



Greek Islands



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PLAN YOUR TRIP

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MYKONOS P165

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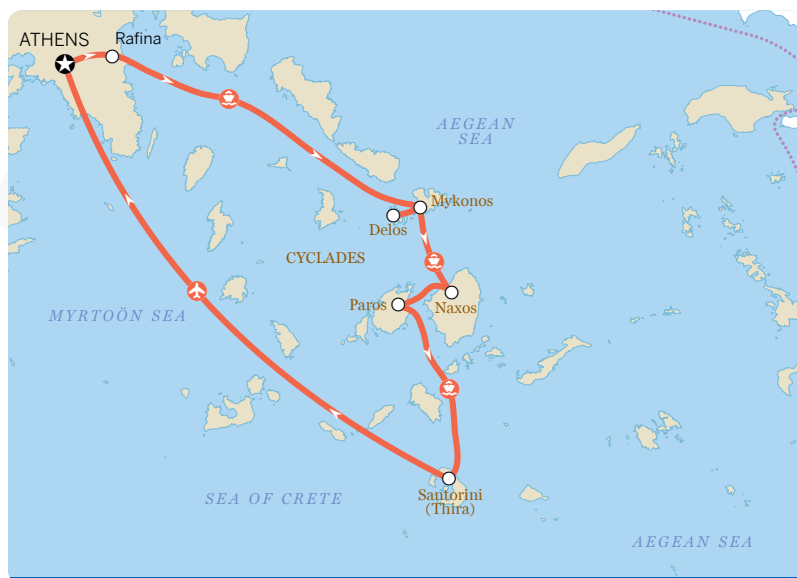
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Itineraries



10
DAYS

Athens & the Cyclades

If you're short on time, this itinerary packs a punch in just 10 days. Take in the must-see attractions in Athens, visit a few popular, bustling islands, and chill out in quieter havens where you can soak up that slow-paced island life. Transport between these islands and the mainland is plentiful.

Spend a couple of days in **Athens**, visiting the Acropolis, catching a play at the ancient Odeon of Herodes Atticus and wandering through the Acropolis Museum. Take in Athens' lively markets, contemporary art scene and brilliant nightlife.

Catch a ferry from **Rafina** to spend a day or two on chic **Mykonos** and enjoy the colourful harbour, hopping bars and beaches full of sun worshippers. Take a day trip to sacred **Delos** and explore ancient ruins. Hop on a ferry to **Naxos**, the greenest of the Cyclades with its hilltop, Venetian-walled old town, quaint villages and sugar-soft beaches. Move on to **Paros** whose cobbled capital is filled with trendy boutiques and excellent dining. Head to the seaside village of Naousa for excellent seafood.

Lastly, visit spectacular **Santorini** (Thira) for stunning sunset views. Explore excellent wineries and volcanic beaches, along with the truly impressive Minoan site of Akrotiri. From here, catch a flight back to Athens.



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FRANCK GUIZOU / CORBIS ©

Top: Mirabello Bay,
near Agios Nikolaos
(p296), Crete

Bottom: Skala Eresou
(p425), Lesvos



2
WEEKS

Crete & the Dodecanese

With divine beaches, atmospheric towns and jaw-dropping sights, Crete is a full destination in itself. From the eastern side you can reach the neighbouring Dodecanese by ferry or on a short flight from Iraklio. The Dodecanese offer a wealth of diversity, and a speedy catamaran service that makes island hopping a joy.

Begin in **Iraklio**, visiting the excellent Archaeological Museum and taking a day trip to the impressive Minoan ruins of **Knossos**. En route see the surrounding **Peza** wine region, which is nestled in 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 a hip ambience in equal portions.

Agios Nikolaos is a great base for exploring the surrounding region. Head to **Golden Beach** (Voulisma Beach) and **Istron Bay** for long stretches of sand. Take a short ferry ride across the Gulf of Mirabello to see the massive fortress on fascinating **Spinalonga Island**. Explore nearby Minoan ruins including **Malia**, a palace still filled with mysteries, and hire 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 via **Sitia** to 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**. 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 to sip coffee and cocktails in Kos Town's lively squares. From Kos Town you can catch onward flights to **Athens**.



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 fairy-tale 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 that reveals 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, make for **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 and producer of some of Greece's finest olive oil and ouzo. Not surprisingly, it's also 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, with salt marshes, gushing hot springs, dense forests and soft beaches, is as diverse as its cultural offerings. 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**.



Top: Loggos (p486),
Paxi, Ionian Islands
Bottom: Agios
Georgios (p483),
Corfu

WESTENDIG / GETTY IMAGES ©




**10
DAYS**

The Ionians

If you have a hankering for island life along with beautiful architecture, scrumptious food, flour-soft beaches 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. Both the start and end of this itinerary are reachable by short, scenic flights from Athens.

Begin your tour in **Corfu**, where you can easily spend a couple of days wandering through the amazing blend of Italian, French and British architecture in Corfu Old Town, indulging in gourmet cuisine. Take in the island's world-class museums and fortresses. Explore picturesque coastal villages and lounge on fantastic sandy beaches. If you want to expend a bit more energy, Corfu is also a great place for windsurfing, or try biking in the island's mountainous interior.

From Corfu, hop on a ferry to tiny **Paxi**, where ancient olive groves and windmills dot the interior while tranquil coves beckon from the coastline. Its colourful, Venetian-style harbour towns will beg you to stay. Drag yourself away to the west-coast beaches of **Lefkada**, where you can bliss out on endless stretches of sand and turquoise water. Head to the southern tip to windsurf before carrying on to **Ithaki** where you can walk the paths of Homer and feel inspired by ancient churches and monasteries.

Hop over to neighbouring **Kefallonia**; overnight in the picturesque village of Fiskardo, with its top restaurants. Kayak to isolated golden beaches and sample the island's well-reputed local wine. Catch a boat south to **Zakynthos** to take in the fabulous Byzantine Museum before heading for the verdant southern cape. This island is the nesting grounds of the endangered loggerhead turtle.

Jump on a flight south to **Kythira**, which rests between the Aegean and Ionian Seas and is peppered with tiny, white, sugar-cube villages. Explore the island's pastoral interior; waterfall and remote coves before heading back to the real world.

Map Legend

Sights

- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Islamic
- Jain
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

Activities, Courses & Tours

- Body surfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing
- Snorkelling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

Sleeping

- Sleeping
- Camping

Eating

- Eating

Drinking & Nightlife

- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

Entertainment

- Entertainment

Shopping

- Shopping

Information

- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Telephone
- Toilet
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

Geographic

- Beach
- Gate
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

Population

- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

Transport

- Airport
- Border crossing
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- S-Bahn/S-train/Subway station
- Taxi
- T-bane/Tunnelbana station
- Train station/Railway
- Tram
- Tube station
- U-Bahn/Underground station
- Other Transport

Routes

- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

Boundaries

- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

Hydrography

- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Reef

Areas

- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove

Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book



Greg Ward

Dodecanese Having first visited Greece as an InterRailing teenager, Greg Ward (www.gregward.info) has been returning ever since, and honeymooned on Symi. He has written books and articles about the Greek islands for many publishers and newspapers.



Richard Waters

Ionian Islands Richard is an award-winning journalist and writes about Greece for the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Independent* and *Sunday Times Travel Magazine*. He lives with his family in the Cotswolds but his spiritual home is in the islands of Greece where he first went as a boy in 1974. Since then he has been more than 20 times, and is most at home sat in a *kafenio* talking about myths, digging into freshly caught calamari and island hopping. As ever his admiration goes out to the people of Greece who, despite unimaginably difficult times, remain among the friendliest on the planet.



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 Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Beijing and Delhi, 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, Crete Korina first ventured to Greece as a backpacking teenager, sleeping on ferry decks and hiking in the mountains. Since then, she's found herself drawn back to soak up the timelessness of the old towns and drink coffee with locals in seaside *kafeneio*. Korina grew up on Vancouver Island and has been exploring the globe independently since she was 16, visiting or living in 36 countries and picking up a degree in Communications and Canadian Studies

and an MA in Migration Studies en route. Korina has written nearly 40 titles for Lonely Planet and also works as a children's writing coach. Korina also wrote *Plan Your Trip*, *Understand Greek Islands* (except for Ancient Greek Culture) and *Survival Guide*.



Alexis Averbuck

Athens & Around, Crete, Saronic Gulf Islands Alexis lives in Hydra, takes regular reverse R&R in Athens, and makes any excuse she can 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, Alexis has 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.alexisaverbuck.com.

Read more about Alexis at:

<http://auth.lonelyplanet.com/profiles/alexisaverbuck>



Carolyn Bain

Cyclades Melbourne-born Carolyn worked on her first guidebook for Lonely Planet back in 2000, and it involved some serious island-hopping around Greece. There began two addictions: writing guidebooks, and the Greek islands. Fifteen years later, this trip fed those addictions over a glorious two-month stint, in which Carolyn visited all the Cyclades. She has now visited 50 Greek islands –

and has way too many favourites. Read more at carolynbain.com.au.



Michael Stamatios Clark

Northeastern Aegean Islands, Evia & the Sporades Michael's Greek roots go back to the village of Karavostamo on the Aegean island of Ikaria, home of his maternal grandparents who emigrated to America. His first trip to Greece was as a deckhand aboard a Greek freighter, trading English lessons for Greek over wine and backgammon. Since then, he has become a Greek citizen, visits the islands often and enjoys *rembetika* and *retsina*. He has also worked on Lonely Planet

guides to Burma (Myanmar), New York and Hawaii.

OVER MORE PAGE WRITERS

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