

Greek Island Hopping 101



Greece boasts some of the world's most magnificent ancient temples, stunning architecture, spectacular island hopping and beaches, and a truly fascinating culture. Travelers arriving by air are welcomed with an aerial view of its world-famous treasures like The Acropolis, the birthplace of democracy and the most important center of ancient Greece. On the same sprawling complex is the Parthenon. It's harmonic proportions and precise construction have been celebrated and emulated for thousands of years.

Part of the fascinating culture is an endless passion for food. Live a lifetime in Athens and you still can never be bored with the smells, tastes and flavors of Athens. From traditional tavernas, cafes, markets, delicatessens, street food and the renowned Varvakios Agora Food Market, the city's cuisine is a foodie's dream come true.

Beyond Athens, Meteora is another must-see highlight on the mainland. It's 24 byzantine monasteries are precariously perched atop sheer limestone cliffs. These extraordinary structures set against nature's grandeur never cease to amaze those who are fortunate enough to view this serene landscape.



A journey to Greece isn't complete without a Greek Island experience, or two, or three.... Whitewashed villages on hills and cliffs, stunning beaches colored white, pink, red and black, and endless hidden coves. All this beauty set against a backdrop of turquoise blue water. Can you see it? Like you, most people can name Greece when they see an image of one of its many islands. I hesitate to use a cliché, but it is truly unlike any other place on Earth.

Greece has many islands, over 6000 in fact, with 227 inhabited. They take up nearly half of the country's total 16,000 kilometers of coastline. So, while island hopping is an adventure most people want to include when they travel to Greece, how does one decide which islands to choose for their trip?

The Greek Island Groups

Because of the travel logistics between islands, it's generally best to choose a few islands in the same group. The islands are divided into six main groups plus Crete and Evia which are the largest of the Greek Islands:

- Cyclades: Mykonos, Santorini, Sifnos, Naxos, Paros
- Sporades: Skyros, Skopelos, Skyros, Alonissos
- Dodecanese: Rhodes, Kos, Kalymnos
- Saronic: Aegina, Hydra, Poros, Spetses, Salamis
- Ionian: Corfu, Zakynthos, Kefalonia
- North Aegean: Thassos, Levsos, Samos

Traveling Around the Greek Islands

Of course, the fastest mode of transport is going to be air travel. Ten islands have international airports and 13 have domestic airports with connections to the mainland and other cities in Europe and beyond. Flying makes the most sense for long routes, like Athens to Crete. When traveling between islands within a group, and sometimes beyond, there are also car ferries, hydrofoils and hi-speed catamarans. You may opt to combine water-based transport with ferries if your itinerary allows. We check all the possible options when working on your Greece tour so that your decisions can be made based on the journey experience (ferries are fun if you're not prone to sea sickness), length of the journey and time of day.

What Greek Islands Should You Travel To?

Each of the Greek Islands has its own unique character, so we start with a conversation to find out about your travel style, interests and the activities you like to

take part in while on holiday. Santorini and Mykonos are probably the two most popular choices for island hopping travelers as well as Crete. Santorini is the more romantic of the two with the most spectacular views day and night, sunrise and sunset. Mykonos is loaded with partying and nightlife: its main town is charming, and the beaches are fantastic.

We feature these two islands on our [Greece Tour with Island Hopping](#) journey. This itinerary can easily be customized to include the islands, accommodation and activities that are suited to your travel style. To give you some ideas, we've put together highlights from one Greek Island in each of the six island groups - Cyclades, Sporades, Dodecanese, Saronic, Ionian, North Aegean. Then we added the two largest islands not included in the groups, Crete and Evia. Perhaps there is an island on this list that is perfect for you.

Rhodes

Rhodes is both cosmopolitan and traditional - a destination to please almost anyone. Medieval sights in the Old Town of Rhodes include the Palace of Grand Master, the Street of the Knights, the old port of Mandraki and Hippocrates Square. Near the town's center, there are minarets, Turkish baths, a mosque, a synagogue, and Italian monuments.

A private tour will bring you to many other sights, such as the Acropolis of Lindos, the Monastery of Filerimos, the Springs of Kallithea and various castles on the island. Rhodes also has many clean beaches to relax and sunbathe on between refreshing dips into the sea.



Skyros

Even though can Skyros be one of the more difficult islands to travel to, it has a loyal following. This isolation has aided in the preservation of the famous Skyros Pony which has lived on the island since ancient times. These tiny horses may have once taken Achilles to Troy.

Skyros Town (Hora) has sun bleached houses and a Venetian castle on a crag above the town. You can wander its narrow alleyways with boutiques, boutique shops and cafes where you sit and enjoy the welcoming and relaxing atmosphere.

The island is quite green with stunning landscapes of pine forests that reach down to the shore. Pristine beaches with crystal clear waters are scattered around the island. Wellness tourism is a popular theme on the island with alternative therapies and yoga available to locals and tourists alike. And for the adventurous, there are good spots for windsurfing and cliff climbing.

Crete

Crete is the birthplace of Zeus himself and the largest Greek Island. Its landscape is dominated by mountains with gorges, rivers and lakes. Getting to the know island takes time, so for island hoppers staying only a few days, we recommend basing yourself in the port town of Chania. This will allow you to concentrate on the western part of the island.

Crete also makes the list for best beaches and hiking in the islands of Greece. There are some adventurous hikes such as Samaria Gorge National Park and gorge trails that are less demanding. Old Town Chania with a lovely Venetian Harbour and picturesque alleyways, a bustling food market, and interesting Archeological and Nautical Museums.

A nice day tour from Chania is the legendary Minoan palace of Knossos. It is the largest Bronze Age archaeological site on Crete and has been called Europe's oldest city. Knossos is where myth tells us the Minotaur was held in a labyrinth.

Naxos

Naxos is easy to reach from Santorini. It offers a more relaxed pace but there is plenty of nightlife near the airport and in Hora, the main waterfront city. Hora is also a good place for shopping, meandering alleys and hilltop vistas. At the top, you'll be sure to check out the medieval citadel and the Archeological Museum of Naxos.

An iconic landmark on the island is Portara, the doorway to the temple of Apollo. Naxos is also on the list for best beaches and hiking in the Greek Islands. There are many small coves and great beaches to be discovered on the island like Agios Prokopios, Plaka and Mikri Vigla for windsurfers.



Evia

This second largest Greek island is located closest to Athens (you can drive to it) and yet, it has managed to remain relatively unknown. This is good news for anyone wanting an island with a more laid-back feel. There's plenty of natural beauty to behold and experience if you're an outdoor enthusiast including thermal spas, a Petrified Forest and the unique tidal phenomenon of Euripus, which has been studied since the time of Aristotle.

A popular spa is in the northwest town of Edipsos, where hot water springs forth from rocks and crevices into the sea and swimming pools of the many hotels and healing centers. There are numerous archaeological sites, ancient landmarks and museums scattered throughout the island.

And there are beaches - 110 to be exact. It's the top reason travelers from around the world visit the island. Windsurfing, nudist, secluded and tranquil, party, family-friendly - there's a different beach to please everyone.

Samos

Samos is a perfect base for quick getaways and day trips. There is even daily ferry connection between Samos and Kusadasi in Turkey which makes it easy to visit Kusadasi Castle, Ephesus and Priene Ruins. Standing out for its stunning beaches and beautiful natural landscape, Samos is a top destination for nature vacations. It's arguably one of the most beautiful islands and has a wide variety of beaches. Tsamadou, Agios Konstantinos, Potokaki and Lemonakia are some of the top ones to visit.

Samos is a large and varied island with some wonderful mountain villages and lots to see. The Temple of Hera at Heraion and nearby Pythagoreion were designated a [UNESCO World Heritage Site](#) in 1992. The island's capital is Vathi, but a drive along the coastline will get you to many picturesque seaside villages.



Corfu

Being one of the greenest of the Greek Islands, many consider Corfu (also Kerkyra) to be the most beautiful and bit quieter with many of inland villages that are unspoiled. Corfu is just a few hours by ferry from Italy off the northwest coast of Greece. It has some of the most amazing beaches in the Mediterranean. Most of the beaches are busy but some in secluded coves are less busy if you're looking for seclusion.

Corfu Town is the capitol of the island and a [UNESCO World Heritage Site](#) with cobblestone streets, Venetian architecture, churches, fine museums, good restaurants and boutiques. To the west, the Venetian-built New Fortress has a network of tunnels underneath and views over the harbor. The 15th-century Old Fortress overlooks the town from the east and features a small chapel and mosaics.

Hydra

Hydra is one of the most romantic destinations in Greece but also suitable for families. Travelers come to the island because Hydra has managed to preserve its distinctive atmosphere through the passage of time. This car-free paradise uses about 500 donkeys as well as water taxis for its public transportation. It is graced with

an artist's colony, traditional stone mansions, narrow cobblestoned streets and secluded squares.

Hydra has a fascinating history beginning in the 18th when it became prosperous due to commercial shipping and trading. A serene day on Hydra might include a beautiful walk from Kamini, a picturesque fishing village to Hydra Town. Here, seaside restaurants and cafes are frequented by tourists and locals alike. It's the perfect spot to quietly watch the scene or make conversation with interesting people from around the island and the world. Less known, but just as amazing and less expensive are the little places tucked away in the backstreets and along the coast. Without a doubt, we think the rustic charm of this little island will captivate you.

Ready to Go Island Hopping in Greece?

Do you know which group of Greek Islands you want to include on your trip to Greece? We're ready to help you narrow down your options and creating the perfect [Greece Tour with Island Hopping](#). Give us a call and [let's get started!](#)