

BY FRANCESCA SPIZZIRRI | @travelista73  

UNDER THE GRECIAN SUN

Brilliantly whitewashed villages and centuries-old churches set against an endless ocean of blue await you in Greece's enchanting Hellenic paradise of islands and swoon-worthy coastline.



For full hotel reviews and more images, visit travelista73.blogspot.com

The Aegean Sea is home to a myriad of islands where vacationers flock each year. However, with so many islands, and so little time, where do you start? Just a quick plane or ferry ride from Athens, the Cyclades islands are the picture-perfect choice. The Cyclades (meaning circle) is a ring of islands around the sacred Delos, where Ancient Greek Mythology states as the birthplace of Artemis and Apollo. Here, stunning natural settings, warm hospitality, inspired cuisine and seaside lifestyle, provide the perfect escape from the daily grind and some relaxing fun in the sun.

With effortless island hopping, you can't help but explore the best of the Cyclades. From the dramatic volcanic peaks of Santorini, to the natural splendor of Ios, the vibrant and glamorous Mykonos to the unspoiled beauty of Folegandros, there is something that appeals to every type of traveller.

Known as the 'black pearl of the Aegean,' **SANTORINI** is a romantic destination set over dramatic volcanic mountains with spectacular views. One of the most famous Greek islands, its imposing Caldera and multicoloured cliff tops lined with sundrenched villages is a vision to behold – especially

when the sun sets and casts its dazzling orange and red glow. The picturesque villages of Oia, Fira, Firostefani and Imerovigli are lined with tavernas, shops and impressive restaurants and hotels. Take in the island's iconic views on a cable car or donkey ride. Since Santorini's beaches differ from other beaches in Greece, be sure to visit Kamari Beach, the black sand beaches of Perissa, or the rust-coloured backdrop of Red Sand Beach. Tour a local vineyard or take a boat ride to visit the volcano and swim in the hot springs. With so much to see and do, Santorini never ceases to impress.

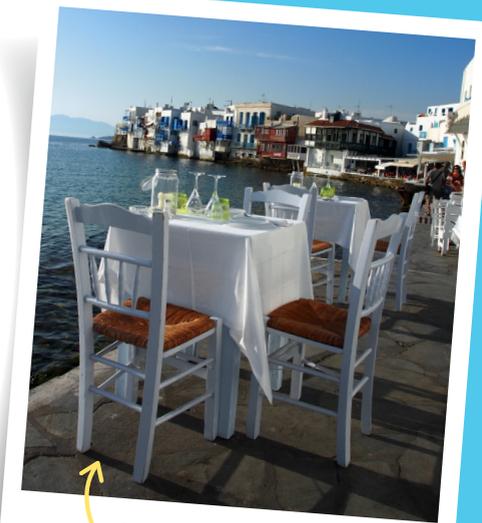
The hedonistic island of **MYKONOS** is located close to the centre of the Cyclades and is renowned for its parties, beaches, glamorous hotels, posh boutiques, vibrant dining and sizzling nightlife. This is the island for jetsetters and those who have an appreciation for the finer things in life. If having a good time is on your travel agenda, the options here are endless! The island's exotic beaches are magnificent, with Psarou, Super Paradise, Paranga and Kalo Livadi being fabulous places to spend a day under the Grecian sun. Afterwards, head to Little Venice to watch the sun set while sipping a cocktail – a truly spectacular experience! Other iconic features of this Greek island are the picturesque windmills and Panagia Paraportiani, the island's most famous church. Mykonos Town's narrow, winding paths are lined with chic boutiques, galleries, bars, restaurants and other shops for you to explore. Day or night, this cosmopolitan island always excites.

An authentic island experience awaits you in **FOLEGANDROS** with its white washed buildings and jaw-dropping views. Often referred to as the next Santorini, Folegandros is home to picturesque village squares where you can unwind under the shade of a mulberry tree while watching locals go about their daily lives. The island's bohemian spirit has long provided quiet inspiration for writers and painters alike. Its vast open spaces are perfect for walking and hiking to and from its quaint villages. Along the picturesque streets of Chora you will find artisan shops and restaurants where you can dine on homemade meals. A visit to Panagia Church perched on the highest spot of the island is a must – the view is breathtaking! Take a trip to the northeastern cave of Chrysopelia or relax on one of the island's many secluded sand beaches. Folegandros provides a glimpse of genuine island life.

A spectacular rugged landscape and youthful vibe are some of the characteristics of **IOS**, an island known for its golden beaches and lively atmosphere. Chora, the island's capital, is built on a picturesque hill with narrow streets lined with shops, restaurants and laid back bars. But the island is not just for fun, it's also home to 365 churches strung along its natural terrain. Rent a vehicle and set out to explore the island's isolated interior and 75 kilometres of beaches that vary from white to golden sand. When you go, make sure to pack a picnic! Maganari Beach, Kalamos Beach and Mylopotas Beach are a few worth noting. If you go to Plakoto Beach, be sure to visit the ancient ruins where legend has it the poet Homer is buried. Ios is a study in contrast and offers something for everyone.

ISLAND HOPPING

ISLAND HOPPING IS EASY AND EFFORTLESS THANKS TO A NEW GENERATION OF HIGH-SPEED FERRIES. CONTACT THE PROFESSIONALS AT **ACTEON TRAVEL AGENCIES** FOR ALL YOUR FERRY BOOKINGS AND SET SAIL ON THE ADVENTURE OF A LIFETIME!
WWW.ACTEON.GR



Photos courtesy of Francesca Spizzirri

WHERE TO STAY

Located on a tranquil stretch of coast next to the unspoiled beach of Agios Stefanos, the seaside haven of **ROABELLA MYKONOS ART HOTEL & SPA** is a bright world of contemporary design with beautiful views over a sea of turquoise and the picturesque town of Mykonos.
rocabella-hotel-mykonos.com

The breathtaking **ICONIC SANTORINI** is nothing short of sublime. This luxury boutique cave hotel cascades across five levels carved right into the face of the volcanic caldera. Its magnificent ocean views and striking sunsets provide the perfect setting for romance.
iconicsantorini.com

For an island known for its endless partying, **LIOSTASI IOS HOTEL & SPA** is anything but! From the moment you set foot into this stylish boutique hotel, you are immersed in a world of peace and serenity all within easy access of Chora.
liostasi.gr

Perched on a towering cliff overlooking the spectacular Aegean Sea, the lovely **ANEMOMILOS APARTMENTS** is a boutique property in Folegandros where you can listen to waves softly crashing below as you lose yourself in the expanse of sea and sky.
anemomilosapartments.com