

TRAVEL SECTION OF THE YEAR

The Daily Telegraph

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TRAVEL

Make Rhodes your holiday playground

Glorious beaches, natural beauty, rich history, great food... this popular Greek island has it all, says Rebecca Hall

The island of Rhodes, that sun-drenched jewel of the Dodecanese, boasts around 300 days of sunshine a year – and from the magnificent architecture of the Old Town to the harbour where the Colossus of Rhodes once stood, the island captivates the senses as soon as you step off the plane. After the devastating fires of 2023, this Greek giant has risen like a phoenix from the ashes, more vibrant and welcoming than ever.

Since the birth of the package holiday in the 1960s, Britons have flocked to this corner of the Aegean to enjoy its golden beaches, crystal-clear

waters and a history dating back to the 1300s when the Knights of St John began their 200-year rule. As you wander through the streets of Rhodes Old Town, you are transported back to medieval times – surrounded by the grandeur of the Palace of the Grand Master and the labyrinthine, cobbled, bougainvillea-clad alleyways.

It is easy to see why Rhodes has always held a special place in British hearts – and now there is a further incentive to visit. The Greek tourism ministry this year launched a programme promising to cover the cost of six nights on the

▲ Zoom with a view: the whitewashed houses of Lindos and its acropolis form a dramatic backdrop for watersports

island in spring or autumn, for those who curtailed their holidays due to the 2023 fires. New and returning visitors are encouraged to explore the island's rich tapestry of history, culture and nature in a celebration of resilience and renewal – local people have worked hard to rejuvenate their beloved island in the past 10 months.

Various wonders showcase both the island's natural beauty and its storied past, including the Valley of Butterflies, where thousands of butterflies rest on the oriental sweetgum trees during their southern migration; the Acropolis of

Lindos, with its panoramic views of St Paul's Bay; and Kallithea Springs, a once chic seaside spa.

The American novelist Henry Miller once said: "It takes a lifetime to discover Greece, but it only takes an instant to fall in love with her." As you explore Rhodes, these words will ring true at every turn. Follow our guide on the following pages to discover the island's highlights, from great places to stay and local delicacies to the most inviting stretches of sand.

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Cover story

WHERE TO GO

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Rhodes Old Town

Enclosed within medieval walls, the Unesco Old Town – right by the port – is a paradise for history lovers. Wander through cobbled streets, visit the Palace of the Grand Master, ancient mosques, and bustling squares. This World Heritage site offers visitors a vibrant blend of historical intrigue with modern amenities, appealing to culture enthusiasts and those keen on experiencing the traditional Rhodes.



Families will also appreciate the Faliraki Water Park, one of the largest in Europe.

Lindos

Once a traditional fishing village, Lindos, on the island's east coast – roughly 25 miles from the Old Town – is renowned for its stunning Acropolis perched high on a cliff. The village combines historical exploration with seaside relaxation thanks to its whitewashed houses, narrow alleys and panoramic views. The nearby beaches, including St Paul's Bay, are perfect for those looking to unwind by the azure waters – and those seeking a hint of romance will be delighted.

Faliraki

Known for its lively nightlife and extensive sandy beach, Faliraki on Rhodes's north-east coast caters to the younger crowd and raucous partygoers. In this all-inclusive destination, enjoy watersports and sunbathing by day, then at night dive into the vibrant nightclub scene.



Ialyssos and Ixia

If it is adventure you are after, head west to these two coastal areas – ideal for windsurfing and kitesurfing enthusiasts, thanks to the region's breezy conditions. The mix of luxury resorts and traditional tavernas appeals to both adventurous tourists and those seeking a relaxing beach holiday.

Kallithea

Just south of the Old Town of Rhodes, on the north of the island, Kallithea is famous for its thermal springs. The beautifully restored Kallithea Springs complex attracts wellness seekers and those searching for architectural beauty. The beaches here are perfect for snorkelling and diving too.

▼ Cool off: swim in the clear waters of Kallithea, famous for its thermal springs



WHERE TO EAT

Marco Polo Mansion

This restaurant in Rhodes Old Town dates back to the 15th century, when the Ottoman Empire was in full swing. The décor showcases some of its imperial splendour. Expect a twist on everyday Greek cuisine in dishes such as crab with pear, prawns and black rice dolmades (0030 22410 25562; marcopolomansion.gr).



Mavrikos Restaurant

In Lindos Square, this is one of the oldest restaurants in the area, handed down through the Mavrikos family for generations. Sit in the shaded courtyard and try its simple dishes of Greek or French cuisine. Baby shrimp, calamari and stuffed pork belly are among the favourites (0030 22440 31232).

Tambakio

In the tranquillity of St Paul's Bay, boasts enu mainstays including linguine with mussels and lobster pasta. The strawberry salad with caramelised walnuts, parmesan flakes, poppy seeds and citrus dressing is a refreshing beachside summer dish in a serene setting (0030 22440 33000; tambakio.com).

◀ Expect a twist on everyday Greek cuisine at Marco Polo Mansion, which dates back to the 15th century

▼ Shellfish choice: try linguine with mussels or lobster pasta at Tambakio restaurant in St Paul's Bay

Expert tips

Locals and visiting Greeks tend to have lunch or dinner late, meaning after 2pm and 9pm respectively. Almost all tavernas and restaurants open at 12 noon and then around 7pm to cater to early diners, while many don't close at all in the afternoon. Some restaurants in the capital open only for dinner.

In terms of dress code, shorts and beachwear is fine at casual tavernas, while trousers and skirts are required at smarter restaurants. Covering up in church is mandatory; shawls and skirts will be provided if necessary.

Tipping is not required. However, most restaurants have a cover charge for bread. A tip of 10 per cent is most welcome.

Hiring a car is strongly recommended so that you can explore Rhodes independently, but public transport is good and affordable. Rhodes KTEL (ktelethrodou.gr) Intercity buses offer regular services from Rhodes Town to resort areas on the eastern coast, in addition to Epta Piges. RODA buses cover routes in Rhodes Town and nearby areas, and link the capital to destinations on the west coast. Tickets can be bought from most kiosks and mini markets and at the airport.

Taxis (dark blue and white) are easy to find in Rhodes new town, and can be booked by phone for other destinations. A taxi ride from the airport to Rhodes Town should cost around €25 (£22), with a small charge for baggage. If staying in the pedestrianised Old Town, expect to be dropped off at the gate nearest to your hotel. There are taxi ranks at the airport and selected resort areas including Faliraki, Ialyssos, Lindos and Afandou. Rates double between 12am and 5am.

WHERE TO STAY



Kokkini Porta Rossa

This hotel in the Old Town of Rhodes has double suites from £362 per night, including a four-course breakfast (0030 22410 75114; kokkiniporta.com).

Lindos Comfy Suites

Located in the village of Lindos by the coast, the property offers double rooms from £118 per night, B&B (0030 22440 33162; comfysuitesrhodes.com).

Grecotel Lux Me Dama Dama

Pictured left, this is the perfect package holiday choice in the popular beach resort of Kallithea. Double rooms cost from £400 per night, B&B (0030 22410 85412; grecotel.com).

THE BEST BEACHES

Elli Beach

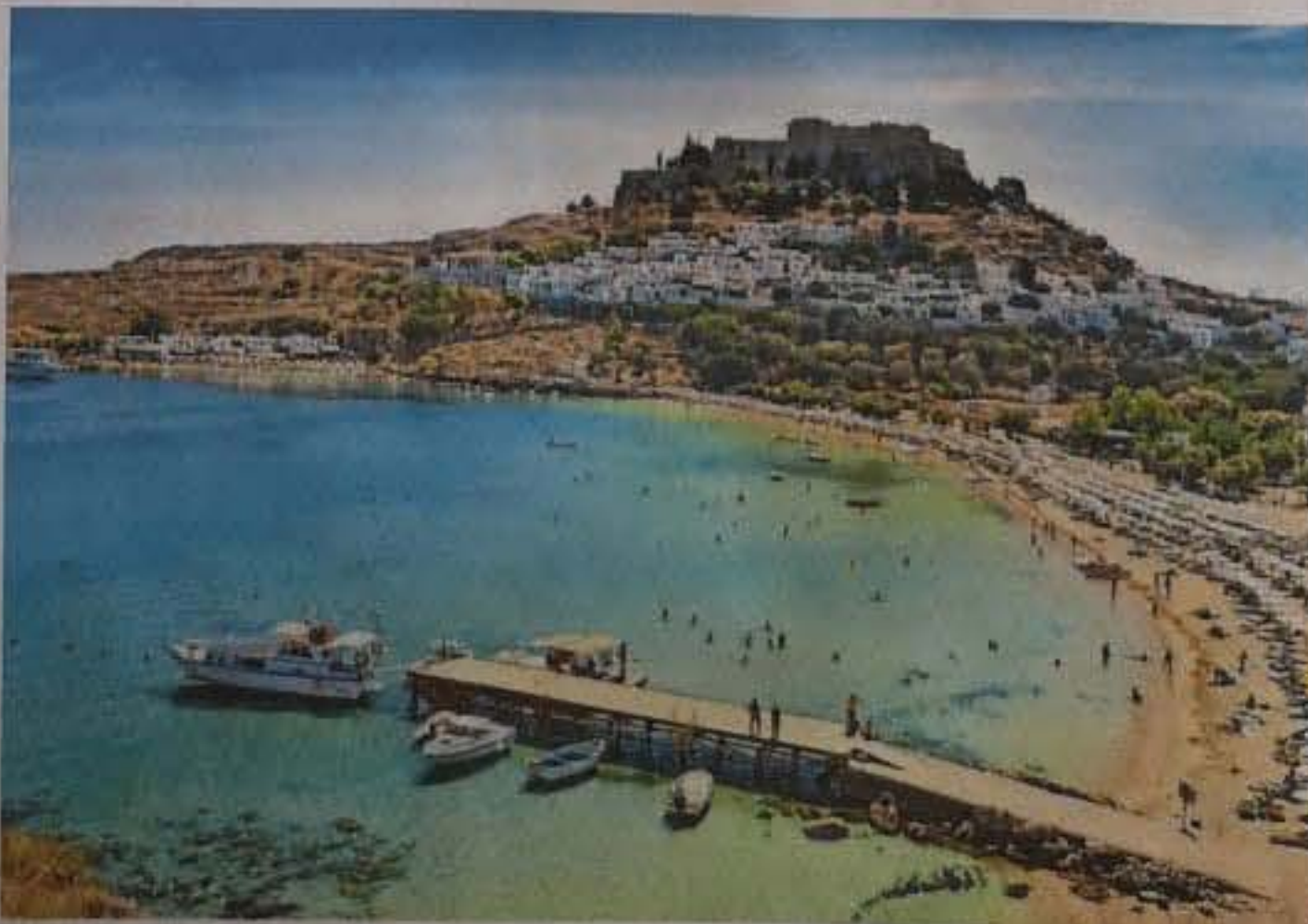
Right next to the Casino and close to the Old Town, Elli is not only conveniently located but is also one of the most popular beaches on Rhodes. It is a mixture of sand and gravel, so bringing water shoes to protect your feet is a good idea. Dive off the water platform or relax on the sunbeds.

St Paul's Bay

Located at Lindos and nestled in a sheltered cove, this is a tranquil place to go for a swim or snorkel. The backdrop of whitewashed buildings and rocky cliffs adds to its unique charm and beauty – and the view of the Lindos Acropolis and St Paul's Church make it even more picturesque.

Faliraki Beach

Part of the resort of the same name, this stretch of golden sand is known for its lively atmosphere. Ideal for sunbathing and watersports, it offers a vibrant nightlife with numerous bars and clubs. The shallow waters mean that families and thrill-seekers alike enjoy its extensive amenities.



▲ Join the jerry set: St Paul's Bay, with its arc of golden sand and views of the Lindos acropolis, is a tranquil place to go for a swim or snorkel

WHAT TO SEE



The Acropolis of Lindos

An hour south along the coast from Rhodes Town, the Acropolis of Lindos (lindosrhodes.gr), pictured above, guards the village from its cliff-top location, providing a breathtaking view of the Aegean Sea and coastal scenery. Explore history and natural beauty as you wander through the ruins of Temple of Athena Lindia.



The Valley of Butterflies

This location is where the butterflies (above) congregate in summer to rest in the climate-controlled shade. This lush area (valleyofbutterflies.com), with its streams and fragrant grass trees, is a serene escape into nature.

Kallithea Spring

Roughly 15 minutes by taxi from Rhodes Old Town, this historic spa (kallitheasprings.com) is known for its mineral-rich waters. The surrounding architecture is a mix of traditional and modern styles. Visitors can enjoy the natural beauty of the area, including the Kallithea Spring, and the views of the Old Town and the Aegean Sea.

◀ Stay local to immerse yourself in the history of the island. The Old Town of Rhodes, a UNESCO World Heritage site, is a must-visit.

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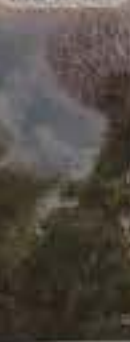
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