



# Greek Islands



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# Behind the Scenes

## SEND US YOUR FEEDBACK

We love to hear from travellers – your comments keep us on our toes and help make our books better. Our well-travelled team reads every word on what you loved or loathed about this book. Although we cannot reply individually to your submissions, we always guarantee that your feedback goes straight to the appropriate authors, in time for the next edition. Each person who sends us information is thanked in the next edition – the most useful submissions are rewarded with a selection of digital PDF chapters.

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## THIS BOOK

This 10th edition of Lonely Planet's *Greek Islands* guidebook was researched and written by Korina Miller, Alexis Averbuck, Anna Kaminski, Craig McLachlan, Zora O'Neill, Leonid Ragozin, Andrea Schulte-Peevers, Helena Smith, Greg Ward and Richard Waters. The previous edition was written by Korina Miller, Alexis Averbuck, Carolyn Bain,

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# Welcome to the Greek Islands

*The Greek Islands ignite the imagination and satisfy the soul with a history laced in mythical tales and told through ancient, sun-bleached ruins.*

## Experience Island Life

Sink your toes deep into the sand and listen to the warm Aegean lap the shore like you have nowhere else to be. This is island life. Soak up the majestic beauty of Santorini or indulge in the pulsing nightlife of Mykonos. Wander through lush wildflowers in spring or laze on isolated sandy coves in summer. Become acquainted with the melancholy throb of *rembetika* (blues songs) and the tang of homemade tzatziki. The days melt from one to the next, filled with miles of aquamarine coastline blessed with some of Europe's cleanest beaches. Many travellers simply settle down and never go home.

## Satisfy Your Appetite

On the islands, you'll often be fed like long-lost family from traditional dishes heaped with pride. Island hopping is a culinary adventure and a tour of regional cuisine. Each island's local cheese is unique, and its wild greens and honey distinct. Head to a harbour to watch the daily catch tumble from the fishermen's nets, and look for people collecting wild produce on the hillsides. On many islands, you'll encounter the Italian legacy of pasta with a Greek slant, like rich sauces with mussels steamed in ouzo. On others, the Ottoman past surfaces in spiced sweets and pastries.

## Time Travel

Surround yourself with the ancient ruins of Delos or wander through the reconstructed Minoan palace of Knossos and you can almost sense the ancient Greeks moving alongside you. The spellbinding city of Akrotiri, dug out from beneath the ash of Santorini's massive volcanic eruption, and the medieval walled city of Rhodes let you step through a window into times past. Beyond these celebrated sites are the quieter ruins scattered on nearly every island, filled with mystery and often overgrown with wildflowers – from the enormous marble statues of Naxos to the colourful 2nd-century mosaics on Kos. Greek ruins are as impressive as they are numerous.

## Get Active

The islands sit 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. The Greek islands are also an excellent place to try new pursuits, with some of the world's top kitesurfing, diving and rock climbing locations. With wide, open skies and a vast and varied landscape that begs to be conquered, it's easy to understand how so many myths of gods and giants originated here.



## Why I Love the Greek Islands

By Korina Miller, Writer

I was marooned on Tilos – a speck of an island adrift in the Aegean. My ferry had been cancelled and warm rain fell in torrential sheets, drenching me to the bone. This was not my island dream. I made my way to a beachside pub, housed in a turn-of-the-century stone building. Inside I was welcomed unceremoniously into the old boys' club with a shot of ouzo that slid down my throat like liquid sunshine. Someone picked out a tune on a guitar as singing filled the room. Island life comes in many guises but the warmth and the welcome are universal.

**For more about our writers, see p608**

# Understand Greek Islands

## **GREEK ISLANDS TODAY .....538**

Despite bearing the brunt of severe economic austerity measures and the strain of a humanitarian refugee crisis, islanders remain spirited.

## **HISTORY .....540**

Greece's cultural influence, physical prowess and athleticism of mind have left deep historical footprints.

## **ANCIENT GREEK CULTURE .....552**

Ancient Greek is the grandmother of philosophy, the keeper of classical sculpture and the wellspring of stories and myths.

## **THE ISLANDERS .....556**

The Greek islands balance tourism, agriculture, modernity and tradition. Gain insight into seasonal life, island customs and regional identities.

## **THE ARTS .....560**

Greece's contemporary page-turners, music styles and thought-provoking modern art scene offer cultural immersion.

## **ARCHITECTURE .....565**

Discover Greece's influence on architecture around the globe, along with where to see the best temples and ruins.

## **NATURE & WILDLIFE .....569**

With mountainous interiors and unending ribbons of coastline, the islands offer everything from birds and turtles to orchids and oregano.



# Greek Islands Today

While life on the Greek islands seems to carry on relatively unfettered, few have been unaffected by savage wage and pension cuts, new taxes, record joblessness and thousands of closed shops and businesses, all brought on by the country's debt crisis. Tourism hasn't been the hoped-for miracle balm. Meanwhile, thousands of refugees who have landed on the islands in hope of reaching other parts of Europe are trapped in crowded island camps by closed borders, causing a humanitarian crisis that Greece is struggling to deal with.

## Best on Film

**Shirley Valentine** (1989) Classic Greek-island romance on Mykonos.

**Mamma Mia** (2008) The island of Skopelos shines to the soundtrack of ABBA.

**Guns of Navarone** (1961) Compelling wartime boy's-own thriller.

**Captain Corelli's Mandolin** (2001) Lavish retelling of Louis de Bernières' WWII novel set on occupied Kefallonia.

## Best in Print

**The Magus** (John Fowles; 1966) Creepy mind games set on fictional island Phraxos.

**The Odyssey** (Homer; 8th century BC) Plagued by Poseidon, Odysseus struggles to return home to Ithaki.

**Zorba the Greek** (Nikos Kazantzakis; 1946) A spiritual bible to many; one man's unquenchable lust for life.

**Something Will Happen, You'll See** (Christos Ikononou, 2016) Moving short stories of characters caught in the effects of the financial crisis.

**Falling For Icarus: A Journey among the Cretans** (Rory MacLean; 2004) A travel writer fulfils his ambition to build his own plane in the land of Icarus.

**Colossus of Maroussi** (Henry Miller; 1941) A travelogue of pre-war Greece, heralded as Miller's best work.

## Austerity Measures

The past decade has seen a widening of Greece's stark economic and social disparities. The hedonistic lifestyles of Athenians taking weekend jaunts to Mykonos bear no resemblance to islanders struggling with severe wage drops, pensions cut by 40%, increased taxes and soaring living costs. This scene is the result of the enforced austerity measures attached to the multi-billion-euro bailouts loaned to Greece by its EU and IMF creditors in 2009, 2010, 2011 and again in 2015.

Growing anger and social unrest have sparked mass strikes, protests and clashes with police in Athens that have spread to the larger islands. Disillusioned young Greeks are bearing the brunt of years of economic mismanagement – the country's most educated generation faces bleak prospects as youth unemployment sits at 46%. There is a feeling of despair that is decidedly un-Greek.

## Migration & Asylum

In 2015, the Greek islands' refugee crisis came into focus when tragic images of a drowned three-year-old spread across world media. The young Syrian refugee had been headed to Kos with his family. Greece's outlying islands have long been landing points for those in search of safety and a better life. Since 2015, 1.3 million illegal migrants have crossed into Greece; most come from Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Africa via the porous Turkish border, and many hope to reunite with family elsewhere in Europe.

In 2016, all European borders with Greece were closed in an attempt to discourage immigrants to the islands. In exchange, the EU committed to giving Turkey €6 billion to deal with their own refugee crisis. The numbers of refugees reaching the islands dropped drastically; some islands that saw up to 5000 arrivals daily in 2015 saw as few as 100 a day in 2017. Consequently, the number of drownings in the dangerous crossing has also declined.