouni specialises in grilled meat dishes.

Drinking

Café Vegera CAFE

This waterside cafe has a lovely verandah, ideal for watching life go by.

Rock Castle BAR

High above the harbour is the remarkable Rock Castle, gained by steepish steps. There's a great selection of drinks and cocktails and over 30 different beer labels that include Guinness and the Athenian Craft label. Sounds range from jazz, ethnic and

Latin to reggae and rock. The terrace has unbeatable views.

Information

There's an Emboriki bank (with ATM) on the road above the Merihas waterfront, and an ATM just past the flight of steps as you come from the ferry quay.

Larentzakis Travel Agency (22810 32104, 6944906568) Sells ferry tickets, arranges accommodation and hires cars starting at about €30 a day in August. Scooters start at €15. It's up the flight of steps near Ostria Taverna that leads to the main road.

Port police (22810 32290) On the waterfront.

Around Kythnos

The capital, Hora (also known as Kythnos or Messaria), is steadily taking on a distinctive charm, underpinned by its inherent Greek character. Small, colourful cafes and shops are growing in number. The long straggling main street, its surface decorated with painted motifs, makes for a pleasant stroll. The post office and the island's police station (22810 31201) are at the entrance to town coming from Merihas. There's excellent accommodation at Filoxenia (22810 31644;; d/tr/q €65/75/90;), and tavernas such as Koursaros , To Steki and Mezzeria serve good island cuisine. The resort of Loutra is 3km north of Hora on a windy bay and hangs on to its status through its surviving thermal baths .

From Hora there is a 5km-long walk south to Dryopida , a picturesque town of red-tiled roofs and winding streets clustered steeply on either side of a ravine.

There are decent beaches at Flambouria about 2.5km south of Merihas, and near Kanala on the southeast coast.

KEA (TZIA)

POP 2417

Kea (Κέα (Τζία)) is the most northerly island of the Cyclades and, being the island closest to Attica, attracts more mainland locals than foreign visitors. It is an island that wears its many charms quietly. Between its bare hills, green valleys are filled with orchards, olive groves and almond and oak trees. The main settlements on the island are the port of Korissia and the attractive capital, Ioulida, about 5km inland. There are several fine beaches and some excellent signposted footpaths. Local people use the name Tzia for their island.

Getting There & Away

The island's main connection to the mainland is through the port of Lavrio in southern Attica; there are no ferries from Piraeus to Kea. Connections onwards to other Cycladic islands are few. Boats are usually packed on Fridays and you should avoid the Sunday-night ferry to Lavrio, unless you enjoy controlled rioting. If you plan a Sunday departure, make sure you get your ticket before Friday – and brace yourself for a bit of a mosh pit.

BOAT SERVICES FROM KEA (TZIA)

DESTINATION	PORT	DURATION	FARE	FREQUENCY
Andros	Kea	5hr 50min	€10	1 weekly
Folegandros	Kea	9hr 50min	€22	5 weekly
Ios	Kea	11hr 10min	€23	2 weekly
Kimolos	Kea	11hr 10min	€18	2 weekly

Kythnos	Kea	1hr	€7	7 weekly
Lavrio	Kea	50min	€10.40	3-5 daily
Milos	Kea	12hr 20min	€15	2 weekly
Paros	Kea	5hr 20min	€18	2 weekly
Naxos	Kea	8¾hr	€19	2 weekly
Sikinos	Kea	8hr 50min	€24	2 weekly
Syros	Kea	2hr 50min	€12	4 weekly
Tinos	Kea	4hr	€13	4 weekly

Getting Around

In July and August there are, in theory, regular buses from Korissia to the villages of Vourkari, Otzias, Ioulida and Piosses Beach, although there may be irregularities in the schedules. A **taxi** (22880 21021/228) may be a better bet, to Ioulida (€7) especially. A taxi to Otzias is €6 and to Piosses €22.

For motorcycle and car hire expect to pay, per day, €17 to €20 for a scooter and from €45 for a car. Try **Lion Cars** (22880 21898, 69371 85053) located mid-harbour front.

Korissia Κορησσία

POP 881

The port of Korissia (koh-ree- see -ah) is a fairly bland place, but there are enough tavernas and cafes to pass the time. The north-facing beach tends to catch the wind.

Sleeping & Eating

Domatia owners don't meet ferries. It's wise to book in high season and at weekends.

United Europe APARTMENTS €

(22880 21362;; s/d/tr €40/ 60/70;) Big, airy self-catering rooms make this quiet place an excellent option. All of the rooms are well kept and some have been refurbished in recent years. It's about 200m along the river road behind the beach.

Magazes MODERN GREEK €

(mains €7.50-13) Located mid-waterfront, Magazes is housed in what was once an old warehouse for storing wine, oil, almonds and other products due for export. It has been carefully transformed into a very fine *estiatorio* (restaurant) in a style that retains the architectural integrity of its origins. Recommended for its seafood, signature dishes include mussel risotto with fresh fennel and peppers.

Lagoudera GREEK €

(mains €5-12) On the main waterfront offering tasty Greek dishes such as mushroom pie and pork and celery.

Steki tou Strogili GREEK €

(mains €7-13) In a pleasant setting above the main quay and next to the church, Strogili has a decent menu of traditional Greek favourites.

THE RED TRACTOR FARM

Kea's Red Tractor Farm (22880 21346;; d €90, studios €130-180;) lies islanded within a serene world of its own, yet is a mere stroll from the beach and port of Korissia. This is where Kostis Maroulis and Marcie Mayer have created a sustainable and creative agro-tourism venture. The complex of beautiful Cycladean buildings combines tradition with comfort and modern styling, all of it set within organic vineyards and olive groves where you're likely to find a hand-crafted seat or two for relaxation or an unobtrusive yet striking artwork. Recycling and sustainability are major features of the farm, which is a host member of WWOOF, (World Wide

Opportunities on Organic Farms) and it is open all year. Kostis and Marcie also produce olive oil, wine, marmalade and chutney, and a current initiative aims for a renaissance of Kea's native acorn harvest and of acorn products.

Drinking

There are traditional bars and cafes along the waterfront, but for a more modern upbeat scene try Tzamaica for mostly rock, or next door the bigger Echo Club goes for Greek sounds.

Information

There are ATMs on the waterfront and the Piraeus Bank, facing the beach, has an ATM. There is a small ferry ticket office next to the car-hire agency on the waterfront.

Internet Café (22880 22635; per hr €4; 10am-2.30pm & 5.30pm-midnight Mon-Fri, 10am-midnight Sat & Sun) Located just up an alleyway midway along the waterfront.

Stegadi (22880 84002;) A useful travel agency selling ferry tickets and with information on island tours.

Tourist information office (22880 22651) The official tourist office, opposite the ferry quay, has lists of domatia in Greek, but not much more.

Ioulida Ιουλίδα

POP 1536

Ioulida (ee-oo- lee -tha) is Kea's gem and has a distinctly cosmopolitan feel at weekends. It's a pretty scramble of narrow alleyways and rising lanes that lies along the rim of a natural amphitheatre among the hills. It was once a substantial settlement of ancient Greece, but few relics remain and even the Venetian Kastro has been incorporated into private houses. The houses have red-tiled roofs like those of Dryopida on Kythnos.

The bus turnaround is on a square just at the edge of town. Other than taxis and delivery vehicles there is no parking here. Cars should park in the car park located below the square. From the car park follow steps up to a T-junction and turn right for the bus turnaround, from where an archway leads into the village. Beyond the archway, turn right and uphill along the main street and into the more interesting heart of Ioulida proper. The post office is part way up on the right. You'll also pass the quirky 'Piazza Dellapizza' with its giant chess set, home ground of the colourful naïve painter and creative artist 'Del' who doubles as Ioulida's efficient and creative street and path maintenance man.

There's a bank in the turnaround square but no ATM. There's an ATM in the square by the town hall, halfway up the main street.

Sights

Archaeological Museum MUSEUM

(22880 22079; adult/child €3/2; 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun) Ioulida's archaeological museum is just before the post office on the main thoroughfare. It houses some intriguing artefacts, including some superb terracotta figurines, mostly from Agia Irini.

Kea Lion MONUMENT

The famed Kea Lion, chiselled from slate in the 6th century BC, lies on the hillside beyond the last of the houses. Head uphill from the museum and keep going until abreast of the Kea Lion across a shallow valley. The path then curves round past a cemetery and the lion, with its *Mona Lisa* smile, is ahead and is reached through a gate and down some steps. Continuing beyond the lion, the path leads in a few minutes to a big drinking fountain behind a huge plane tree. From just beyond here, a splendid

path branches left and leads to the road just above Otzias in just over 3km. It's then 3km, unfortunately by road, to Korissia.

Sleeping & Eating

There are a few domatia in Ioulida, and several decent tavernas. Ask about rooms at tavernas.

The recommended eateries below offer good Greek dishes from about €4.50 to €9 (with lamb and fresh fish costing more).

Rolando's MEZEDHES €

Turn right beyond the arch for this terrific little *ouzerie* .

Estiatorio I Piatsa TAVERNA €

(22880 22195) Just inside the archway. Popular for grills and Greek standards.

Around Kea

The beach road from Korissia leads past Gialiskari Beach for 2.5km to where the waterfront quay at tiny Vourkari is lined with yachts and cafes.

Just across the bay from Vourkari are the truncated remains of the Minoan site of Agia Irini , which lie rather forlornly behind rusting wire fences. Excavations during the 20th century indicated that there had been a settlement here since 3200 BC and that it functioned for over 2000 years.

The road continues for another 3km to a fine sandy beach at Otzias . A surfaced road with rugged coastal views continues beyond here for another 5km to the 18th-century Moni Panagias Kastrianis .

Piosses is the island's best beach and is 8km southwest of Ioulida. A daily bus runs from and to Korissia in summer, although hours are awkward. Piosses has a long and sandy beach that is backed by a verdant valley of orchards and olive groves, with rugged hills rising above. There's a well-kept campsite here, Piosses Camping (22880 31302; campingkea@yahoo.gr; camp sites per adult/child/tent €6/3/6; bungalows €60-80; May-Sep) with a shop and cafe on site. The taverna Christoforos (mains €4.50-12) has great fish dishes.

About 1.5km beyond Piosses you can take a left turn and follow a surfaced road through Kato Meria and Ellinika and back to Ioulida in about 18km.