

Dodecanese

Δωδεκάνησα



Strung out along the coast of western Turkey, like jewels upon an impossibly aquamarine sea, the Dodecanese both entrance and attract passers-by – many of whom return year after year to sample some of the most culturally and geographically diverse islands in the Aegean.

These 18 islands (including satellites) are an entity unto themselves. Under Italian rule until 1947, they maintain an air of slight separateness and, unsurprisingly, still attract large numbers of curious Italian visitors. The islands are a beguiling mix of sea, mountain and meadow and, because they are all close to one another, can easily be 'hopped'. They need that extra effort to get to, but the rewards far outweigh the investment.

The spiritually inclined will make a beeline for Patmos. The developed resorts of Rhodes and Kos have beaches and bars galore, while Lipsi and Tilos have seductive beaches, minus the crowds. The far-flung islands of Agathonisi, Arki, Kasos and Kastellorizo await Greek-island aficionados in pursuit of traditional island life, while everyone gapes at the extraordinary volcanic landscape that geological turbulence has created on Nisyros. The islands' chequered history has also endowed them with a wealth of diverse archaeological remains.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Historical Experience** Viewing Lindos (p527), the most famous of the ancient cities of the Dodecanese
- **Getting Away from it All** Enjoying Kastellorizo (p543) with slow, laid-back life unfussed by mainstream tourism
- **Chill-out Spot** Relaxing on Astypalea (p564), an island of tranquillity, spirituality and beautiful beaches
- **Green Haven** Viewing fertile, volcanic Nisyros (p554)
- **Wine Country** Indulging in Rhodes' wine country (p531) on the slopes of Mt Attavyros
- **Romantic Restaurants** Dining in Rhodes' Old Town (p525)
- **Adrenaline Rush** Cliff-diving around Kalymnos (p572)
- **Sporting Event** Windsurfing fast and furious at Afiartis Bay (p537) on Karpathos



■ POPULATION: 190,071

■ AREA: 2714 SQ KM

HISTORY

The Dodecanese islands have been inhabited since pre-Minoan times, and by the Archaic period Rhodes and Kos had emerged as the dominant islands within the group. Distance from Athens gave the Dodecanese considerable autonomy and they were, for the most part, free to prosper unencumbered by subjugation to imperial Athens. Following Alexander the Great's death, Ptolemy I of Egypt ruled the Dodecanese.

The Dodecanese islanders were the first Greeks to become Christians. This was through the tireless efforts of St Paul, who made two journeys to the archipelago, and through St John, who was banished to Patmos, where he had his revelation.

The early Byzantine era saw the islands prosper, but by the 7th century AD they were plundered by a string of invaders. By the early 14th century it was the turn of the crusaders – the Knights of St John of Jerusalem, or Knights Hospitallers – who eventually became rulers of almost all the Dodecanese, building mighty fortifications, but not mighty enough to keep out the Turks in 1522.

The Turks were ousted by the Italians in 1912 during a tussle over possession of Libya. The Italians, inspired by Mussolini's vision of a vast Mediterranean empire, made

Italian the official language and prohibited the practice of Orthodoxy. The Italians constructed grandiose public buildings in the Fascist style, which was the antithesis of archetypal Greek architecture. More beneficially, they excavated and restored many archaeological monuments.

After the Italian surrender of 1943, the islands became a battleground for British and German forces, with much suffering inflicted upon the population. The Dodecanese were formally returned to Greece in 1947.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Astypalea, Kalymnos, Karpathos, Kos, Leros and Rhodes all have direct flights to Athens. In addition, Rhodes has flights to Astypalea (via Kos and Leros), Iraklio, Kasos (via Karpathos), Thessaloniki, and in summer to Mykonos and Santorini (Thira) in the Cyclades. Additional seaplane service operates out of Kos and Kalymnos linking those islands with Lavrio on the mainland.

Ferry & Hydrofoil

DOMESTIC

Ferry schedules to the Dodecanese are fairly complex, but they do follow a predictable and rarely varying pattern. Departure times

FERRY CONNECTIONS TO THE DODECANESE

Origin	Destination	Duration	Fare	Frequency
Alexandroupoli	Kalymnos	23hr	€38.50	weekly
	Kos	26hr	€39	weekly
	Rhodes	29hr	€44	weekly
Piraeus	Astypalea	10-12hr	€33.50	5 weekly
	Halki	22hr	€35	2 weekly
	Kalymnos	9-11hr	€42	daily
	Karpathos	18½hr	€33-49	3 weekly
	Kasos	17hr	€32.50	3 weekly
	Kos	10-15hr	€42-45	2 daily
	Leros	11hr	€32-36	daily
	Nisyros	17hr	€44	2 weekly
Sitia	Patmos	7-8hr	€32.50	daily
	Rhodes	15-18hr	€48-51.50	2 daily
	Symi	15-17hr	€44	2 weekly
	Tilos	15hr	€42	1 weekly
	Halki	7½hr	€20	3 weekly
Thessaloniki	Karpathos	4¼hr	€17	3 weekly
	Kasos	2½hr	€10.50	3 weekly
	Rhodes	10hr	€25	3 weekly
	Kos	18hr	€44	1 weekly
Rhodes	Kos	18hr	€44	1 weekly
	Rhodes	21hr	€53	1 weekly

