



WHY WE LOVE OUR ISLANDS IN THE SUN

Dazzling seas, magical landscapes, mythical history and divine food. We meet local creatives to find out why the Greek islands are so inspiring

INTERVIEWS JOHN MALATHRONAS

SANTORINI

BY WINE EXPERT GEORGE KOUTSOYANNOPOULOS



Santorini promises fantastic sights, and it certainly delivers. Arriving by boat – sailing inside a still-active volcanic crater and gazing at the whitewashed houses perched on the cliffs like seagulls – is one of the most unforgettable moments you are likely to experience. If you're a photographer, the sunsets around the *caldera* are bewitching. If you like history, go to Akrotiri to marvel at a 3,500-year-old city. If you like lazing in the sun, we have beaches with black, white and red sand; my favourite one is Perivolos, its chick-pea-sized black gravel stretching for 5km. If you're a foodie try our flavourful *tomatina* (pygmy tomatoes), our signature white aubergines and *fava* (chick-pea purée). But most of all, try our wine.

My family has been making wine for four generations and, in terms of quality and reputation, Santorini is the leader among Greece's wine regions. Assyrtiko reigns dominant among the nine indigenous varieties, with its high acidity and natural mineral aroma from the salty air. It's been cultivated on the island for centuries without foreign injections; its vines grow horizontally in entwined wreaths for protection against the strong Aegean winds. Come to my wine museum to learn about Santorini's viniculture and have a tasting. Quality wines, great panoramas and history – what a combination! Visit santoriniwinemuseum.com ▶

LEFT View towards the underwater *caldera* (crater) from Fira, Santorini. Take in such magical vistas on the Best of Santorini, Easy Santorini, and The Village of Oia and Swim shore excursions. Or savour local wines during the Traditional Village and Wine Tasting shore excursion

ZAKINTHOS

BY CERAMIC ARTIST HANNE MI SAUGE



A Greek lady asked me recently: 'Apart from the sun, the sea, the nature, the food and the people, why do you live here?' She answered the question for me!

In the winter months, I can paddle board out on the water – try doing that in the Norwegian fjords in winter! The Ionian is not just a sea to me. It's a mysterious entity separating us from the mainland. Sometimes I throw my ceramics playfully into the sea and take photos of them floating away – they appear alive and energetic.

I get inspired by the island's colours. Blue and turquoise represent the sea, but I try to get all

the shades from light green to dark blue. I also use greens and yellows, symbolising the thousand-year-old olive groves among which I built my studio-house.

Shipwreck Cove is unmissable: it's a small white-pebble beach surrounded by a huge wall of rock and, in the middle of it all, that shipwreck. It looks like a prop on a theatre stage and has turned the beach into a legend. Not far away are the Blue Caves. You go inside and suddenly the water turns cobalt blue. Maybe it's something to do with the light reflection. It's full of fish, so bring your snorkel.

Visit ceramichannemi.com

BELOW Shipwreck Cove, Zakynthos. Accessed by boat from the village of Skinari, this dramatic beach and nearby Blue Caves are a shore excursion must



CORFU

BY SINGER LOUISE DU TOIT



I love Corfu because it combines tranquillity with vibrancy. The island is buzzing with people and ideas, and there is a settled artist community that provides me with great inspiration and feedback. It's a place where I can perform my music, exhibit my art and be appreciated – isn't this what a true artist craves?

I can wake up, take my drawing book and violin, sit on the beach and compose, undisturbed. After a concert, I can just dip in the sea and take a swim. Paleokastritsa is my favourite spot: it's a fantastic beach with crystal-clear water surrounded by spectacular rock formations.

I love the simplicity of the island's food. There's nothing like cooking my own potatoes under the old olive tree accompanied by boiled wild greens I've just foraged from the fields. Evergreen fruit trees surround my house. Even in winter, we make fresh orange juice every day.

Come in the summer and you're likely to bump into one of Corfu's marching bands (above). We have 18 of them and they're quite a spectacle – children and adults marching together through the narrow, cobbled streets of Corfu Old Town. This, and much more, is the spirit of Corfu.

Visit louisedutoit.com

Previous page and left: 4Corners; Aviom

CRETE

BY NOWHERAKLION FOUNDER CLIVE BIRCH



The Mediterranean culture appeals to me, so when I hit 60 I decided it was time to retire and rethink. By then I had discovered Heraklion, a very underrated destination. I knew

what to expect: hospitable people, wonderful food, constant sun and a mild climate. But the city is also like a mini Athens: cultural, cosmopolitan with a delightful old centre. There are almost daily events in the summer – some free, some ticketed – in the magnificent open-air theatres.

Take a stroll by the Venetian walls in the Old Town and climb up to the well-tended grave of Nikos Kazantzakis, author of *Zorba the Greek*, for the best city view. A 10-minute bus ride away is Ammoudara, a mile-long sandy beach. Have a swim there and afterwards lie on a free lounge drinking *frappé* (iced coffee). And definitely go to Knossos; there are many archaeological sites, but this tops them all for organisation. Finally, don't miss out on the local specialities such as *stifado* (meat and onion stew), stuffed peppers, or *dakos* (rusks with tomatoes and olive oil), complete with a glass of *tsikoudia*, the local fire water, which is always offered free at the end of your meal. Visit nowheraklion.com



THIS PAGE With so many attractions on the island, the port of Heraklion in Crete is sometimes overlooked. The island's capital is the fifth largest city in Greece and a lively cultural hub that is well worth exploring



RHODES

BY ARCHITECT ANDREAS CHADZIS

ABOVE Enjoy this vista of Mandraki Harbour in Rhodes on the Panoramic Rhodes shore excursion. Visit Lindos and Tsambiki beach on the Lindos Acropolis and Tsambika shore excursion

OPPOSITE Birthplace of gods Apollo and Artemis, UNESCO-protected Delos, an island off Mykonos, is an archaeological treasure. Soak up the atmosphere on the Delos, Birthplace of Apollo shore excursion



Rhodes is one of a kind: amazing beaches, medieval castles and archaeological sites. Its beauties are endless. Take Lindos, an iconic place defining the Aegean ideal:

white houses, narrow streets with donkeys for transport up the steep slope to the Acropolis of Lindos and a mix of azure sky and turquoise sea. Tsambika is an amazing beach with golden sands and clear, shallow waters, overlooked by a monastery at one end and a promontory on the other – it's perfect for families.

Medieval Rhodes town is fascinating. There is Italian architecture, a mixture of Art Deco with unusual motifs of sea animals. The Italians were conquerors, but they also

restored our medieval castle originally built by the Knights of Saint John. The restoration is not to everyone's taste, but what would have happened without it? We'd have another set of glorious ruins.

Rhodes is a stony island and I'm trying to take one step forward supporting the Greek tradition. A famous project of mine is a nine-house complex built in stone. We used stones found on site, breaking them by hand to make them square or round – a technique with extreme potential. The result is a building of undefined age. We're here to improve what we have inherited, add to our knowledge and pass it on to the next generation.

Visit chadzis.wordpress.com

MYKONOS

BY JEWELLERY DESIGNER MINAS



How can I describe Mykonos? This is an island blessed by the gods. Every corner hides a beach. Mersini is my favourite, but there are so many.

The island is barren and there's no cover from the sun, so it radiates freedom. Mykonos taught me to be free.

I learned my trade as a goldsmith and worked for many years designing jewellery and luxury wear, but nowadays I see myself as more of a designer. I like simple curves and shapes like the ones you find on Mykonos. The traditional architecture here is simple and sensual. This Cycladic simplicity is reflected in my work, which has a Doric ethos with severe shapes.

But there is movement in my designs, too, matching the island's dynamic, the freedom of its bohemianism, its beauty, its light.

I like to take the boat to the island of Delos. It's a fantastic UNESCO protected place – don't miss it. Visit the Ano Mera monastery, too. It gets few visitors and is a surprise: Baroque, not Greek Orthodox.

In Mykonos archaeological museum you'll find a vase with a relief of the Trojan war. The shape is effortless and the lines are continuous and minimal. I feel an affinity with that ancient artist. We've both been influenced by the island in the same way. Visit minastudio.com ■

MED FLY-CRUISES GO GREEK

Full 2017/18 details will be online from 21 March. Weekly Med Fly-cruises will depart from Malta. pocruises.com

