HOUSE & GARDEN

TRAVEL

The best Greek islands to visit in 2026

With 227 Greek islands to choose from, here are the ones that make for the best holiday

By Tal Dekel-Daks, Arabella Bowes, Antonia Bentel, Virginia Clark And Arta Ghanbari

9 April 2026

Whitewashed churches with blue domes emerging out of rocky cliffs, gentle beaches rivalling that of the Caribbean and fresh fish suppers at rustic tavernas – it's no wonder that the Greek islands explode with sun-seeking holidaymakers. Despite their abundance, no two Greek islands feel quite the same – from the Cyclades in the south Aegean to the Ionian and Dodecanese to the west near the Turkish coast. We take a closer look at what makes some of the standouts.

When is the best time to visit the Greek islands?

The Greek islands' summer holiday season begins around late spring in April and ends in autumn around October. The weather is at its hottest (and the crowds are at their fullest) between early July and the end of August. If you want the warm weather with less of the crowds, visit in June or September. Autumn is also beautiful and the Aegean islands, the southerly Dodecanese and Crete are extremely pleasant.

How many Greek islands are there?

There are an impressive 6,000 islands and islets scattered in Greece, most of which are located in the Aegean and Ionian Sea. Of those thousands, only 227 islands are inhabited. The Cyclades is a popular group of islands in the Aegean Sea which includes Mykonos, Santorini and Naxos in its number, along with plenty of smaller, quieter islands. The Dodecanese islands are located further east towards Turkey, with Rhodes being the main island and the gateway to others such as Patmos and Symi. Another popular group is the Ionian islands, which lie off the west coast of Greece and include popular holiday destinations like Corfu, Kefalonia and Zakynthos. Closest in to the mainland are the Saronic islands, of which Hydra is a longstanding favourite for Greek holidaymakers.

Which is the most beautiful island?

If you close your eyes and imagine a Greek island, all whitewashed houses, blue roofs, craggy landscapes and sparkling sea, Santorini is probably the closest you'll get to this mental image. There are some caveats, however: it's a pretty crowded place from a tourism point of view, with visitors landing in planes and cruise ships every day. For a more unspoiled beauty, head a little further north-east to Amorgos, where you can find equally dramatic landscapes and charming villages without the crowds.

Which is the quietest Greek island?

There are plenty of quiet islands out there, but Antiparos and Amorgos in the Cyclades are the best ones for our money; the former has some stylish and understatedly scene-y places to stay, while Amorgos is more determinedly unspoilt. If peace and tranquility is a priority, we recommend staying away from the hotels and renting a villa.

The best Greek islands

© Allard Schager

1/22

Santorini, Cyclades

The best Greek island for couples

Why go

Santorini's caldera is one of those instantly recognisable sights that has travellers flocking from all over the world to see it for themselves. But no photograph quite prepares you for the view along the moon-shaped bay with white-washed villages perched impossibly atop the crimson and black volcanic cliffs, like a sprinkling of snow.

It is said there are about 70,000 hotel beds on Santorini and that, pre-pandemic, the island welcomed more than two million visitors each year. Santorini is a hot commodity, but despite this there remain a few quiet retreats and hidden gems on this tiny, compact island. Vora – a refreshingly subtle, unmistakably cool and painstakingly designed hotel between the village of Imerovigli and the island's capital, Fira – feels far removed from the tourist trail, while being within easy reach of all the attractions that make Santorini so popular. The only marker to hint at your arrival is a discreet black-painted gate with a small sign fixed on volcanic stone, through which lies three one-bedroom cave villas carved into the steep cliff hang-ing above the sea. Designed by Athens-based starchitects K-Studio, a long-time collaborator and friend of Vora's charismatic owner Yiannis Bellonias, the interiors have been decked in custom-made furniture, creating a contemporary look that is a far cry from the conventional cave-house aesthetic. Other beautiful hotels we love can be found in Oia, among traditional whitewashed houses and blue-domed roofs. Mystique Hotel, located on the edge of Oia – the island's postcard coastal town – is perfectly positioned for taking in the mesmerising scenery, with its maze of 41 suites emerging from the cliff face in the traditional cave style that has long been synonymous with the island. Andronis Boutique Hotel, with its luxury spin on Santorini's cave-style architecture is in one of the most desirable spots on the island. There's also the spectacular Perivolas, made up of 22 private houses in restored 300 year-old caves that were once the homes, wineries and stables of Santorini's fishermen and farmers, there's a spectacular pool flowing over the edge of the cliff into a glistening horizon.

How to get there

As with most Cycladic islands, you can reach Santorini by plane or ferry from Athens. Most ferries to Santorini (but not all) leave between 7am and 8am from the Piraeus ferry port. Several airlines including Norwegian, British Airways and Easyjet also have non-stop flights to Santorini from the UK during the summer months.

Where to stay

- **For those who want to avoid the crowds:** Vora
- **For a romantic bolthole with a panoramic pool:** Mystique Hotel
- **For the most desirable spot in Oia:** Andronis Boutique Hotel
- **For a historic stay:** Perivolas