

YOUR COMPLETE GREECE TRAVEL GUIDE



My first trip to Greece was with three girlfriends in 2016 and we seriously had the time. of. our. lives. I loved it so much that my husband begged us to go back together (my first time to go back to an international country), so we went back in August of 2019. It is still definitely one of my favorite places I have ever been (right behind **Mallorca**). I have created detailed travel guides for all the islands I have been to so keep reading and then check those out!

Greece is amazing because of the variety of beaches, the islands with their own personalities, the super fun beach clubs, the amazing food, the nice people, the views, the beautiful cove beaches to choose from, and the overall good energy. I could go on....

Let me paint a picture. Wake up and have a healthy Mediterranean breakfast overlooking the water – pack your beach bag and head off to whatever beach you have starred – laze around, order wine, eat gyros, climb on the rocks, feel fabulous – head back to your hotel/Airbnb and shower for dinner while enjoying some local greek wine – head to a casual or fancy dinner with beautiful views – walk around the chora eating late-night gyros, dance all night at a fun club, shop in and out of cute islands shops, or just sit outside enjoying snacks and wine until whenever you're ready to go back home. There are so many more activities than just lying on a beach when you go to Greece – I don't even know how to convey how much I love it, but this picture is close.



If I've already convinced you to go to Greece, check out my [step by step guide to booking a trip](#) to jumpstart your planning. If I haven't convinced you yet, keep reading.

WHAT ISLANDS TO GO TO IN GREECE

Picking what islands to go to in Greece can be very difficult. If you're like me, you really want to see the popular ones that everyone talks about, but also you want to see smaller ones that will remind you of Mamma Mia, and with just one week, how do you do both?! One thing I can guarantee you is that you do not want to overdo it. For our first trip, we went ahead and chose **Mykonos** and **Santorini** for 3 nights each and I'm so glad that we did. We could have done a lot longer on each island, but any shorter would have been sad.

First you need to know that there are several cluster of islands that are easiest to hop between. It is not a good idea to try and hop between different regions because you will waste most of your time traveling and not enjoying the islands.

For my second trip, we went back to Mykonos because I loved it so much and then onto Paros and Milos. I have to say after visiting these smaller islands that I totally get it – they were incredible. For my next time going to Greece, I would probably never go back to Mykonos or Santorini after seeing how cute and adorable these “lesser traveled” islands are. I would still totally recommend a first-time visitor to visit Mykonos and Santorini as they are so unique and beautiful and there's a reason why they are so popular, but if you aren't into crowds or the boujee party scene that Mykonos provides, then totally feel free to skip them as well. Corfu is next on my list for a trip next year, hopefully!

The most popular tourist islands can be grouped into Cycladic or Ionian for the most part. Crete is also a category of its own. I will only cover Cycladic and Ionian in this post.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.fivestargreece.com/island-groups/>

CYCLADES

The Cyclades are your classic Greek islands with white-washed houses, blue roofs, and a mostly barren landscape. Most of these islands have a port or two with a main town called the “chora” where you can find all the white-washed houses. Beaches are sandy and plentiful (obvi, it’s an island). The most well-known Cycladic islands are Mykonos and Santorini, and they’re a must visit if you like being where the action is. These islands are located southeast of Athens.



MYKONOS

Since I have been here, I can speak for its character. If you love fun, lively beaches with lots of rocky outcrops and instagrammable beach clubs, Mykonos is your island. The town itself is also so lively up until 6 in the morning every night, but not too crazy. We spent our nights in fun bars dancing around to fun music. It was very carefree and casual and I loved it. The shopping is also so great to get fun necklaces, bags, and other textiles. It is definitely very expensive – so if you are on a budget, you may want to pick other islands to save some cash. Also note that it's not really "pretty". It's very flat and dry. The town, or Chora, and all the beach clubs make it very photographic, but there's not much nature to speak of. It can also be overrun by tourists due to the busy cruise ship port. There can be 5 cruise ships docking on the island at the same time in the heat of summer.

Go mainly for:

Party scene

Trendy / beautiful / bohemian beach clubs

[Check out my travel guide to Mykonos here.](#)





SANTORINI

You can't imagine the beauty that is Santorini!!! The views of the caldera from everywhere on the island are incredible. This island is not a beach island, but it's a great place to hang out in the towns, do a boat tour, and be romantic in a cliffside villa. The nightlife was in stark contrast to Mykonos with most people retreating back to their rooms after dinner. They have awesome wineries to visit as well!

Go mainly for:

The views

Romantic, fancy hotel rooms

[Check out my Santorini Travel Guide](#)





Other well-known Cycladic islands: Naxos – Paros – Antiparos – Ios – Folegandros – Sifnos – Milos

MILOS

I had seen so many pretty pictures of these moon-looking beaches in Milos, and I had to go. It is much smaller than the other islands but with breathtaking, less crowded beaches. This was our favorite island of the whole trip for so many reasons. The biggest reason is probably because we rented an ATV and it was just super fun to jet around the island on that thing. The second is how uniquely beautiful all the beaches were. The three main beaches on the island are sooooo different from one another and different from any beach I had ever seen. They were not too crowded and very beautiful. We also loved how picturesque the island was. It was a lot like Santorini with a majority of the villages up on these cliffs making for beautiful photos and views.

Go mainly for:

Beautiful landscape

Stunning beaches

Guide to Milos coming soon!





PAROS

It looked like a good stop in between Mykonos and Santorini and [this article](#) from Purewow made me want to go! The beaches were beautiful and the prices were way less steep. Antiparos is a smaller island off of Paros that you can tack on to your trip as well. The main town that we stayed in was sooo trendy and cute and pretty, just like Mykonos – but less crowded and less touristy. Local Greeks are often quoted as saying this is their favorite island out of all of them. It was really a hidden gem and I hope it stays that way.

Go mainly for:

Mykonos but without the cost

A chill getaway

[Check out my Paros Travel Guide!](#)







THE REST

Ios is supposed to be the party island for the 18 and up crew with Mykonos being what you graduate to in your 20s. Folegandros looks teeny and beautiful and would probably be my fourth island on our trip if we had time to spare. Naxos is supposed to be very kid-friendly with wide, long beaches.

Even more, less well-known Cycladic islands: Tinos – Syros – Serifos – Kea – Andros – Koufonisia – Amorgos

IONIAN ISLANDS

The Ionian islands are still on my bucket list, as they are supposed to be lush and green and beautiful. Think Mamma Mia vibes. For the record, Mamma Mia was filmed on Skopelos which is east of Athens and kind of far from anything, so not really a great destination. The most well-known Ionian islands are Corfu, Kefalonia, and Zakynthos. These are located west and northwest of Athens. There is supposed to be less wind at these islands with calm waters perfect for swimming and yachting.

Corfu and Zakynthos both have their own airports making them easy to get to from around Europe. Zakynthos is known for their “shipwreck bay” that you’ve definitely seen in pictures before which makes it pretty touristy I’ve heard.

Other Ionian Islands: Paxos – Levkada – Ithaca – Kythira



ATHENS

If you are coming from the US, you probably have an inevitable layover in or out of Athens before you hit the islands. We spent a day on either end in Athens and actually really enjoyed it! I didn't enjoy it as much as the islands, but the town was really cute and fun to walk around. I wouldn't add on time in Athens (unless you're a history or mythology nut), but you'll find plenty to do if you have a layover there.





WHAT TIME OF YEAR TO VISIT GREECE

The islands are going to be busiest mid-May to September with peak season being July and especially August. We went in peak season in August and I actually loved how lively it is – such good people watching. However, August is also the windiest month of the year. If you want to save money or don't like crowds, try to go in May, June, or September.

IS THERE A LANGUAGE BARRIER IN GREECE?

No, not at all. It's very touristy and everyone speaks English. Remember that the Greek alphabet is not the same as the English alphabet, so you can't phonetically figure out what a sign says. I would definitely recommend downloading Google Translate and using the camera feature to translate signs into English.

WHAT SHOULD I PACK FOR GREECE?

No heels!! The greek islands are very hilly with uneven pavement, and heels will just give you a broken ankle. Though Mykonos and Santorini are very glitzy and glam, it's resort casual. I got by in rompers and sundresses at night with cover-ups and bikinis during the day. I of course bought lace-up greek sandals before my trip and they were perfect – any sandals work.

HOW DO I GET TO GREECE?

You will probably fly to Athens from the US and then go onto your destination. The larger islands have airports giving you the choice of taking a ferry or a flight to the islands. Factoring in getting to the airport early, the ferries are usually quicker and cheaper. Remember to pack light because of all the traveling,

though that shouldn't be hard with no heels and summery clothes. Check out my [guide to packing in a carry-on](#) to make sure you fit everything in one bag.

In each of my travel guides I have super detailed information about ferry vs flight and how to get to your destination once you get to your island.

For our first trip, we flew to Athens, ferried to Mykonos, ferried to Santorini, and flew back to Athens to fly back to the US. For our second trip, we flew to Mykonos from London, ferried to Paros, ferried to Milos, flew to Athens, flew to London. The ferries are HUGE and you don't necessarily need to book your tickets in advance – but I would go ahead and do it just for peace of mind. Know that because the Cycladic islands can be very windy, there's always the chance for ferries to be canceled or delayed. Just know this is an option and live with the fear. We use [Santorini Dave](#) to get lots of insights on which ferry companies are best / fastest / most reliable.

SOME ROUTE OPTIONS

The most common: Athens – Mykonos (3 nights) – Santorini (3 nights) – Athens

Optional add-ons if you have time in-between Mykonos and Santorini: Naxos, Paros, Sifnos, Milos, Folegandros, Ios

Off the beaten path: Athens – Paros (3 nights) – Milos (3 nights) – Athens

A little bit of party and chill: Athens – Mykonos (3 nights) – Milos (3 nights) – Athens

I prefer bucket list Santorini, but want a chill island too: Athens – Paros (3 nights) – Santorini (3 nights) – Athens

Ionian: Athens – Corfu – Zakynthos – Athens

WHAT SOUVENIRS SHOULD I BUY IN GREECE?

A major part of the experience in Greece is shopping in the main towns. The shops are incredible! I always leave Greece with some sort of beachy clothes or accessories or jewellery. It's so easy to spend a lot of money on resort wear here.

HONESTLY, HOW MUCH DID YOU SPEND IN GREECE?

Trip One with Girlfriends

Flight from US to Athens – \$900

Accommodations – \$640

Transportation (Ferries, Buses, and Flight) – \$325

Food – \$450

Entertainment (food tour in Athens and boat tour in Santorini) – \$230

Shopping – \$140

Miscellaneous (aka can't remember what this was for) – \$140

TOTAL FOR 8 NIGHTS IN GREECE – \$2,825

Trip Two with Husband (Prices for 1 below)

Flights from London to Greece – \$663

Accommodations – \$755

Transportation (Ferries, Buses, ATV Rental) – \$184

Food – \$776

Beach Chair Rental – \$60

Miscellaneous – \$47

TOTAL FOR 8 NIGHTS IN GREECE – \$2,485