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PLAN YOUR TRIP

YOUR PLANNING TOOL KIT

Photos, itineraries, lists and suggestions to help you put together your perfect trip

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16 TOP EXPERIENCES
Chile Capital
The capital of Chile is Santiago, a city of 6 million people, built on a hillside overlooking the bay. It's a city of contrasts, with modern skyscrapers and colonial buildings. The city is a mix of old and new, with a vibrant cultural scene. Santiago is a city of contrasts, with modern skyscrapers and colonial buildings. The city is a mix of old and new, with a vibrant cultural scene.

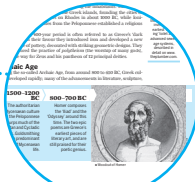
Great Food
Greek food is a mix of fresh ingredients and traditional recipes. It's a cuisine that's both healthy and delicious. From the famous Greek salad to the hearty moussaka, there's something for everyone. Greek food is a mix of fresh ingredients and traditional recipes. It's a cuisine that's both healthy and delicious. From the famous Greek salad to the hearty moussaka, there's something for everyone.

UNDERSTAND GREEK ISLANDS

GET MORE FROM YOUR TRIP

Learn about the big picture, so you can make sense of what you see

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➤ **Every listing is recommended by our authors, and their favourite places are listed first**

➤ **Look out for these icons:**



Our author's top recommendation



A green or sustainable option



No payment required

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Greek Islands



National Marine Park of Alonnisos
Pristine waters (p467)

Corfu Town
French, Italian and British influences (p482)

Athens
Ancient and contemporary come together (p62)

Hydra
One of Europe's most beautiful island towns (p146)

Hania
Labyrinth of Venetian architecture (p285)

Samaria Gorge
Europe's longest gorge (p293)

Top Experiences >





Victoria Kyriakopoulos

Eat Like a Local, Understand Greek Islands Victoria is a Melbourne-based journalist and travel writer who has written about Greece for more than 15 years. She wrote Lonely Planet's *Athens Encounter* and *Crete*, and contributed to *Greece* and *Greek Islands*, as well as international newspapers and magazines. Victoria was editor of *Odyssey* magazine, covered the 2004 Athens Olympics and has worked on several television shows about Greece.



Andrea Schulte-Peevers

Crete Andrea has travelled the distance to the moon and back in her visits to around 70 countries, but she'll forever cherish the memory of first setting foot on Crete some 15 years ago and being instantly charmed by its people, the rich tapestry of their traditions and their long and proud history. She has written or contributed to some 60 Lonely Planet books, including the *Crete* regional guide. Her current home is Berlin.



Richard Waters

Dodecanese Since gorging himself on whitebait in Corfu in the '70s, Richard has been back to Greece more than 15 times. He loves its people, its varied landscape and perhaps most of all its myths, and has written about them for various newspapers including the *Sunday Times*. He lives with his family in the Cotswolds, works as a freelance journalist and photographer, and when he's not travelling, pretends he's still a surfer. You can read some of his work at www.richardwaters.co.uk.



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Korina Miller

Coordinating Author, Plan Your Trip (except Eat Like a Local), Finding Your Perfect

Island, Survival Guide Korina first ventured to Greece as a backpacking teenager, sleeping on ferry decks and hiking in the mountains. She has since found herself drawn back to soak up the dazzling Greek sunshine, lounge on the beaches and consume vast quantities of Greek salad and strong coffee. Korina grew up on Vancouver Island and has been exploring the globe since she was 16, working, studying and travelling in 36 countries en route. Korina has written nearly 20 titles for Lonely Planet.



Alexis Averback

Athens & Around, Saronic Gulf Islands, Ionian Islands Alexis lives on Hydra, Greece, and takes regular reverse R&R in Athens, and makes any excuse to travel the isolated back roads of her adopted land. She is committed to dispelling the stereotype that Greece is simply a string of sandy beaches. A travel writer for two decades, she's lived in Antarctica for a year, crossed the Pacific by sailboat and written books on her journeys through Asia and the Americas. She's also a

painter – visit www.alexisaverback.com.

Read more about Alexis at:
lonelyplanet.com/members/alexisaverback



Michael Stamatios Clark

Northeastern Aegean Islands, Evia & the Sporades Michael's Greek roots go back to the village of Karavostamo (Ikaria), home of his maternal grandparents, and one of his destinations for this guide. His first trip to the islands was as a deck-hand aboard a Greek freighter, trading Greek lessons for English over backgammon. For this edition, Michael roamed the trails of Skopelos, tested the thermal sea waters of Ikaria, and happily sampled the retsina and *tsipouro* along the way.



Des Hannigan

Cyclades Des has been wandering around Greece for years. In a previous life he worked at sea, valuable experience for coping with the Greek ferry system although he'd really like to hop the islands in a fast yacht or even an old caique. Des has covered the Cycladic, Ionian and Saronic Islands and eastern Crete for Lonely Planet. He lives in the far west of Cornwall, England, where on very sunny days it can sometimes feel like Greece, except for the chilly Atlantic Ocean.

OVER MORE PAGE WRITERS

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itineraries

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 lonelyplanet.com/thorntree 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 ambiance 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 Ypsilon 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**.

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