

Rhodes

The island of the Knights

Welcome to Rhodes, the capital of the **Dodecanese**, an island which is ideal not only for those who want to relax but also for those looking for an action-packed holiday! With its bright green hills, rich green valleys and uninterrupted line of golden **beaches**, Rhodes is truly a blessed place. Add in the excellent facilities for tourism, the island's special blend of cosmopolitan and traditional, and numerous cultural and archaeological sites and you've got the perfect holiday **destination**.



Thanks to its strategic position, Rhodes has been important since ancient times. The ancient city of Rhodes, the construction of which began in 407 BC, was designed according to the city planning system devised by the greatest city planner of antiquity, **Hippodamus of Miletus**. Rhodes soon developed into one of the most important seafaring and trading centres in the Eastern Mediterranean. When it became a province of the Roman, and later the Byzantine Empire, it initially lost its ancient glory. But in 1309 the **Knights of Saint John of Jerusalem** conquered Rhodes. They built strong fortifications to protect the island, turning it into an important administrative centre and a thriving multinational medieval city. In 1523 Rhodes was conquered by the Ottoman Turks, and the Greeks had to settle outside the city walls. During the Ottoman occupation, new buildings were erected within the Old Town, mainly mosques and baths. In 1912 Rhodes and the rest of the **Dodecanese**, were seized by the Italians. The new rulers embellished the city with magnificent buildings, wide roads and squares. The **Palace of the Grand Master** was rebuilt and the Street of the Knights was reconstructed in order to regain its medieval purity. It was not until 1948 that Rhodes officially became part of Greece. In 1988 the **Medieval City** of Rhodes was listed as a **UNESCO World Heritage site**.

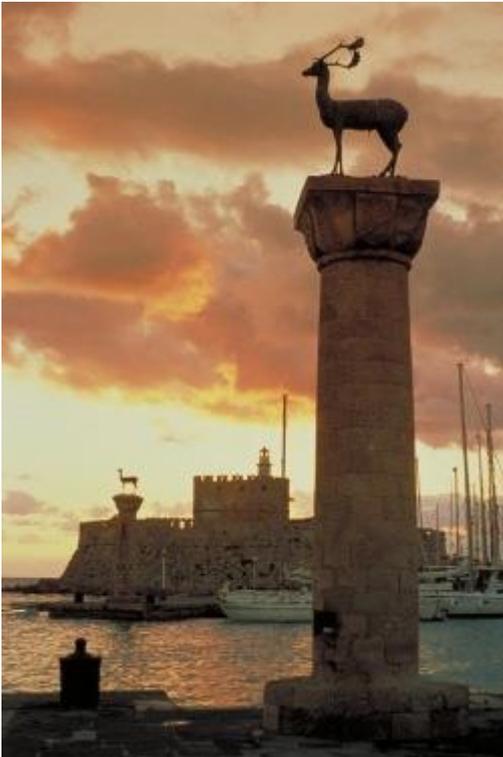
Old Town

As you enter one of the largest medieval towns in Europe through the Gate of Freedom, it soon becomes obvious that the Old Town of Rhodes is a mosaic of different cultures and civilizations; rarely does a visitor have the chance to stroll within medieval walls and explore twenty-four centuries of history. The fascinating medieval fortress-like buildings, the bastions, walls, gates, narrow alleys, minarets, old houses, fountains, tranquil and busy squares make it feel like you have stepped back into medieval times. The **Palace of the Grand Master** is certainly the highlight of the Old Town. The Palace, originally a Byzantine fortress built at the end of the 7th century A.D., was converted in the early 14th century by the Knights of the Order of Saint John into the residence of the Grand Master of the order and the administrative headquarters of their state; now it has been turned into a museum.



The cobblestoned **Street of the Knights**, one of the best preserved medieval streets in Europe, is packed with medieval inns that used to play host to the soldiers of the Order of the Knights. At the end of the Street, in the Museum Square, stands the Hospital of the Knights, which houses the Archaeological Museum. Across the square is the Church of Our Lady of the Castle, the Orthodox Cathedral of Rhodes in Byzantine times that became the Catholic Cathedral when the Knights occupied the city. Now it hosts the Byzantine Museum. Polidorou Street leads to a square with outdoor cafés and restaurants. Moving on, you enter Sokratous Street – always buzzing with life thanks to its cluster of cafés and shops – which leads down from the Mosque of Suleiman the Magnificent towards the harbour. If you decide to take a detour and head off for Arionos Square, don't forget to stroll around the "Turkish district", where you will find the Mustafa Pasha Mosque and the 16th century "Yeni Hammam" (Turkish Baths).

Outside the walls...



Outside the walls of the Old Town lies the "**new**" city, with its magnificent Venetian, neoclassic and modern buildings. Among the most remarkable buildings that keep the memories of the island's Italian period alive are the **Post Office**, constructed by the Italian architect Florestano di Fausto, the **Prefecture** of the Dodecanese, formerly the Italian

Governor's Palace that resembles the Doge's Palace in Venice, **Evangelismos Church**(Church of the Annunciation), the **Town Hall** and the **National Theatre**.

A **stroll around** Mandráki, the small marina with the Rhodian deer statues at its entrance and the surrounding windmills, is an experience not to be missed. The multicultural character of Rhodes is also evident in this part of the city, since next to the Prefecture stands the Murat Reis Mosque with its elegant minaret. Enjoy the sun and the sea at cosmopolitan Elli beach at the northern tip of Rhodes town, which is lined with modern hotels. Here you will also find the beautifully renovated historic Grande Albergo delle Rose, which today operates as a Casino. A visit to the **Aquarium**, one of the most important marine research centres in Greece, is a must! In the underground aquarium, reminiscent of an underwater cave, the visitor can see many of the species living in the Aegean.

On the other side of the city you can visit **Rodíni Park**, a true paradise with many peacocks, streams and paths amidst oleander bushes, cypress, maple and pine trees. Rodini is said to be the site of the famous School of Rhetoric, where prominent Greeks and Romans, including Julius Caesar, Cato the Younger, Cicero, Pompey, Brutus, Cassius and Marc Anthony, studied. **Saint Stefanos Hill** (known as Monte Smith) marks the site of the Acropolis, one of the most important centres of worship, education and recreation in ancient times on Rhodes. At the top of the hill you will find the remains of the Temple of Apollo, a Hellenistic stadium and a gymnasium.

Around the island....

As you head down to the **east coast**, the first tempting stop is **Kallithéa**, a cosmopolitan holiday resort bustling with hotels lining Faliráki beach. In Kallithéa the main attraction is the Roman baths – a unique example of orientalisised Art Deco from 1929 – and the long sandy beach of Faliráki. The picturesque small bay at Ladikó (where the film "The Guns of Navarone" was shot) and the scenic "Anthony Quinn" Bay are just some of the **beautiful beaches** where you can bask! If you are interested in learning more about the local traditions of Rhodes visit **Koskinou**, a traditional village where the house facades are painted in bright colours, the lovely courtyards are paved with pebbles and the houses are decorated inside with ceramic plates and hand-woven textiles.

Ialissós (or Triánda) used to be one of the three powerful cities of ancient Rhodes which acquired great fame thanks to the Olympic Champion Diagoras. Today Ialissós is a popular cosmopolitan resort; its beach is a favourite destination for windsurfing, kitesurfing and **sailing** enthusiasts. Basking in the lush green of pine trees and cypresses, on the slopes of Filérimos (meaning "lover of solitude") Hill stands the Monastery of the Virgin Mary and the ruins of an ancient acropolis. In Byzantine times, there was a fortress on the hill which, in the 13th century, became a monastery dedicated to Holy Mary. It was beautifully restored at a later stage by the Italians and the British. Directly in front of the church there are the ruins of 3rd century temples of Zeus and Athena. Visitors can walk up the "Via Crucis", which leads to an enormous crucifix. The view from there out over Ialissós Bay is stunning. Illuminated at night, the crucifix is clearly visible even from the nearby island of **Sými**.



In the verdant area of **Afándou** you can either bask on beautiful sandy beaches or play golf on a modern 18-hole golf course (close to Afándou beach) that is open all year round and attracts golf enthusiasts from all over the world! The road from the beautiful seaside resort of Kolimbia leads through a forest and along the banks of the River Loutanis to Archipoli, a picturesque rural village. The route is ideal for **walking** or **cycling**.

The area of **Petalouídas** (meaning Butterflies) includes the villages of Kremastí, Paradísi and Theológos. Kremastí, one of the biggest and liveliest settlements on the island, is famous for its major festival of the Virgin Mary on 15th August, while the beach of Kremastí is perfect for kitesurfing and windsurfing. However, the most fascinating and popular attraction of the region is the Valley of the Butterflies, a habitat of unique value for the reproduction of the Panaxia Quadripunctaria butterfly. Admire an atmosphere of incomparable beauty with lush vegetation and streams as you stroll along cleverly laid paths. Also well worth a visit in the Valley is the Museum of Natural History.



Archángelos was rebuilt in medieval times away from its initial site by the sea (to guard it from pirate raids) and the Knights of Saint John later protected it by building a castle. The tradition of ancient arts and crafts – such as pottery and hand-made tapestries – is more evident in Archángelos than anywhere else. The locals live a more simple life style, almost untouched by the rapid growth in tourism elsewhere on the island and still reverentially maintain their age-old traditions, customs, their local dialect and even the distinctive decoration of their houses. The area is famous for its **golden beaches**, such as Tsambíka Beach at the foot of a steep cliff, where there is also the famous monastery of the Virgin Mary. Stegna is a picturesque resort close to Archángelos, while at Haraki (with its idyllic small bay) visitors can see the ruins of a medieval castle: Faraklos. At the northern edge of the region lies “Eptá Piyés” (Seven Springs), a green valley with clear flowing waters and covered with enormous plane and pine trees.

Kámiros was one of the three most powerful cities of ancient Rhodes and flourished during the 6th and 5th century BC. The ruins of the city and the neighbouring necropolis were discovered in 1859; magnificent public buildings, a market, temples, houses and an acropolis on the hill top bear eloquent witness to the splendour and wealth of ancient Kámiros. It is also worth exploring the surrounding villages, such as Soroni on the north coast and Fanes to the south, a nice spot for kitesurfing and windsurfing. The road from Kalavarda leads you to Salakos, a traditional village with lush vegetation and flowing springs. From there you can climb up Profitis Ilias Mountain, with its classic Italian hotels in the forest and a chapel on the summit. On the mountain slopes, there are several smaller villages with springs and age-old plane trees: Eleousa, Platania (“plane trees”), Apolonas and Dimilia, famous for its Byzantine chapel of Áyios Nikólaos (also called Fountoukli).

The highest mountain on Rhodes, the imposing **Mt. Atáviros**, with its rocky summit and green slopes, is an eternal symbol of the island. The amazing view will compensate those who will make the effort to reach its summit! The biggest settlement in the region is Embonas.

Built on a mountainside covered with vineyards, the village is famous for its excellent wines. If you want to escape the crowds, explore the rocky coast and bask in small, well-hidden bays, such as Fournoi, Glyfada or on the beaches of Kritinia. Watching the sunset from the medieval **castles** of Atáviros, Kritinia and the 14th century Monólithos, both built on the summit of an imposing rock, is a richly rewarding experience.



The ancient city-state of **Líndos** was one of the three major towns of ancient Rhodes thanks to its great naval power. The remains of the acropolis of Líndos, a natural watchtower facing the open sea built on a steep rock 116 metres above sea level, bear eloquent witness to its long standing power and wealth. At the foot of the acropolis lies the traditional village of Líndos with its cubic whitewashed houses, mansions, Byzantine churches and narrow cobbled streets. By following a path through the village or by hiring a donkey from the main square you can climb to the ancient acropolis, which is surrounded by well-preserved walls. Here you can see the remains of buildings from ancient times, the Byzantine era and the era of the Knights, such as the 4th century BC temple of Athena Lindia, the Propylea, the large Hellenistic arcade, the Byzantine chapel of Ayios Ioannis and the castle of the Knights of Saint John. You can also enjoy astonishing views of the town and the sea –an experience not to be missed during your visit on the island. At Saint Paul’s Bay you can either relax in the azure sea or have a go at your favourite water sport!

In **southern Rhodes** nature is unveiled in all its splendour: sun-drenched bays stretch from Kiotari and Genadi to Lahania, Plimiri and Prassonisi, the southernmost tip of the island and a popular location for windsurfing and kitesurfing. The villages of the area were built in medieval times, or even earlier, and still maintain their traditional colour, just as their inhabitants still maintain their local dialect, traditional customs and even the traditional decoration of their houses. Follow old paths and discover the beauty of golden fields and shady woods, gentle hills and valleys –magical landscapes that will rejuvenate your body and soul.

Don’t forget that while you are on the island you can take the opportunity to go on a daytrip to the following nearby islands:

-**Kastellórizo** (or Megisti) is the easternmost island in Greece, with a long and stormy history. Only 300 people live on the island today but the town and its magnificent neo-classical houses reveal the former prosperity of the island.

-A former sponge-diving centre, **Hálki**, is famous for its Theological School, which unfortunately does not operate anymore. Emborio, with its grand houses and a picturesque waterfront offering fresh fish, is the only inhabited hamlet on the island. Horio and the Knights’ Castle are both well worth visiting.

-Beautiful **Sými** is an hour away by boat from Mandráki, the port of Rhodes. An island of sponge divers and seamen, Sými used to have 30,000 inhabitants before the Second World War and was the richest island in the **Dodecanese**, despite its small size. Today Sými

attracts many visitors thanks to its beautifully preserved neo-classical buildings and the famous Archangel Michael monastery at Panormitis.

-To the north west of Rhodes you will find **Tílos**, with its imposing mountains, rocky and steep coasts, beaches with crystal clear water and caves and medieval castles. The island's harbour is at Livadia, and from there you can visit the village of Micró Horió ("Small Village"), deserted since 1950. At Meyálo Horió ("Big Village") visit the Palaeontology Museum, where you can see petrified skeletons of dwarf elephants.

Extra tip for trekking enthusiasts: Following breathtaking **routes on foot** is the ideal way to discover the unique natural beauty of the island: try the two-hour route from Filérimos to the coast through a magical pine-tree forest, tour the Valley of the Butterflies (3 hours), go from the village of Salakos to the summit of Profitis Elias following a breathtaking route that takes 4 hours to complete, walk from Kritinia Castle to Kritinia village through a lush green valley (4 hours) or, if you are an experienced hiker, take the opportunity to conquer the summit of Ataviros, a beautiful six-hour walk!

More information about walking trails on the island at **www.rodosisland.gr**!

Getting there

-By aeroplane from the airports of **Athens** and **Thessaloniki**. There are also connections to and from other **Greek islands** such as Kos, Leros, **Mytilini**, Karpathos, Kasos, Kastellorizo, **Mykonos**, **Santorini** and **Crete**(Iráklion city). Flights are operated by Olympic Airways and Aegean Airlines. Beginning this year, Ryanair will also be operating direct flights to Rhodes from Frankfurt Hahn, Brussels Charleroi, Bremen, Düsseldorf, Bologna, Cagliari, Milan, Pisa, Rome, Liverpool, London, Stockholm and Kaunas.

-By ship

The port of Rhodes has daily connections to the port of Piraeus. The trip lasts approximately 12 hours with intermediary stops at the islands of **Patmos**, Leros, **Kalymnos** and Kos. Rhodes is also connected directly to all the other islands of the Dodecanese and Crete.