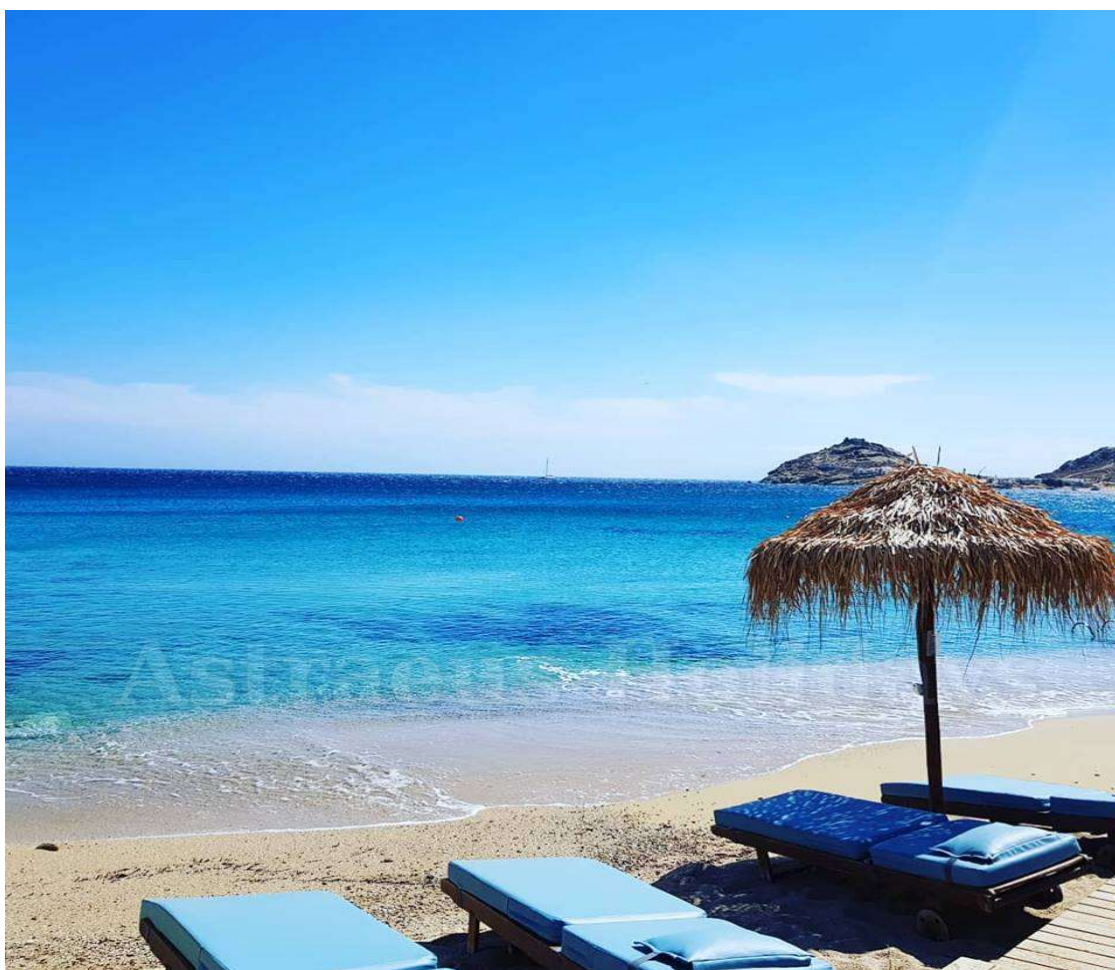




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Discover the Real Greek Cyclades

Newsletter 31: August 2026



Well, it's here but nearly over the madness of August. We will soon be able to find space on the beach. The picture of the beach above is a dream more than a reality at the moment. Despite a stronger than usual Meltemi this summer, swimming in the sea is like immersing yourself in a bath, it is gorgeous and despite how busy the beach is I manage a swim most days, after I finished in the office, it is one thing that makes summer so special, as I am a fair-weather swimmer unlike a lot of the people here who manage it year-round!

Coming up: The normal waffle many of you have come to expect from the last 30 (flipping heck) newsletters!



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Our News

After the busiest June we have ever had (and my constant refrain that we need someone else as a lot of you have heard numerous times!) we are now gearing up for September another month when if it is ideal to travel here. In fact, we are still taking bookings for September and early October, while juggling pre-arrival information and enquiries for 2027. We are aware that most of our holidays are summer ones, but Athens, and now Naxos and Thessaloniki are year-round destinations. And we have a special offer for October/November and March/April next year which I will share at the end of this newsletter.

So, something I have mentioned every year around this time, is early bookings and as I said above, we are getting enquiries and booking holidays for 2027. The major airlines have already released schedules and prices for next season, but not all hotels have updated their rates and availability and obviously we are well away from a finalised ferry schedule (that will not be officially agreed until after Greek Easter next year which actually falls later than usual) although based on experience we can obviously put your holiday together. So, do you need to book this early!? If you want a family holiday in July or August, or want a villa or a group booking where you are all in the same hotel at anytime of the year, yes go for it now. But otherwise, while we welcome enquiries at any time of the year, you can chill out and think about it at your leisure with the added caveat, that earlier bookings are good for the small islands and for islands like Sifnos and Serifos and Milos if you want the best accommodation, we really do not mind when you enquire though, and as many of you know, your holidays are tailored to you so can take time and patience

Dates for Group Holiday (no more than 12 people with 2 dedicated solo places) 2 nights Mykonos – 4 nights Naxos – 3 nights Syros and 3 nights Athens (including a day trip to Delphi) are 24th May – 5th June 2027 and 25th September – 5th October 2027 – price on application

This year we have organised more holidays to a wider variety of islands than ever, including Symi, Halki, Aluminosis, Skiathos and Skyros, and even to tiny Kastelrizo and whilst these islands will remain as “on request” as previously mentioned destinations like Leros, Patmos, Tilos, Chios and more and the mainland will be on



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our website in the coming months. We have plans to visit some of new hotels later in September.

Island News

The Cyclades are proving as popular as ever with and 80,000 passengers are expected to depart from the ports of Attica during the three days of August 21-23, despite it being near to the end of the Greek summer holidays. In just one day at the beginning of August 9000 people arrived in Paros, and Naxos port to put it mildly has been hectic (and the port police there are lunatics so all good!). The popularity of Paros has unfortunately had the knock-on effect of increasing the traffic to Naxos with a resultant rise in prices next summer.

Speaking of prices speaking recently to a hotel owner on Syros about next year, she indicated her prices will rise due to the increased cost of electricity and staffing costs, so some difference from 2026 is inevitable., but we still know of some great reasonably priced holidays





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Musings from a small island – Jacky

A City by the Sea



It is two hundred years, since refugees from Ionian islands struggled ashore in Syros, fleeing persecution from Ottoman rule. Syros was then under French protection and considered a safe haven. The existing population was clustered in a town they had built way above the sea, safe from pirates and marauders, their tiny houses in narrow streets

connected by many steps and clustered around the grand catholic cathedral of St George in Ano Syros. The inhabitants could survey their farmlands and trees from an elevated location and climb down daily to harvest food and make forays to the sea to fish.

The refugees did not want to challenge or fight with the original occupants. They wanted to be traders not farmers and were excited by the large natural harbour where they landed on the eastern coast of Syros. They decided to build their trading city by the water and they wanted it to be special. The newcomers were determined to make a better life for themselves and soon there were buildings from local stone surrounding the waterfront, a new grand church dedicated to Saint Nicolas, a theatre based on La Scala in Milan, a fine town hall, cobbled streets, hotels for visitors and at a safe distance across the harbour, a quarantine building – Lazaretta.

The incomers brought many skills with them too and the new town became known for its shipbuilding expertise. Factories were also built to make textiles, which were traded, engineering workshops manufactured parts, printing presses produced books and local newspapers. It was a time of great opportunity and soon Syros port was one of the largest and busiest in the Mediterranean.

This fine new city needed a name to distinguish it from the original settlement in Ano Syros. It had become a place of trade, so it was decided to name it after the Greek god of trade – Hermes. Thus, the city became Hermoupolis, which translated from Greek, means the city of Hermes – a very appropriate name.

As we are celebrating the bicentenary this year, the city has grown way beyond the dreams of the early settlers. But history is being celebrated with a play in the theatre detailing past events, cultural dancing in the grand square surrounding the elegant town hall and by the many museums that have rescued artefacts from the island's industrial past.

Hermoupolis is still a city of trade. As capital of the Cycladic islands, it has a population of around twenty thousand year-round residents, supported by a hospital, a university, courts of justice, schools, local authority services, shops, tavernas and markets. Today it is also a transport hub. There is still a shipyard here, but the view of the twin hills capped by their respective catholic and orthodox cathedrals, as you approach or leave by sea, is unforgettable, as are the restored town buildings and the elegant waterfront of the harbour.

Now, in summer, tourists struggle ashore with luggage, where once refugees had a vision of their new city. Hermoupolis is a success story and like many before me, who have fetched up here, I'm proud to call Syros my home.

Jacky Storey
Kini, Syros
August 2026

Please note, we have had lots and lots of enquiries to us regarding volunteering for a month with Syros Cats we cannot help with that you need to email volunteeratsyroscats@gmail.com. We can help you with a paid holiday here to help out as part of your holiday if you cannot commit to the 30 days required.

The work of charities like Syros Cats is invaluable, should you wish to donate please see their website <https://syroscats.com/>

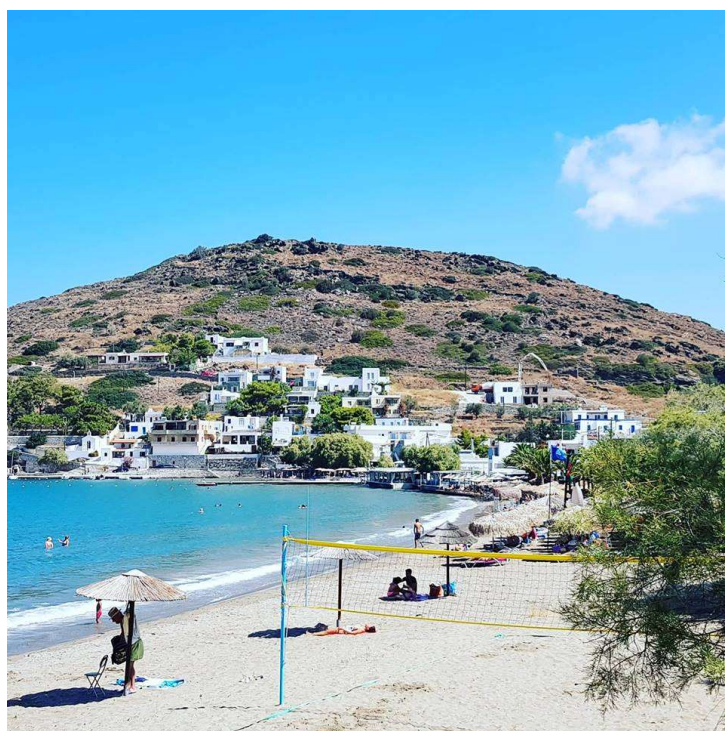




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Musings from a small island – Rachel



We get asked a lot about what it is like to live here in the winter, less so about the summer, there is so much to love about summer, from the sounds of children on the beach, being surrounded by happy people (well hopefully), watermelon is plentiful and cheap, and is my favourite fruit, I actually feel sad when it goes out of season. As a child who adored Richard Scarry books I used to wonder what it was, that pink stuff the animals were eating (don't at me I grew up in a small Shropshire village in the late 1970s seeing a

watermelon would have been a remote possibility!) and figs are coming in to season, ruinously expensive to start with, unless you have a friendly neighbour or two with trees or a few overhanging branches nearby, this would be a massive bone of contention in the UK but it seems you can help yourself to fruit that overhangs a road even though the tree is in someone else's garden I only know this as a friend of ours had a house in a very rural area of Vari, and was astonished one day to find two old dears armed with baskets helping themselves to the just ripened figs from her two trees, which did overhung the path in front of her house; Anyway I digress, summer is manic, every beach is full, especially the free umbrellas due to the ever increasing cost of a set of sunbeds. From the first to the last day of August, the island is full, mainly of Greeks from the mainland, in their massive cars, which are far from suitable for the roads here, and it does not help that a lot of them drive like "bats out of hell", scaring the living daylights out of me as I do my near enough daily walk down the hill, speaking of which, as some of you will remember I have been doing this for some time, when I started I tended to get cars and moped stopping to ask me if I need a lift (this sometimes still happens), obviously as I looked completely clapped out! But now I see a lot of the same faces every day, they wave, peep their horns and wish the mad English woman a kind good morning, but I have also acquired a special friend, a sweet old man, who appears from behind a bush some mornings, bearing a bunch of flowers (well mainly jasmine) this is a very sweet



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gesture to be sure, but I have to carry on walking with a bunch of wilting flowers looking like some kind of superannuated Morrissey (that's one for the teenagers!)

Returning to the subject of bad. driving as you know over the years I have been bemused by the laissez faire attitude to the police to unsafe driving practices, especially around helmets on scooters and bikes, well you will also remember that the government decided enough was enough and after a few false starts, toughened up the existing laws with massive fines for, not wearing a helmets or a seatbelt and the use of mobile phones whilst driving (we have all probably had an experience of a Greek taxi driver texting or looking at his phone on some of most precarious roads!) well I suppose one out of three is not bad, as it mainly has now worked where the wearing of helmets is concerned, I did think the summer would be the test, as a lot of people wore helmets anyway in the winter to keep their heads warm, not for the obvious reason of safely. You obviously still do see people without helmets, especially in the villages where they do not expect to see the police and in town from a few diehards who clearly think they are invincible (and I include Priests in that group.)

Whilst not wearing a helmet is a massive risk, so I have discovered are figs in particular windfall ones! Coming down the rather steep steps to our house the other day carrying a large watermelon I managed to slip on one, and both me and the water melon came crashing down, "whose is that bloody fig tree" is not something I imagined I would be shouting a few years ago. Luckily it was only the watermelon that went rolling down the steps!





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Which Island is for me!



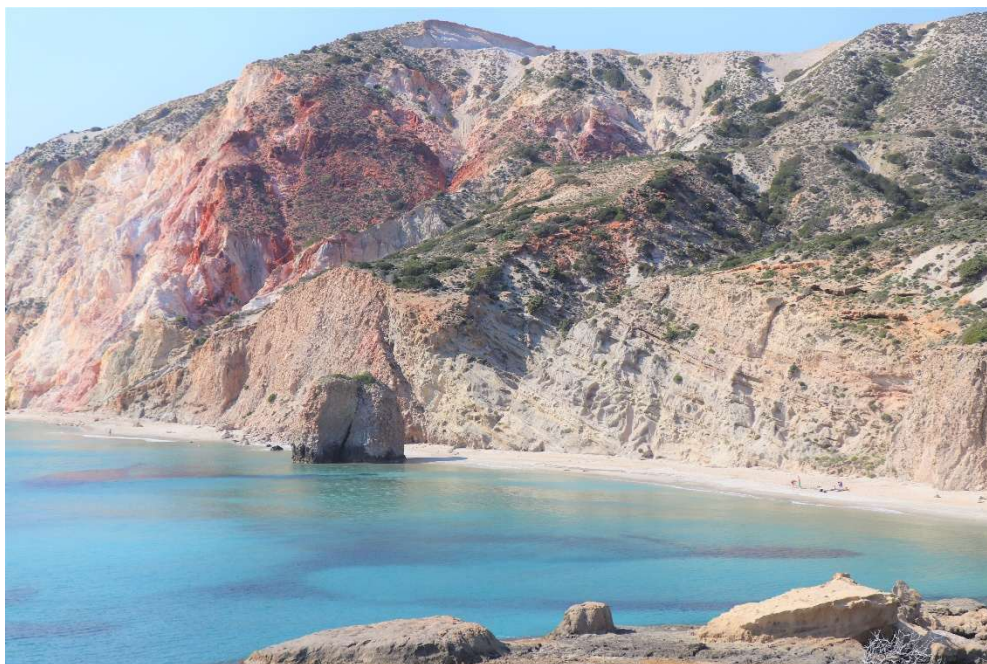
This is a rehash of an article I wrote a few years ago, note it is mainly Cycladean focused with a bit of the mainland and the Argo-Saronic islands thrown in I will endeavour to write something about a few different ones in the coming months! Of course, we are here to help with your choices and which islands match and don't leave you on ferries for hours All islands have their stand out points and this is very generalised.



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Romantic holidays



It is said that Nafpilo is Greece's most romantic city and it makes for a lovely break whatever time you visit, you can mix it with Hydra and Spetses to make it the perfect romantic island hop, or with Athens, strolling the ancient streets of Plaka in the shadow of the Acropolis or sipping a cocktail on a rooftop bar surrounded by sites that have been viewed for thousands of years. We have lots of people returning to the islands where they spent their honeymoons even if that was years ago, you can still find the romance, and there is nothing like ending or starting a holiday with a view of the Caldera in Santorini or the dramatic scenery of Milos and the beaches of Ios.

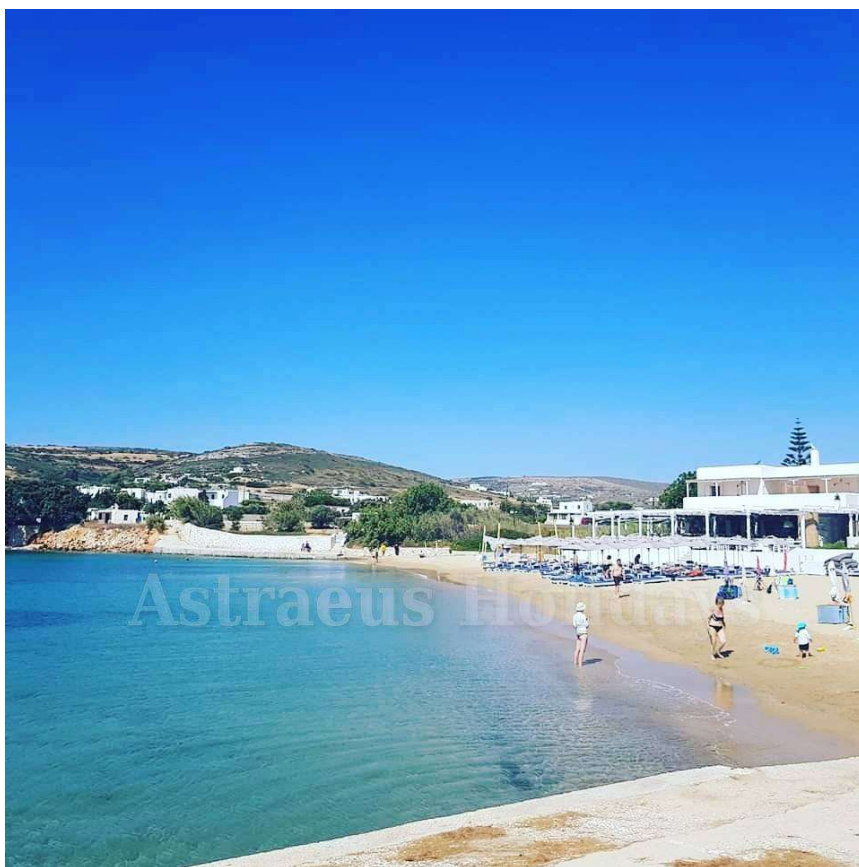
Little Children

Throughout the islands there are sandy beaches which shelve very gently making them perfect for paddling and building sandcastles on the water's edge, there are also plenty of super ice cream cafés, and I know it is a cliché but the Greeks really do love children, Greek children are not put to bed early and well in to the evening we watch little children running around restaurants and playing in town squares. There are so many perfect islands but remember your tolerance for long ferry journeys may not be matched by your toddler's so when considering islands, it is normally best to choose ones close together. Perfect islands for little children are Syros (yes, I know!) Tinos, The little Cyclades, Naxos, Serifos and Sifnos.



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Older Children/Teenagers

Perhaps the most difficult age group to keep happy and you certainly fit them all in to one bracket, for active teens there are a wide range of opportunities for water sports on Naxos, Paros and Ios. Dependant on their ages they may crave some nightlife and again those three islands can per perfect.

Sophisticated Luxury/take you best clothes!

What are holidays for if you can not spoil yourself! Even I want to get out of my shorts and tee-shirts sometimes! Islands that are perfect for luxury, are Mykonos, Paros, Ios, Santorini, Milos, Spetses and Hydra.

Active holidays

There are great hiking trails on Andros, Tinos, and Sifnos and for the even more adventurous Amorgos, Kimolos and Iraklia. There is apparently a sport called bouldering which can be found in Tinos. Surfing and water sports abound on Naxos, Paros and Ios.

Ancient History

Athens cannot be beaten for its ancient history, but all over the islands are sites of interest, the most interesting being Delos, Santorini, and in particular Naxos, for the ancient history buffs among you this is a fascinating tailored holiday we can do for you. Equally there are some authentic Kastro's still in evidence on Serifos, Kimolos, Sifnos and Milos. And Ano Syros is a very good example of Frankish architecture.

Lone Travellers

Travelling on your own is in no way a lonely experience, I still laugh at the couple in Shirley Valentine who felt the need to permanently keep Shirley company, I met a couple like that on my first experience of lone travel to Lesbos many years ago, and although they were really well meaning I was actually happy in my own company and doing things my way. Most of you know I then moved on to Milos as my island of choice, and I still think it is a great island to visit on your own, but so are Syros, Naxos, Mykonos, Serifos Sifnos and Tinos which is exceptionally friendly.

Party Islands.

The ultimate island for partying is Mykonos however it can be astronomical, for me the best party island has to be Ios, Ios though as my cousin never ends telling me is more than all night partying at Far Out Club or cocktails in it's beautiful little Hora, it has a range of options for all ages

Getting away from it all

Something we all crave especially in this day and age, forget your phone and computer buy some good books and head for Donousa, , Schinoussa Iraklia, Kimolos or the South West of Naxos or even the tiny islands of Sikinos and Anafi* I am going to add a caveat here, even these islands are full in August!



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Beach addicts!

Every island has some great beaches, but the ones that stand out to us are Naxos, Paros, Syros, Mykonos, Tinos, Koufonissia Ios, Sifnos and Serifos and Poros, but to me the winner is Milos, there are more beaches than you will ever have time to visit!

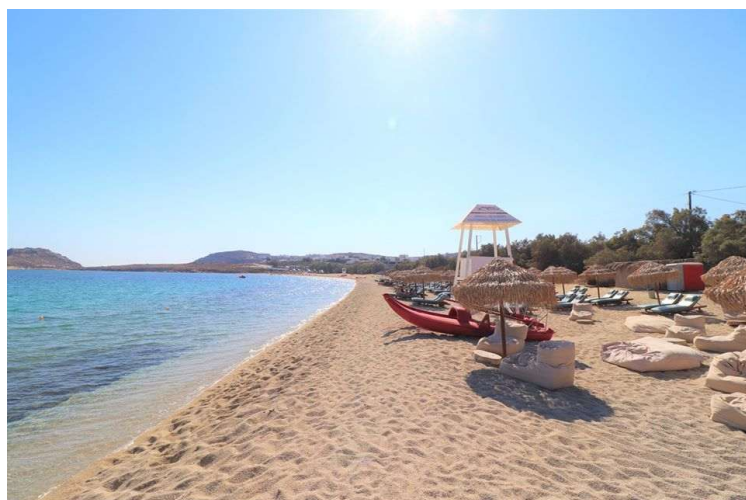
Foody Islands (with wine!)

The islands all have their own specialities and you really can find great food everywhere but the islands that really stand out foodwise are Syros, Sifnos, Naxos and Tinos. For really good local wine, the wines of Santorini and Paros can be fantastic.

Keeping it real

Even on the most touristy islands there are areas which still retain the kind of authenticity we all come to Greece for, and so far, only Athens and Santorini even have McDonalds (no good when you suddenly get an unexpected craving for one!), the obvious islands that stand out are Syros, Tinos, the interior and east coast of Naxos, Kea, Kythnos, Folegandros, Andros, Sifnos, Kimolos, Astypalea and Poros.

* Some of the islands I have mentioned do not have destination pages on our website yet but we have accommodation on all of them 😊

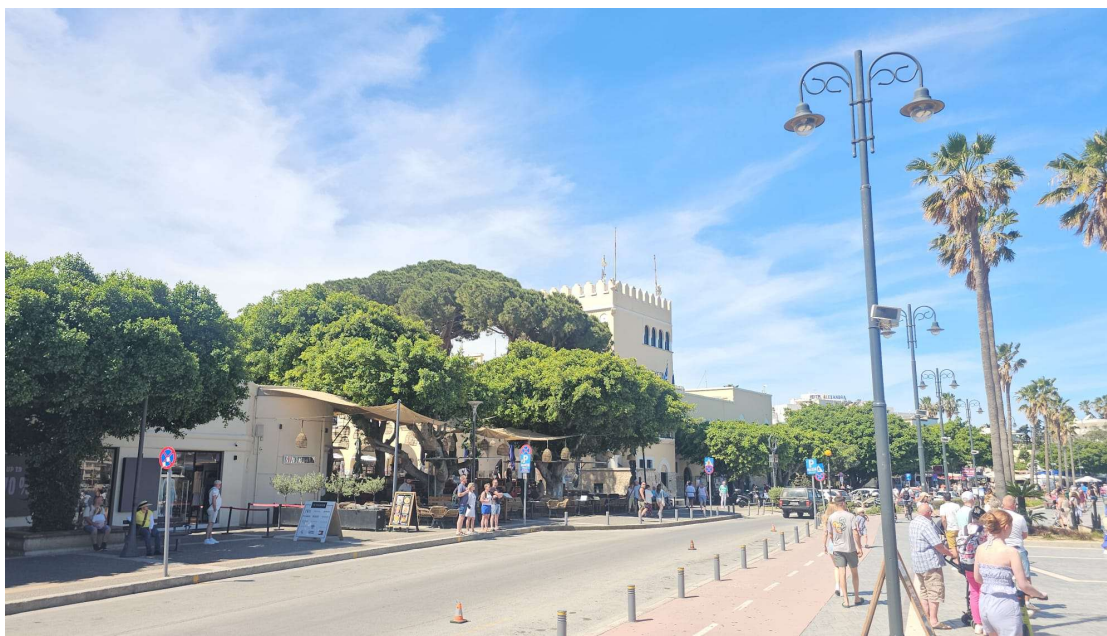




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Spring Island Hopping



With all my trips to Mykonos over the summer and the other odd island when I want to catch up with some of our lovely clientele and with the relatively closeness of everywhere you would think we would get more time to visit the islands, of if it was so easy! So, our trips to visit hotels, new islands become a whirlwind, crazy and exhausting experience (oh woe is me!) with plans to go to the mainland during winter, we decided we needed to fit a few islands in before summer got in to full swing.

So, one Friday night in May we went to Ermoupoli had a lovely meal in the harbour and then boarded an over night ferry to Kos, I know Kos is not actually a destination we regularly do but it is a good starting point for a lot of the islands. I am going to admit I did not have high hopes of Kos, so going against my own mantra of there is something good on every island!

Actually, pulling into Kos port at 6am in the morning and the imposing site of the Castle of Nerantzia a mediaeval fortress constructed by the Knights of Saint John is very impressive. You also get a very good view of Turkey (although I asked Brian what island it was!) Kos Town itself has also got lots of Roman remains, and one interesting fact Brian seemed to pull from nowhere was that one of the islands most well known tourists was Cleopatra who apparently had a holiday home there and gave birth to Mark Anthony's son on Kos Yes, it is touristy but it does also have some nice beaches and for those of us who feel deprived of English Breakfasts they



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have those in abundance!! After two nights in Kos, it was time to head off to Astypalea (a completely different kettle of fish!



Astypalea is in name a Dodecanese the Castle of Astypalea (or the Querini/Quirini Castle) is a magnificent Venetian fortress situated at the top of the main hill of Chora. The Querini family built the castle in the 1400s, the views from the top are stunning (needless to say one of us walked up and one did not, but in my defence, I was working).

The island is known as the butterfly island not just because of its shape but also because it is so pretty, it is also incredibly friendly and still feels very traditionally Greek, it is though modern in the fact that it is designated as a “green island” where electric buses and cars are strongly encouraged. An afternoon spent at Analipsi; beach allowed us some relaxation before it was time to go again!! This time for three days in Athens, catching up with my family (yes, I know we visit Athens a lot but it was great to take our family all but two of which had never been there to some of our favourite sites and restaurants



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.A day at home gave us time to do the washing I had not managed to do in the Athens apartment, before it was time to go again.

This time to Ios for two nights, I am guilty sometimes of overlooking Ios and until I arrive forget just how pretty it is, yes it has a party element but that does not mean everyone should not enjoy it, it has great beaches, some organised some not, some that can only be reached by boat and some lovely little tavernas, two days there again is just too brief, still it was nice to catch up with the people we did.

So, if you think two nights is bad then it was off to Folegandros for one! Some of you know this, as a travel agent and one who lives mainly on a Greek island I suffer from sea-sickness (which is clearly not ideal) I am absolutely fine normally on large conventional ferries but put me on small ferries and jets and I just do not feel great, and if I forget my tablet it is really bad (so I feel for everyone who also suffers from it and we devise holidays for people who do) Anyway the ferry was particularly small oh dear, so apart from a brief trip to the unique little Hora to our planned appointment was mainly vertical leaving Brian to go off to Agaili beach and take pictures, I did manage to go out to dinner in the evening on the port beach but to



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be honest it was a waste of food as I sent most of it back (poor man who served us looked totally worried!) Anyway, feeling finally better it was time for another ferry but a much bigger smoother one this time of to Naxos, Naxos is busier than ever this year and that was even evident in May, but we stayed well out of the port and Agios Georgios in a new hotel (to us) and finally got a whole day on the beach which was lovely!

The next plan, if we manage it is back on that overnight ferry to Patmos, Leros, Rhodes and Athens again, I will report back!





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Πορτοκαλόπιτα (Portokalopita)

Orange Pie



This is a particularly well known Greek desert, it can be oversweet (as a lot of Greek deserts are) and portion sizes so big you, tend to need to share a portion, it is best served with ice cream or whipped up Greek Yoghurt it is also a good winter desert when oranges are plentiful, in season and cheap. There is no flour in this recipe crumbled up phyllo is used instead; it is said it was devised by people making traditional Greek pies as a use for the left-over pastry.

Ingredients

For the Syrup

- 400 ml Water
- 400 ml Sugar
- Zest of a whole orange
- 1 Cinnamon Stick

For the pie

- 200 grams Greek Yogurt (in this instance 2% keeps the cake lighter)
- 300 ml of sunflower (or other vegetable oil)
- 300 ml sugar (granulated is fine)
- 300 ml freshly squeezed olive oil
- 4 teaspoons baking powder



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- Zest of one and a half oranges (maybe 2 if they are small)
- 1 tsp vanilla extract/paste
- 400/450 phyllo dough (airdried sea method!)
- 4 medium eggs

Method

- Take the Phyllo sheets out of their packaging, separate and lay the sheets on flat surfaces around your kitchen, go and have coffee, put on a face mask or read a book!!! The point of this is to dry out the sheets as much as possible, some recipes suggest cooking it in batches but to be honest this is simpler (depending on space I guess and in our case on one particular cat would wonder round walking on them and nibbling bits, this should take no less then 20 minutes. So shut the cat out and put your feet up!
- Oil a baking tray (approx. 20x30cm) and preheat oven to 180 degrees
- Make the syrup , by putting all the ingredients in to a saucepan, bring to the boil and then simmer for 5-10 minutes until it has thickened, set aside to cool
- Put the oil, eggs and sugar in to a large mixing bowl and whisk until incorporated (you can use a hand whisk if you want to get rid of bingo-wings or electric mixer if you are me!)
- Then add in the yoghurt, orange juice, orange zest and vanilla extract again whisk well until the mixture is smooth
- Slowly and lightly incorporate the baking powder
- Then using your hands crumble up the Phyllo in to small pieces and really gradually whisk them in to the mixture (do it slowly so they do not all clump back together!)
- Bake for 40-50 minutes (usual trick if knife comes out clean)
- Then slowly pour the cold syrup over the hot cake (you may want to make the syrup before you dry out the pastry) because it does need to be cool
- Decorate with slices of candied orange or if this is just too much sweetness just normal orange!
- Leave to cool a bit then put in the fridge (it is best served cool)



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7 Days Autumn/Spring Holiday (October/November 2026 March/April 2027)

Classical Greece: Athens, Nafpilo, Delphi, Athens (with stops at classic sites)

Price from **£1450** (based on two sharing – see inclusions and exclusions below)

A fantastic experience including

- 2 nights in a central 4* Athens Hotel close to all the major attractions
- Stop at Mycenae on the way to Nafplio visit the ancient site
- 3 nights in Boutique Hotel in the centre of Nafpilo
- Stop at Ancient Olympia on the way to Delphi to visit the site
- 1 night in Delphi in 3*/4* hotel
- Visit to Delphi
- Final night in Athens

(Please note this is an entirely private tour run for us by a very experienced guide in a luxury vehicle)

Included in price: Hotels, transfers, private tour

Excluded from price- Flights (suitable for flights from London, Manchester, Edinburgh, Bristol and Dublin)

Museum entry tickets (can be added)

Licensed Guides (can be added)

You will stop for lunches along the way the cost of these are not included.

Overnight tax at hotels, which are payable directly to the hotels.

Like all of our holidays this can be refined further to suit the individual travellers (if you want to do this as more than two for example, please do not hesitate to contact me)



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And finally!



Despite swearing we would get no more cats, Matti arrived in our life last summer. He was in a really bad way and ended up in the vets in intensive care for three nights and inside the house being nursed for many days after, not only is now is he our cat he is also an indoor one which has put smudge's nose out of joint big time, at first it was constant squabbling and the occasional fight, but now things have settled down somewhat and he has firmly got his paws under the table!

We have not got round to watching the Odyssey the massive summer blockbuster, despite it showing in the outdoor cinema here, I have had mixed feedback from friends and family here and in the UK with lots of comments that it is just too long!

I have though been listening to a plethora of podcasts about the book and the history behind it, back to History Hit, which had a few and the Rest is History again a few, the I am notale of Odyssisus overcoming the Cyclops it is all a bit brutal for me.

An interesting book is *Travelling Heroes: Greeks and their myths in the epic age of Homer* by Robin Lane Fox, I am currently working my way through it

Did you know! Before cats were introduced to Greece probably by Phonition traders around the 5th century BCE, (although there are differeing dates). Greeks used weasels to protect their homes and granaries from vermin. Although less sociable, weasels were considered highly effective, can you imagine!

Thank you for reading

Brian & Rachel 2026



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