

# The Rhodes less travelled

Meera Dattani explores the beaches and beyond of this Greek favourite

A pair of padded shorts would have been welcome. Even so, cycling along the cobbled streets and grassy paths of Rhodes Old Town is nothing but a delight. In fact, it's so pretty you wonder why it's not already popular for city breaks.

Rhodes, the largest of southern Greece's Dodecanese isles, has long been a favourite with beach lovers, but its appeal stretches way beyond the shoreline. There are ancient amphitheatres, rural villages, medieval old towns and walking trails, while a hotchpotch of minarets, synagogues, Byzantine churches and monasteries illustrate a 4,000-year-old

history of rule by ancient Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Ottomans, Italians and the Knights of St John.

British Airways' new flights to the island will boost its appeal. Since April, the airline has offered twice-weekly flights from Gatwick to Rhodes' Diagoras International airport, joining the services by the likes of easyJet, Ryanair, Thomson, Monarch, Jet2.com and Thomas Cook.

Lynne Embleton, British Airways' director of strategy and managing director at Gatwick, says: "Rhodes is a seasonal route, and flies until October. We hope it will become a highly popular and regular part of the BA

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Rhodes is a seasonal route. We hope it will become a regular part of the British Airways summer schedule

summer schedule in the future.”

The service has been warmly welcomed by Rhodes tourism officials, who already oversee two million visitors – including half a million cruise ship tourists – with UK travellers making up a third of repeat visitors.

## ► RHODES TOWN

Rhodes Town is a real highlight. Europe's largest walled city, and a Unesco World Heritage Site at that, boasts beautifully preserved buildings, tiny squares, tucked-away restaurants and historic areas such as the Jewish Quarter.

Away from the touristy main street Aristotelous lie narrow alleys, a medieval moat and the Archaeological Museum in the former Hospital of the Knights. From Mandraki Harbour, where the Colossus of Rhodes once stood, the town rises up towards the historic Street of the Knights leading to the Palace of the Grand Master at the highest point.

The city isn't all medieval →

## FAST FACT

Classic Collection has seen a 17% rise in bookings to the Greek islands compared with last year



Attraction World's Symi Island Tour takes guests from Rhodes harbour to explore the smaller island's narrow streets and pretty seafront tavernas, with a guided walk of Panormitis monastery to see Byzantine frescoes and a 12th-century church. Prices from £35 adults/£19 for under-11s. [attractionworld.com](http://attractionworld.com)

The Butterflies and Chalki Island tour from Do Something Different combines a visit to the Valley of Butterflies with a boat trip to Chalki, including three hours' free time to explore its harbour and picture-postcard villages. Prices from £34 adults/£17 for under-11s. [dosomethingdifferent.com](http://dosomethingdifferent.com)

→ marvel. The ancient stadium and temple of Apollo, west of the old town walls, provide more wow factor, while the Aquarium, boat trips and underwater safari experiences are great for families.

The New Town's market, Kyprou Square's shopping streets and independent shops of the old town are good places to stock up on Rhodian honey, olive oil and European fashion brands.

Accommodation is mostly small-scale, with several heritage hotels. These include Saint Michel, housed in a 700-year-old building, eco-friendly Spirit of the Knights Boutique Hotel, and S. Nikolis Hotel & Apartments. Modern options include Rodos Park Suites & Spa, a member of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World collection.

▶ EAST COAST

The town is a real charmer by day and even more so by night, but

it's the beaches, particularly along the east coast, that lure so many to Rhodes. Understandably, when you see wide sandy Tsambika beach overlooked by a tiny chapel, the long sandy stretch of Afandou Bay or Kalithea Springs, an Italian-style spa complex above a pretty beach. Accommodation is plentiful: suggest Aldemar Paradise Village, Elysium Resort & Spa and Rodos Palladium Beach Resort Hotel.

Farther south lies Faliraki, whose reputation precedes it but which has cleaned up somewhat in recent years. Not for everyone, it remains the island's liveliest resort, lined with bars, restaurants, shops and clubs, and home to a popular waterpark. Just south of the town is Anthony Quinn beach, one of Rhodes' most beautiful bays.

Halfway down the east coast, and rivaling Rhodes town in the beauty stakes, is hilltop Lindos,

with its whitewashed houses and narrow streets lined with 17th-century mansions, tavernas, cafes and art shops. Reasonably fit travellers can climb up to the Acropolis, where they're rewarded with beautiful views over St Paul's Bay, and get up close to ancient monuments such as the Temple of Athena Lindia.

For clients staying in Lindos town, it's hard to beat Melenos Lindos, another member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World. Set within a 3,000-year-old acropolis, it took 14 years to create the layered buildings which include 12 Ottoman Iznik-style suites in the style of old Lindos mansions, and a rooftop seaview restaurant.

For a beach location, suggest the five-star, adult-only Lindos Blu at Vlycha beach, north of Lindos, the great-value three-star Lindos Sun, the AquaGrand Resort in Psaltos, south of Lindos, or the beaches of Pefkos.



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▶ WEST COAST

Rhodes' west coast isn't short on sights or accommodation either. Ixia Beach, from where Turkey's southern coast can be seen silhouetted at sunset, is handily located between the airport and Rhodes town.

The beachfront has a string of hotels, including Greece's first large resort hotel, Rodos Palace. It's undergone numerous revamps since opening in 1974 and additions include refurbished Garden & Pool VIP Suites. Big on facilities, the property has a 30-acre garden, two outdoor pools, indoor pool, kids' club, tennis courts, watersports and spa. Seven restaurants and five bars include 12 Nissia gourmet restaurant and Castellania restaurant, the latter exclusive to guests in the hotel's Executive Wing, Suites and Garden Suites.

Also on Ixia Beach is the good-value four-star

RIGHT: Lindos  
BELOW: Temple of Apollo  
OPPOSITE: Rodos Park Suites & Spa; Mandraki harbour



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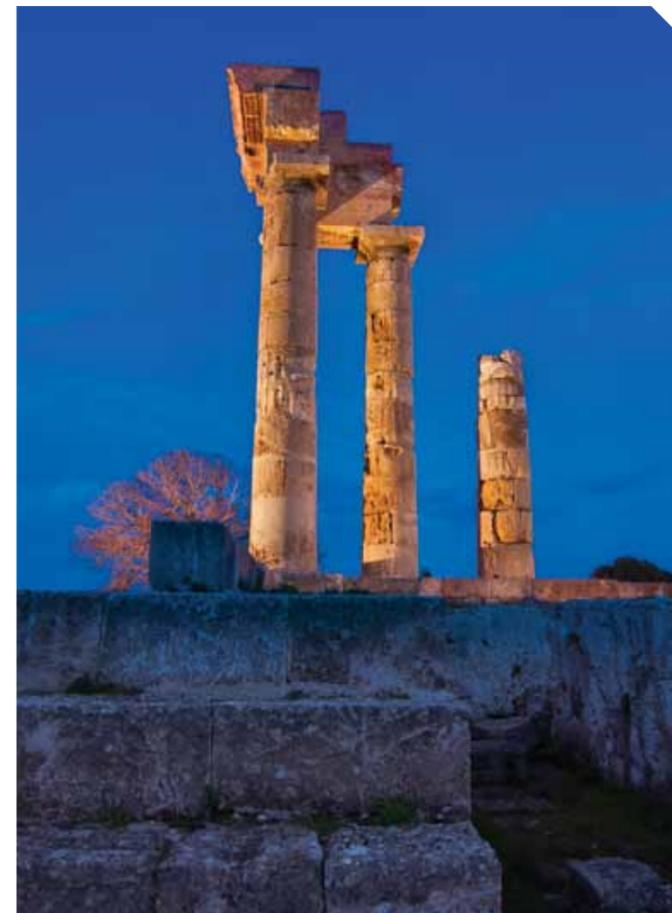
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**ADVICE FROM THE EXPERTS**



**Photis Lambrianides,** commercial director, Olympic Holidays: "Rhodes is as popular as ever this season. I

would suggest hiring a car for at least two or three days to explore; distances are manageable so you can do a good tour of the island in a day. I'd also recommend a ferry trip to Symi, a charming little island which embodies everything one would expect to see in a Greek island."



**Chris Peristani,** groups manager, Cydon Holidays: "The best time for hiking and trekking is from April until the end of June,

and September until mid-October. If you're looking for local culture, the must-sees are The Valley of the Butterflies, the ancient city of Kamiros, the forest at Profitis Ilias and the Seven Springs."



**Michael Austin,** product and commercial executive, Cosmos Holidays: "My favourite attraction is Lindos Village, where

the Old Town is a maze of little alleys with medieval walls and architecture influenced by Roman, Turkish, Italian and Byzantine rulers. Plus there's the Archaeological Museum of Rhodes, and the water park in Faliraki."

→ Mediterranean Hotel and the renovated five-star Sheraton, complete with landscaped gardens, private beach, three pools, kids' club, signature Italian restaurant and seaview Lounge Bar.

This coastline rewards road-trippers. A winding road leads to the conifer and pine tree-covered hill of Filerimos, site of an old citadel, necropolis and remains of a Byzantine fortress with views over the bay and Lalysos town.

A short drive inland is Petaloudes or Valley of the Butterflies, with walking trails, a small river, waterfalls and butterflies galore at the end of May. A cafe-restaurant in the shaded valley

provides a lovely lunch spot, while tavernas abound in nearby Psinthos village.

To the south is the amphitheatre of Kamiros which, along with Lindos and Lalysos, was one of the island's former ancient capitals. Heading even farther in that direction is Monolithos Castle, built by the Knights; it's now in ruins but offers fabulous views after a steepish walk.

**THE INTERIOR**

Rhodes may have 35 Blue Flag beaches, but its interior, especially this greener, fertile western side, is

equally appealing. Protected by Natura 2000, the EU protected-habitat policy, it offers trekking, cycling, mountain biking and horse riding through pristine forests and wooded hillsides, passing tiny chapels with frescoes.

Serious walkers can tackle the 1,215m-high Ataviros mountain, while wine lovers head to mountain village Embonas, the heart of Rhodes' wine industry, and home to renowned wine cellars and gourmet restaurants.

Southern Rhodes gets less of a look-in but Prasonisi beach, at its southernmost tip, is a sight, where crashing sea currents lure windsurfers and kite surfers to ride the waves. There are 4x4 tours on off-road trails, which offer an alternative way to explore Rhodes, while day trips to the smaller isles of Symi, Halki and Tilos are easy to arrange.

There's no doubt the beaches are great – but in Rhodes, so is everything else.



RHODES TOURISM PROMOTIONAL ORGANISATION



**Planet Holidays** offers seven nights' B&B at boutique Melenos Lindos in a double suite with sea view from £1,037 including BA flights from Gatwick. Price based on travel on October 11-18. [planet-holidays.co.uk](http://planet-holidays.co.uk)

**Olympic Holidays** offers seven nights' half-board at Rodos Palace Hotel, staying in a garden view suite, from £579. The price includes Thomas Cook flights from Stansted departing September 2. [olympic-holidays.com](http://olympic-holidays.com)

**Macs Adventure's** self-guided Cycling the Island of Rhodes is a seven-night trip which runs April to October, staying in wine village Embonas and Rhodes Town. Prices start from £495 including accommodation, breakfast, baggage and airport transfers, maps and route notes, plus 24/7 emergency assistance. Flights extra. [macsadventure.com](http://macsadventure.com)



**BELOW:** Sheraton Rhodes Resort  
**OPPOSITE:** Prasonisi beach

**News in brief**

**GREECE AND CYPRUS**

**Classic Collection Holidays** has begun featuring modern and traditional villas in the Cypriot villages of Pomos, Milios and Latchi, with prices starting at £458 for a week in the three-bedroom Clarissa & Carmel Villas in Pomos. Six hotels and several villas in Skiathos and Skopelos are also new to the programme this year, including Skiathos Princess, Golden King Luxury Villas, the Village Suite Hotel in Skopelos Town, and Bay View Villas in Metohi. [classic-collection.co.uk](http://classic-collection.co.uk)

**Cosmos Holidays** has added weekly flights from Birmingham to Kefalonia this summer, to be repeated in 2016, as well as introducing more twin-centre options and resorts in Portaria, a traditional town on the slopes of Mount Pelion in Central Greece. [cosmos.co.uk](http://cosmos.co.uk)

**Sani Resort** in Halkidiki is tempting budding sailors to improve their skills with its Optimist Sailing Academy, offering intensive tuition from the Nautical Club of Thessaloniki. The course includes 10 hours of classes, with morning sessions for six to 14-year-olds and late-afternoon lessons for those aged 14 to 18. Courses cost £250 or £225 for a family rate, available until the end of September. [saniresort.gr](http://saniresort.gr)

**Holiday Extras** is offering a free insurance upgrade for customers travelling to Greece, nearly doubling their cover for cash to help clients wishing to carry extra euros with

them. Policies which covered up to £300 will now protect up to £500, while the £200 and £250 limits have been increased to £350 and £400 respectively, all per person. Holiday Extras is also offering free FairFX currency cards which can be pre-loaded with money in the UK, as a back-up to cash. And for customers with an early flight departure or arrival – British Airways' Saturday flight lands in Gatwick at 00.20 – Holiday Extras offers airport hotel packages from £39.50, and a room and 15 days' parking from £90 – only 7% more than the parking alone. [holidayextras.co.uk](http://holidayextras.co.uk)

**Simply Luxury by Travel 2** has begun featuring Ikos Resorts in Halkidiki (pictured) and Olympic Lagoon Paphos Resort in Cyprus in its 2015 Short Haul brochure. It reports good customer feedback from early bookings to the two properties. [travel2.com](http://travel2.com)

**Cyprus Tourism Organisation** has rolled out its Cypriot breakfast initiative, piloted in Paphos and Polis last year, across the country. In partnership with the Travel Foundation and Cyprus Sustainable Tourism Initiative, participating hotels will serve a traditional Cypriot breakfast using ingredients sourced only on the island to support local communities. [cyprusbreakfast.eu](http://cyprusbreakfast.eu)



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\*Price based on 2 adults sharing a double at the Colossus Studios, Rhodes on self-catering departing Manchester on 22nd July for 7 nights. †Price based on return flight to Zante departing London Gatwick on 1st Oct 2015. Subject to availability prices correct at time of print 14th July.