

## 1: The Rough Guide to Greece : Rough Guides : | The Chart & Map Shop

*The subject of the very first Rough Guide and the birthplace of Western civilisation, Greece continues to entice visitors and make history. From discovering the coolest Athens neighbourhoods to hiking your way up to Mount Olympus, home of the gods, or boarding a ferry to dozens of stunning islands.*

Skiathos, Skopelos, Alonissos and Skyros. Skiathos is the most-travelled of the islands thanks to its international airport, and its fame lies mainly in its sandy beaches. Away from the coast you can still find isolated hiking trails and the odd Byzantine monastery. Skopelos is larger, but less visited than Skiathos. Its rugged scenery is perhaps more beautiful and certainly less developed. Its charms were celebrated in the film *Mamma Mia!*. Much more rugged Alonissos lies in the middle of a marine park and is surrounded by a group of uninhabited satellite islands. Visitors have increased in the last decade or so, but it retains an exclusive air and some exceptional hiking routes. Skyros is by far the least visited of the traditional Sporades, at least by non-Greeks there is a domestic airport. Those prepared to find their way here, however, are amply rewarded by an atmosphere that blends traditional Greek village life with an increasingly trendy "alternative" vibe. The second largest island in Greece after Crete, and located conveniently close to Athens, it should be much better known classicists might recognise it as Euboea. From its fertile north to the mountainous south it offers a wealth of travel opportunities. Prices outside of this month can be considerably cheaper. **Alamy Where to stay:** Skiathos Holidays Skiathos caters mainly to package tours but these apartments and villas, located right by sandy Vromolimnos beach in the south of the island, offer stylish white-washed accommodation among the pine forest and the bougainvillea of their gardens. The accommodation is simple but good value and also quietly sophisticated. Leave room for the baked apple and yoghurt dessert. It is more low key than some, but still lined with cafes and offers waterskiing. Bourtzi Boutique Hotel For a different slant on Skiathos try this haven of designer living right in the heart of Skiathos Town. The hotel offers elegant, marble-lined rooms, and a courtyard pool, while the old town is a warren of back streets and squares that are a delight to explore. The Final Step Probably the best dining in town, if not the Aegean. The Final Step is run by Pam and offers her modern Mediterranean twist on local produce; for instance the grilled octopus starter is not only perfectly tender but comes with the added flavour of a sweet chili sauce. You can get here on various boat excursions from the port, but the experience is more authentic if you lace on your hiking boots. Thea Home Hotel Skopelos Town is perhaps the most attractive and unspoilt of all the harbour towns of the Sporades, and this simple hotel lies at the heart of it. The rooms may be basic, but they are also clean and functional and offer great views down to the port. The local cheese pies for breakfast are becoming legendary. Finikas Finikas is a traditional family-run taverna Lambros masterminds the food, and his two sons serve it up with the best view over the harbour. Lambros specialises in the standard Greek dishes with the occasional local flavour – try the pork stuffed with apple and plums. Kastani is famous as the beach in *Mamma Mia*, but as a result can be overcrowded. On the other hand, a quick call to Karen and Babis will secure a lift up from the northern port of Loutraki, and most of your time in your room will be spent on the balcony admiring the views over to Skiathos, particularly as the sun sets. Steki tou Masteras Every Greek holiday should include a good local grill house, and this one, 3km from Loutraki in the town of Glossa, is one of the best. Nothing fancy, just meat perfectly cooked over charcoal, along with more great views. Steps lead up from the sandy cove to the improbably located church. Its movie associations mean that coach and boat trips can spoil the romance, but come in the late afternoon or early evening and you might enjoy the place to yourselves. Patitiri, Alonissos View over Alonissos old town. In fact it is that rare thing among Greek campsites and is based around tents rather than camper vans. Plenty of shade and the eponymous rocky beach just metres away lend themselves to lazy days. Back near the port, To Kamaki is a fantastic example of the breed. This was the old capital of the island, abandoned after an earthquake in Patitiri, Alonissos Eleonas restaurant Where to stay: Ikion Eco Boutique Hotel Also close to the port, but slightly more refined, this stylish little hotel 14 rooms including 4 family rooms offers all the comforts one would want. Renovated by the Athanasiou family in , the traditional building now has modern, but tasteful, furnishings. The service, from the welcoming home-made lemonade to

the breakfast based around local products, is top class. Eleonas A drive up the coast, or a boat ride, takes you to the pretty pebble beach of Leftos Gialos, opposite the islet of Peristera. Right on the beach is this traditional, yet funky, taverna run by Nikos and the talented Magdna. She produces all the normal taverna favourites as well as more unusual dishes, such as tzitzirafa, the tops of the wild pistachio tree cooked in olive oil and lemon. This was founded in , chiefly to protect the surviving population of the Mediterranean monk seal. Skyros A woman on a writing holiday on Skyros Where to stay: Skyros The island of Skyros has a distinctly alternative feel, which is partly down to this company, who have been promoting "lifestyle" holidays here for the past 25 years. Accommodation, in two locations, is basic, and the emphasis is on the plentiful courses provided, from yoga to writing. Participants come back year after year and many describe the experience as "life changing". Istories tou Barba The Skyros courses include buffet meals, but if you want to explore the island, a good trip would be up to the beach at Molos where this ouzeri, "Stories from your Uncle", has an enviable location right by the sand. If you can, come for the annual Goat Dance, held before Lent starts. In this distinctly pagan festival men dressed as goats "marry" local maidens also men dressed up. Little Stone Villa Evia is little visited by non-Greeks, and those who do come tend to stay in all inclusive resorts. The alternative is to stay in private villas. This example, in the tiny village of Enoria near the east coast of the island, revels in its isolation, but is well equipped and has a private pool and breathtaking views. Vrahos Set on the small square of Steni see below this mountain taverna specialises in meat-based dishes, either from the oven or the grill. Mountain spring water emanates mysteriously from a tap in a nearby tree. The village itself is famed for its mountain air and spring water and is surrounded by hiking trails. Altamar Hotel Northern Evia is known for its fertility and this is certainly evident in the lushly green views afforded by this brand new hotel in Pefki. The minimalist design hides the fact that this is a friendly, family-run place. The surrounding countryside abounds in outdoor activities, including horse-riding, jeep trails and hiking. Astron Just outside the elegant port of Limni and metres from the beach, this seafood based taverna has a great location. The setting is superb, and the pretty white-washed complex is well worth the trip. If you are lucky, one of the few resident nuns will show you around. Karystos, southern Evia Where to stay: Aegea Hotel Karystos is the main resort of southern Evia, and its neoclassical waterfront is mainly frequented by Greeks. The Aegea Hotel, just out of town, offers great views in a tranquil location. A swimming pool, and even some see-saws and swings, will keep the kids happy. Babis, the owner, knows the area well and can advise on lots of places to explore. This establishment has been run by the same family since An easier walk, but still hugely rewarding, takes you down the Dhimosari Gorge below the mountain. The route follows old, cobbled mule paths and passes watermills on the way.

### 2: Map of Greece | Greece Regions | Rough Guides

*The Rough Guide Map Greece combines clear modern mapping with bang-up-to-date research and is the essential companion to anyone travelling around this idyllic country.*

Small is beautiful – Agistros beach, Skiathos. A half-hour walk north through the woods from Koukounaries takes you to the laid-back Mandraki and Elias beaches, while further east is expansive Megalos Aselinos. Here, in the evening, goat bells clang and families play badminton in the setting sun. Perhaps the best beaches are the smallest: At remote Kechria, in what the Skiathian writer Papadiamantis called a "beautiful, melancholic valley", a Greek flag flies above the craggy beach as people wade into the sea, or stop in the shade of the beach taverna for a cold Mythos beer. Visibility for snorkelling and scuba diving is especially good around the islets. Take a boat to the beach at Tsougria, or view it from afar over an iced coffee at Bourtzi, an islet linked to Skiathos Town by a bridge, and which – rumour has it – the Beatles once tried to buy. Even some main island beaches – such as pebbled Lalaria, with its rock arch – are accessible only by boat. Skiathos has over 60 beaches, but there is more to see: Try the octopus stifado at Amfiliki restaurant, washed down with a tsipouro like grappa and go to Kentavros bar where the spirit of the 1960s lives on to hear whose yacht is in the harbour. Skiathos may be favoured by the A-list, but by staying at the campsite behind Koukounaries you can join them on a budget. Ermoupoli is characterised by gorgeous neoclassical mansions and 19th-century tenement blocks. Its labyrinthine alleyways are home to fish restaurants and marble-and-brass espresso bars. One block behind the waterfront is Antiparou, a pedestrian lane full of outside tables and chairs, shaded by flowering bougainvillea creepers. Out of town are many small coves. Some 12km to the south is the long, narrow beach at Megas Gialos – incredibly tranquil, with soft pale sand and tamarisk trees and straw canopies offering shade. There is a whitewashed chapel, a few wooden boats moored to a jetty at the western end, a cafe and three grocery stores. Expect a diet of bread, olives, tinned sardines, yoghurt and honey – Megas Gialos is too remote for deliveries of much fresh food. Galissas beach in the south-west of the island is rather more busy – and worldly. It also has several restaurants with perfect sunset views over the sand dunes, while you eat, serving minced lamb with chicory and unusual fish dishes, alongside standard Greek fare of roast meats and stews. Further north is Kini, the closest Syros gets to a beach resort. Here are largish beachfront hotels, and restaurants serving ubiquitous feta salad or deep-fried calamari drenched in lemon juice, washed down with retsina. Some families let out the guest apartments attached to their homes. The best are half a mile inland, high enough to offer magnificent views of the setting sun. At the northern headland of Kini bay, take the footpath north for a 2km clifftop walk through heather to the sandy beach of Delfini. After a swim, make the return journey at sunset, for the best view on the island, and an indelible memory of red sky over black water. EasyJet flies from Gatwick to Mykonos for the ferry to Syros. There are fast, regular and reasonably priced services from Athens, Santorini and most other islands greeka. Local transport by bus, rental car or scooter. The prehistoric equivalent of a modern superpower, the Minoans built vast palaces, from which they controlled the rest of the island and an empire further afield the famous "Linear B tablets", written in a primitive form of Greek, provide vivid evidence of their obsessive bureaucracy – no literature, just lists and lists and more lists. Whether the Minoans were peace-loving types, living under the benign influence of a Mother Goddess, or hardline imperialists remains a matter of dispute. What is left of their power bases can be seen at Gournia and Phaistos, stunningly beautiful sites. During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the Venetians controlled Crete for several hundred years, making it a wonderful melting pot of Italian and Byzantine art. The best place to catch a glimpse of this is the church at Kritsa near Agios Nikolaos, which has a wonderful array of 14th-century frescoes. Knossos, originally a Minoan palace, was excavated and imaginatively restored in the early 20th century by Sir Arthur Evans, who rebuilt the place in concrete and "completed" its damaged frescoes. Yades Heritage and Hospitality Hotels yadeshotels. The inhabitants here were exempted from the exchange of populations with Turkey in 1923. Until the beginning of the last century the first language of large areas of Attica and Euboia in northern Greece was Arvanitika, a form of Albanian, which has been replaced by modern Albanian, spoken by recent immigrants. From the past you can

see the ruins of Venetian towers, Crusader castles, Catholic monasteries, Ottoman seraglios and fountains. And in the heart of Athens there is a mosque and madrasa close to Monastiraki station. If you come to Greece for the classical sites, spare a glance for its more recent cultural heritage. Hotel Casino in Xanthi [hotelcasinoxanthi](#). I first came to Naxos 20 years ago, when donkeys were used for rubbish collection and the ferry from Athens could take 10 hours – and I have been coming back ever since. It is the largest and most fertile of the Cycladic islands. The harbour is small and the airport even smaller. For these reasons, Naxos has not been overrun by cruise ships and mass tourism, even in July and August. The island has long white beaches, mountain paths, Byzantine churches, Venetian towers and good cafes. Most importantly, it is a working island, and the slow pace, absence of loud bars and the many activities on offer make it perfect for families. The shallow beach at Aghios Giorgos – a short walk from the Hora town centre in Naxos town – is ideal for small children. Further down there is surfing, diving and windsurfing bluefindivers. The latter beaches remind me of Australia – scrubby sand dunes, a certain wildness. Cedar trees offer shade. To the east, in the bay of Moutsouna, ecotourism has flourished. The northernmost point is the old fishing village of Apollon, close to an ancient marble quarry, famous for a huge male figure, abandoned around BC. The Hora rises like a pyramid to the Venetian Kastro – a labyrinth of cobbled streets. The author of Zorba the Greek was educated here, and the Venetian, Byzantine and archaeological museums are city pleasures on a small island. The lush interior is great for hiking and walking, and in spring the wildflowers flush the fields and roadsides. Each village has its own character. Sangri sits in the middle of a plain surrounded by small Byzantine churches. Halki, with its neoclassical mansions and Venetian towers, differs again from the drama of white marbled Apeiranthos, overlooking a steep valley. Local buses connect with these villages, including a bus to the foot of Mount Zas, the highest mountain in the Cyclades. The return reward is lunch in the village of Filoti and coffee in the shade of a huge plane tree. Above all, it has a beautiful rocky purity, pebbly shores, the coldest, cleanest sea in the Aegean, old mountain pathways and simple beach tavernas. Byzantine gold treasures; dark cars speeding high-ranking priests to the port; and pilgrims queuing to enter the cave where St John saw his apocalyptic revelations. Patmos has long attracted those who want peace and solitude if not visions and many artists and writers have found inspiration here. Each August, the Italians arrive – a reminder that the Dodecanese were colonised by Italy until To see why lyra is back in a big way, kick off in Chania, just down the road from Stavros, where Zorba the Greek was filmed. Order a thimble of strong, raki-spiked elliniki coffee and hobnob with black-shirted shepherds listening to Cretan music on Radio Kriti FM at the kafeneion in the central square, then pay a call at the corner house, cluttered with memorabilia, where sweet-voiced Nikos Xylouris grew up. Wind up your music tour with a pilgrimage to Matala , the hippy beach resort facing towards Libya, where Joni Mitchell camped out in caves and was inspired to write "Carey", one of her most popular and enduring songs. One place I visit regularly is the bougatsatzidiko cream pastry shop for bougatsa me krema – a vanilla-flavoured semolina custard between crispy filo sheets topped with icing sugar and cinnamon. It is heaven for breakfast. Serrakon Vasileos Irakleou 35, serrakon. Veta , the cafe-restaurant at the Byzantine Museum brestraurant. It is also known for its wine, distinctive cherry tomatoes, white aubergines, and the fact that vegetables grow on the dry volcanic land. In the eastern Aegean lies Ikaria, named after Icarus. Try grilled octopus in red kidney bean stew. Ikaria is, not surprisingly, famous for its village parties and festivals, or panigyria. Wherever you visit in Greece, try local cheeses. Many are labelled PDO protected designation of origin , indicating that the cheese has been produced in a traditional way. Try kefalograviera, batsos, kefalotyri, ladotyri from Lesvos and metsovone. EasyJet flies from Gatwick to Santorini. From there, fly or take the ferry to Ikaria. On Rhodes, the breathtaking medieval city of Rhodes Old Town – all cobbled alleyways, shadowy spaces and half-buried ruins – comes into its own at night. The dazzling white village of Lindos, on the west coast of Rhodes, is home to the sumptuous Melenos Lindos. Even more romantic is the ravishing island of Symi, a ferry ride north-east. A harmonious array of neoclassical mansions, painted matching ochre and terracotta shades, rise to all sides of its amphitheatre-like harbour; many can be rented. The exquisite Old Markets is a converted mansion overlooking the bay. Symi is also known for innovative restaurants, its latest gem being Muses in the main village square. Further north, Patmos was where St John had his visions. In the village of Hora, Archontariki offers four spacious suites,

with gardens and courtyard. For northern Greece, the mainland port of Igoumenitsa can be reached by ferry within an hour from Corfu. Nearest to Corfu is the Epiros region, whose capital, Ioannina, is built on the banks of Lake Pamvotis, where there is an inhabited island. Visit the museum of Ali Pasha, seven monasteries, and the Byzantine castle of Ioannina. The six monasteries here make a viable day trip from Corfu, with an early start. To visit Albania, ferries go from Corfu to Saranda, and you can take a tour that visits the archaeological site at Butrint greeka. Calm, because there is no mass tourism, no stag nights, not many people at all. Repetitive, because we found our favourite taverna Vontza , beach sandy Vraki , swimming spot a stroll down from our villa, Faye , view Erimitis cliffs at sunset , long-distance drive Loggos harbour, five miles and dessert tiny Caramac-flavoured lollies from the bakery at the edge of Gaios harbour Car hire and activities on Paxos can be arranged through travelalacarte. Epiros, a mountainous region in north-west Greece, bordered by Albania and the Ionian sea, is the playground of retirees who have returned home â€” to an undeveloped, rocky, dramatic landscape.

### 3: Sky Finds 'Handbook' For EU-Bound Migrants

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Vasiliki We did return within a week to the island of Lefkada though, this time determined to reach Porto-Katsiki beach that was voted as one of the best in Greece it was number two behind Myrtos Beach in Kefalonia. Once again we took the same road from the town of Lefkada going south through many hills, and we passed the Kathisma beach following the map towards the southern end of the island. We found ourselves on a very narrow road that continued on a steep incline for what seemed to be an eternity. In fact I began wondering if we would ever find the other side of the tall mountain we were climbing, and whether or not we would ever reach Porto-Katsiki within the day! The southern end of the island is more sparsely populated than the north, and since I was running low on gas I really began worrying about getting stuck in this high altitude. In fact, there is not a single gas station in west side of the island after Kathisma until one reaches Vasiliki, and to reach Vasiliki from Porto-Katsiki one must drive back north to Komili! The trip was becoming an adventure that I had not planned for, and things got even worst as we passed Athanio because my gas gage seemed to dip well below the red "E" and the road became narrower to the point where it barely fit our little car by itself in many places, and it often seemed to disappear into a steep cliff. Even though I fancy myself a skilled driver my palms were sweating every time I found my car precariously squeezing between the road gaps which were swallowed by a meter cliff below and the oncoming traffic on the other side, all within a space that seemed barely enough for one car. We did manage to reach Porto-Katsiki on fumes and I was very surprised to see what seemed like a million cars parked on hastily plowed parking lots. Porto-Katsiki The scenery at Porto-Katsiki is truly spectacular. The beach is carved out of the soft limestone mountain, and it is framed by huge vertical cliffs that seem to hang ominously above the fragile white beach and the turquoise water. The only way to reach the sand is through the very steep and narrow concrete steps that the locals have cast upon the cliff. We could not help but marvel at the beauty of the scenery as we sat under the shade on one of the restaurants to have lunch. The descent to the beach through the narrow steps was rough with our little girls aged 5 and 2 and all our beach gear, and we had a hard time finding a place to set our umbrellas in the narrow strip of white sand that was literally packed with bathers. We had a nice day at the beach, but we learned a few things from our visit: Porto-Katsiki is still a wild place and one of the best looking beaches in Greece, but it has been discovered by too many people. It is not the best place to be with small children since there are no bathrooms anywhere in the area, and the densely populated beach does not allow for free play, and it is definitely not a good beach to visit during the month of August when the entire country of Greece is on vacation. We loved Porto-Katsiki for its raw beauty and we will return to it, but next time we will make sure that we visit during an "off" month like May, June, or September. Next time we will have a full tank of gas, and we will make sure that everyone has been fed and visited a restroom before we reach the beach. Porto Katsiki is justly included among the best beaches of Greece. The East Coast of Lefkada The east coast of lefkada is much more developed than the rest of the island. The effects of packaged tourism have transformed Nydri to a busy port that has lost all its character when it transformed itself to the generic tourist town it is today. Nydri is the base for many small boats that offer daily cruises around the island. Amazingly enough there are no good beaches to swim near Nidri. Asking around we found Desimi and Mikros Gialos a few kilometers south, but these beaches are nothing to write home about compared with the beaches of western Lefkas. The road on the east coast is much better than the west coast, so if you are heading south this is the fastest route to take.

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