



MICHAEL KORS COLLECTION

AFTER THE LOCKDOWN

Plan now, go later: the 30 best places to stay in Greece

From pine-clad islands with Mamma Mia-connections to rustic hideaways and villas leading to hidden coves, we've found the perfect Greek breaks



Oia village on Santorini
GETTY IMAGES

By Sue Bryant | Monday April 20 2020, 12:01am, The Times

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1. Adults-only Santorini

Skyfall Suites is not Bond-themed, don't worry. This is a sleek, adults-only haven, five minutes' stroll from the centre of hilltop Pyrgos Kallistis in the middle of the volcanic isle. The brilliant-white interiors are jazzed up with sprinkles of bright pink, yellow and aqua, and most rooms come with a plunge pool or private hot tub. Get dressed for charming Pyrgos Kallistis, the island's former capital, which is more low-key and less visited than glitzy Thira. Eat at the local favourite Cava Alta — the seafood paella and crispy sea bass go perfectly with a glass or two of island wine.

Details Seven nights' B&B from £1,403pp, including flights (tui.co.uk)

2. Mykonos retreat

You know the island for its nights out, but it does a good line in nights in too — especially if you're staying in the dazzlingly white, 31-room boutique hotel Grace, which is close, but not too close, to lively Mykonos Town. Set on a hillside above Agios Stefanos beach, it has a gorgeous pool, a cocktail bar (with signature tipple) and yoga classes. There's a Mediterranean restaurant and, in recognition of the island's fabled party scene, you can get an à la carte breakfast all day long. **Details** Seven nights' B&B from £1,399pp, including flights (abercrombiekent.co.uk)

3. Crete's wild side

In the forested foothills of western Crete's White Mountains, perched above the Topolia gorge, is the Milia Traditional Settlement of 14 stone houses. Once used as a hideout by resistance workers during the Second World War, it was restored in the 1980s to create a rustic eco-hideaway. Cretan specialities, mostly grown on site and all organic, are served in the communal dining room. You make your own entertainment here: hiking, often with vultures wheeling overhead; mountain biking; listening to birdsong; and cooling off in mountain streams. **Details** Seven nights' B&B from £264pp (i-escape.com). Fly to Chania with Easyjet



Astra Suites in Imerovigli village

4. Peak Santorini

Imerovigli village is at Santorini's highest point, so seriously spectacular views over the caldera and across the aquamarine Aegean are a given. Astra Suites, in the village, isn't bad looking either. The hotel is decorated in a Farrow & Ball harmony of whites, with splashes of grey, gold and turquoise. You are 20 minutes' walk from Thira, the capital — although you may be too busy enjoying your private plunge pool, loafing in the spa or guzzling chilled Santorini whites and fresh seafood in the restaurant to bother.

Details Seven nights' B&B from £2,080pp (astrasuites.com). Fly to Santorini with British Airways





Anemomilos boutique hotel

5. Clifftop perch in the Cyclades

Tiny, rugged Folegandros lies on the southern fringes of the Cyclades, 90 minutes by ferry from Santorini. Its pretty capital, Hora, is draped across a cliff, and the boutique hotel of Anemomilos, a short walk from the village centre, sits at the top. Many of the 17 simple but tasteful studio rooms, in the cool blues and whites that we associate with Greece, have balconies with Aegean views. Enjoy a sundowner at the bougainvillea-framed poolside bar, and follow that with dishes such as fresh sea bass with a herby Greek salad at the restaurant. Wander into Hora to try specialities such as matsata (rabbit tagliatelle) or rakomelo (grappa with honey) in one of the local tavernas.

Details Seven nights' B&B from £887pp (i-escape.com). Fly to Santorini with Easyjet



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6. Laze on Antiparos

Favoured by more low-key celebrities (Tom Hanks has a home here) for its laid-back anonymity and sedate pace, Antiparos is the antidote to its livelier sister, Paros, just ten minutes eastwards across the water. You could lose a day having a long lunch in one of the waterside tavernas on Antiparos; several, by hiring a boat to explore the pleasingly rocky shore. Your base is Villa Erato, the minimalist exterior of which belies its sumptuous decor. Cool terraces overlook that crinkly shoreline, and the large pool is made for floating, gazing or aperitivo-sipping. There's tennis and basketball near by too, if you must.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for 14 from £14,417 (brightbluevillas.com). Fly to Athens with BA

7. Eco-friendly Serifos

You won't find thumping nightlife or designer shopping on Serifos, in the western Cyclades, two hours from Athens by high-speed ferry. Here, there's only sandy beaches and the odd whitewashed hamlet. The Greek architect George Zafiriou has created a cool eco-haven on Vagia Beach, converting 13 stone

miners' cottages into Coco-Mat apartments, some with fully equipped kitchens. Zafiriou has made a virtue of natural materials, using stone, wood, cotton, silk and coconut fibre to create serene spaces that blend with their surroundings. Ease into the day at the alfresco seaside lounge bar with creamy Greek yoghurt, fruit and island honey before flopping on your daybed, waves lapping at your toes on the pebbly shore.

Details Seven nights' B&B from £972pp (designhotels.com). Fly to Athens with BA



A room at Kensho Ornos

8. Zen out on Mykonos

The Japanese name — Kensho — hints at the sort of serenity you can expect at this new boutique hotel on Mykonos, basking on a hillside overlooking Ornos Bay on the southwest of the island. Soothing natural textures of stone, slate, wood and wicker offset the blazing white Cycladian backdrop. The whole look is “wish I could recreate this at home” chic. The deluxe rooms come with those Instagram scene-stealers, hanging basket chairs, as well as private plunge pools. There's a bar, a spa and a concierge service offering flights of fancy (by helicopter) to tackle activities around the island.

Details Seven nights' B&B from £1,233pp (kenshomykonos.com). Fly to Mykonos with Jet2



9. Skopelos singalong

The winner takes it all in this hillside hideaway on pine-clad Skopelos, where the first *Mamma Mia!* film was shot. High-beamed ceilings and a soothing palette of white and sky blue characterise the house, which sleeps six and overlooks Skopelos Town, with views over the water to Alonissos. Take it all in through the big blue-framed windows, or from the terrace or L-shaped pool. Hardcore Abba fans will want to make the pilgrimage to Kastri, in the north, and Agios Ioannis, the tiny clifftop church where the film's wedding scene was shot.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for six from £1,016pp, including flights to Skiathos and car hire (ionianislandholidays.com)

10. Cultured Hydra

The shimmering light and car-free tranquillity of Hydra, one of the Saronic islands, has long attracted artists and musicians — Leonard Cohen bought a house here in the Sixties. It's not hard to see what captivated them. You'll get a sense of it at the seven-room Cotommatae 1810 boutique hotel, a former sea captain's mansion in the centre of the port town. Its meticulously restored 19th-century interiors and courtyard garden will transport you to another time. The veranda, with its potted basil and lemon trees, has views over the rooftops towards the harbour 200 yards away, where you'll find galleries and restaurants. Athens is an easy 90-minute hop on the hydrofoil.

Details Seven nights' B&B from £565pp (cotommatae.gr). Fly to Athens with BA

11. Swish Corfu stay

The stone-built villa Castalia, which sleeps 12, is perfect for a get-together (when such things are back on the agenda). It's in the seaside village of Kassiopi, with tavernas and bars a stroll away, along with pebbly Pipitou beach, where you have your own mooring. Castalia has an infinity pool, terraces for lounging, an outdoor pizza oven, home cinema, Jacuzzi, gym, piano and organic vegetable garden. How's that for appealing to a diversity of interests? A private chef is available to hire (food extra), which will definitely be on our menu after all this lockdown cooking.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for 12 from £17,203 (cgvillas.com). Fly to Corfu with BA or Easyjet



Edwards on Castalia

12. Affordable Cephalonia

Fiskardo has to be one of the loveliest ports in the Greek islands, with its colourful Venetian houses following the curving bay at the northern end of Cephalonia. Yachties add a cosmopolitan buzz to the town when they moor up in summer. You're bunking up on land — at the Waterfront Apartments, where you can fling open your shutters in the morning for views of the harbour. The beach is two minutes' walk away, as are the quayside tavernas.

Details Seven nights' room only from £539pp, including flights

(ionianislandholidays.com)



Villa Grigoria on Lefkada

13. Lounging on Lefkada

Mountainous Lefkada is one of the quieter Ionian islands. Wild olive trees pattern the interior, while the coast is ringed by sandy beaches. Villa Grigoria, in the southwest of the island, has uninterrupted views across the Ionian to Cephalonia and Ithaca. The stone-built villa sits in eight acres of olive groves and vineyards, and the gardens are planted with lemon trees and herbs — ideal for crafting those evening gin and tonics. You're a ten-minute drive from the tavernas and shops of Vassiliki, but a daily delivery of fresh croissants can be arranged, so there's no need to rise early to queue at the bakery.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for ten from £2,230 (ionian-villas.co.uk). Fly to Preveza with BA

14. Stretch out on Ithaca

Yogis should pack their kit for this break on the Ionian island of Ithaca. Levendi's is a seven-acre organic olive farm with four self-catering villas and serious eco-vibes. There's an alfresco yoga pavilion overlooking pine trees, hammocks are strung up between the trunks, and there's an outdoor cinema. A stone path winds down the hillside to a communal outdoor cooking and dining area with an organic café and a saltwater infinity pool. Below all of that is a quiet pebbly beach.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for four from £3,362, including car hire (oneoffplaces.co.uk). Fly to Cephalonia with Tui



Kaladi beach on Kythira island
ALAMY

15. Tranquil Kythira

Pretty Kythira, off the southernmost tip of the Peloponnese, is often overlooked by the British, but it's popular with Australians — you may catch the odd incongruous “g'day, mate” on Kapsali town beach. The reason? In the early 20th century thousands of locals migrated down under, and many return each summer to visit the hilly island, which is criss-crossed with wooded gorges and fringed by pristine sand beaches. Stay at the family-run Porto Delfino hotel, with its infinity pool and a breezy terrace overlooking the sea. Head up the hill for sunset aperitifs at Chora, and stroll back down as the Venetian castle puts on a floodlit show.

Details Seven nights' B&B from £958pp, including flights to Athens (cachet-travel.co.uk)



16. Kid-friendly Rhodes

Villa Seashore is aptly named — its expansive infinity pool seems to merge with the equally inviting Aegean beyond. It sits on the sandy sweep of family-friendly Kolymia beach, on the island's east coast. Medieval Rhodes Town and ancient Lindos are close enough for day trips, and guests have use of the facilities at the Mikri Poli resort next door, which has a spa and a small waterpark. Sizzle your own souvlaki at the built-in barbecue by the pool and enjoy long, lazy lunches on the terrace.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for four from £4,676, including flights

(jamesvillas.co.uk)

17. Carefree Kos

Sitting on Kos's sweeping Kefalos beach, Ikos Aria is a sleek, breezy-feeling hotel decked out with soft drapes, rattan chairs and driftwood furniture. The bedrooms have enormous panoramic windows looking out on to the neighbouring islet, Kastri, and along the coast. You'll be well fed too — the menus at three of the eight restaurants have been put together by Michelin-starred chefs, and the all-inclusive rate even allows for dinner in some local tavernas. You should be sufficiently fuelled to undertake the 100-yard swim to Kastri to ring the bell in its tiny blue-and-white church.

Details Seven nights' all-inclusive from £1,668pp, including flights

(jet2holidays.com)

18. Skiathos in style

The ultra-modern Villa Kristi stands on a pine-dotted hillside a ten-minute walk from Skiathos Town. Its light-filled rooms are painted brightest white and filled with flashes of aquamarine and tasteful objets d'art. You'll probably have more fun admiring the sky from your hammock in the grassy garden or staring at the view through the olive trees to the bay from the infinity pool. Yes, there's noisier stimulation, including a games room and home cinema, but really you want to be outside in the vast dining space, presiding over the Weber barbecue. Don't fancy the tongs? The long, skinny strip of Megali Ammos beach, with its tempting tavernas, is a three-minute walk away.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for ten from £5,508 (myskiathosvillas.com).

Fly to Skiathos with Jet2



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19. Elegant Spetses

A two-hour ferry crossing from Athens, off the tip of the Peloponnese, sleepy Spetses is known for its rolling hills, pine-backed beaches and attractive town. Here in the quiet district of Agios Mamas, a five-minute walk from the harbour, is Mare Monte Suites. It occupies a stone house built for a local aristocrat in 1762, and has been revamped to a princely standard, with the six suites and studios offering comfortable, elegant accommodation with high wooden ceilings, flagstone floors, whitewashed walls and chandeliers. The shady patio garden has a hot tub and barbecue as well as hammocks strung between the trees. Best of all? Traditional pies are served for breakfast.

Details Seven nights' B&B from £809pp (maremonteboutiquehotel.com). Fly to Athens with BA

20. The Athens Riviera

Vouliagmeni is the leafy seaside suburb of Athens where you'll find swanky beach clubs lined up along the shore. It's the perfect place to cool off after a visit to the acropolis, and the contemporary Semtex Hotel is the ideal spot

to the capital, and the contemporary Somewhere Boutique Hotel is the ideal spot to park yourself. It's right opposite the beach, has a pool in its flower-filled garden, a spa and Lutetia, a smart restaurant serving Greek classics with a twist. Splurge on the rooftop penthouse and you get a spacious, shaded terrace and outdoor Jacuzzi too.

Details Three nights' room only from £349pp ([somewhere-hotels.com/vouliagmeni](https://www.somewhere-hotels.com/vouliagmeni)). Fly to Athens with BA



A room at St Nicolas Bay Resort Hotel on Crete

21. Hilltop hideaway

Agios Nikolaos, a fun-loving harbour town on the north coast of Crete, fizzles with holidaymakers parading along the waterfront and packing the bars and restaurants. Near enough to dip into the throngs, but far enough away to forget them the morning after, St Nicolas Bay Resort Hotel and Villas is a serene hilltop base for a laid-back family break. It's surrounded by citrus groves and overlooks sparkling Mirabello Bay. There are five restaurants, two pools and a spa, as well as a kids' club, and it has its own private beach. The main building and villas are a mixture of whitewash and stone, and the smartest suites have private pools overlooking the bay.

Details Seven nights' half-board from £1,773pp, including flights ([kuoni.co.uk](https://www.kuoni.co.uk))

22. High-end Halkidiki

Halkidiki's vast Sani Resort in northeastern Greece covers 1,000 acres of pine forest as well as olive groves, lakes and lashings of sandy beachfront. The most exclusive spots here are the Sani Asterias Suites, which are strung along a beach, each with a bougainvillea-brightened garden and some with a private plunge pool. Yes, you can flop, but there's masses to do, from learning to sail to taking dance lessons, and there are (sigh of relief) kids' clubs. Book the dine-around option and you can graze across 22 restaurants, from Greek to Asian, as well as at the Water restaurant — exclusive to the suites — located in a romantic corner overlooking the marina, with a menu overseen by a Michelin-starred chef.

Details Seven nights' B&B from £1,351pp, including flights to Thessaloniki ([cypion.co.uk](https://www.cypion.co.uk))





Villa Blueros on Syros

23. Syros house party

The simplistic design of Villa Blueros — on tiny, rocky Syros in the Cyclades — mirrors its stark hillside setting. But inside, the eight-bedroom hideaway (perfect for a group of friends) is wonderfully inviting, with a huge infinity pool that makes the most of the sweeping sea views. Nip down the narrow stone-laid path for a pre-breakfast dip from the rocks, barbecue on the shady terrace and allow time to explore the island's brightly painted capital, Ermoupoli, where Venetian mansions are stacked up the hillside above the port. The SeaJets service from Athens takes two hours.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for 16 from £12,232 (myprivatevillas.com). Fly to Athens with BA

24. Village on wild Mani

The wild and arid Mani peninsula, on Greece's southern tip, was so beloved of the writer Patrick Leigh Fermor that he moved there permanently. With its stark Tower Houses punctuating the landscape, it feels quite different from the rest of Greece. The new 100 Rizes seaside resort, on a hillside above the coastal town of Gytheio, has been sensitively designed to resemble a Mani village, with the 30 rooms in tall stone buildings decorated simply. You'll have uninterrupted views over the pool to pebbly Kamares beach. The ethos here is to take things gently, but nearby distractions include the flooded cave of Diros and the fortress village of Monemvasia.

Details Seven nights' B&B from £898pp, including flights (blueseaholidays.co.uk)



25. Mountain retreat

The mountainous far northwest of Greece is a place of dense forest and sheer-sided gorges, dotted with 46 tiny stone villages — the Zagorochoria — connected by old roads and Venetian bridges. You'll feel fully immersed in it at the 26-room Aristi Mountain Resort, the dream of a local visionary, Vasilis Iosifidis.

Sustainably built, it's the base for experiences ranging from photography classes to canyoning, riding, cookery and white-water rafting. Each day is deliciously rounded off with dishes such as wild boar and feta pies, mountain trout and organic vegetables in the Salvia restaurant. In winter you can cosy up with an ouzo in front of the fire.

Details Seven nights' B&B from £475pp (aristi.eu). Fly to Preveza with BA

26. Villa with views

There are views and then there are views. From the rooftop pool of Secret Villa, on Greece's west coast, you'll marvel at the Ionian Sea below, Mourtemeno island before you and Corfu on the horizon. Inside it's a tasteful blend of pale wood, whitewashed or stone walls and macrame hangings that feel more chic hotel suite than villa. The busy little town of Sivota is a 20-minute stroll away, and a beach (with a little-visited cove) is five minutes' walk down the hill.

Details Seven nights' self-catering for two from £1,680pp, including flights and car hire (gicthevillacollection.com)



MarBella Elix

27. Perdika seaside hotel

Opening later this year, the new MarBella Elix, near Perdika on Greece's northwest coast, promises to be the ultimate sunshine bolt hole for after the lockdown. On a wooded hillside, overlooking Karavostasi beach, the hotel has 146 rooms, the best of which have swim-up infinity pools. Untangle your WFH spine with yoga, Pilates and treatments in the Elixir spa, and pack energetic tweens off into the forest with the adventure club for activities such as mountain biking, hiking and treasure hunts.

Details Seven nights' half-board from £1,066pp, including flights (olympicholidays.com)



Kinsterna in Laconia

28. Grand Peloponnese

Kinsterna, a grand old manor house, has features that date from the Venetian and Ottoman periods, and a lovely interior courtyard. Set among vineyards, herb gardens and cypress trees, it's a restful base from which to explore the nearby fortress town of Monemvasia, on a small island connected to the mainland by a causeway, a ten-minute drive away. (While you're there, pick up some local honey and tsipouro brandy.) Kinsterna has a sustainable ethos using ingredients grown in its gardens and offering poolside cocktails inspired by local products. Melon mojito, anyone? Experiences include learning to bake with the village baker, traditional weaving and horse riding.

Details Seven nights' B&B from £1,298pp, including flights to Kalamata

(kirkerholidays.com)

29. Nafplion mansion

Romantic Nafplion, west of Athens, is a popular spot for city dwellers escaping for the weekend. The original capital of modern Greece is a busy port town with inviting squares and streets lined with graceful Venetian mansions and tempting boutiques. Overlooking it is hilltop Palamidi fortress, which is reached by 999 rock-cut steps. A slog, yes, but the view is sensational. Back in town, you're staying in the neoclassical, salmon-pink Ippoliti Hotel, an elegant 19th-century mansion in a peaceful corner of the pedestrianised centre offering 19 rooms. Ask for one with a view of the Bourtzi fortress, which hugs a rocky islet in the bay.

Details Seven nights' B&B from £1,108pp, including flights (sunvil.co.uk)





Parga city in Epirus
ALAMY

30. Picturesque Parga

With its ice-cream-coloured houses framed by a Venetian castle and an island-speckled turquoise bay, Parga in northwest Greece is ridiculously pretty. Yes, the waterfront gets busy in summer, the tavernas and bars bubbling with life, but doesn't that sound appealing right now? On the hillside, minutes from the centre, is the 19-room Acrothea Hotel, which overlooks the town and bay. Make sure you book a sea-facing room with a balcony. Sandy beaches are a short hop away, as are the wooded landscapes of mountainous Epirus.

Details Seven nights' B&B from £793pp, including flights (sunvil.co.uk)

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