

## Lifestyle

# Paradise found in delightful Paros

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THE word "Paradise" has Greek roots and it is easy to understand why.

Greece boasts dozens of island paradises offering a chance to get away from it all.

The history of this most ancient of countries has long connections with the seas and the hundreds of Greek islands, each with its own charms.

The ferry system is largely geared towards commuters and the most regular routes run along specific island chains to one of Athens' two ports.

Characterised by whitewashed sugar cube homes with blue doors that have become the subject of a thousand postcards, the Cyclades is the most popular island chain in the Aegean. Planes fly to Santorini or Mykonos, conveying thousands of tourists each year in search of their island paradise.

A single ferry journey from either of these places, or from Athens itself for that matter, can take travellers far from the madding crowd and package holidaymakers, creating an opportunity for a more authentic Greek island experience.

The Cyclades central line runs from Piraeus in Athens to Paros, Naxos, Ios and then Santorini.

The ease with which visitors can travel from one island to the next is astonishing. In the summer, boats are frequent and fast. They might not be strictly punctual but, contrary to what a lot of guidebooks say, this is more to do with the vagaries of wind direction than any southern European indifference to timetables.

The boats that ferry cars and passengers to Paros are not the ancient rusting deathtraps of Greek mythology, either.

Paros is a favourite of Athenians, many of whom have holiday homes on the island. Ferries from the rest of the Cyclades and beyond all dock at Parikia. The island has a small airport but this is restricted to domestic flights.

It is a beautiful and relaxed location offering mountains, ports and beaches within a few square miles. This is an island that certainly requires a car to explore properly.

Prior to leaving the UK, a quick visit to [rhinocarhire.com](http://rhinocarhire.com) quickly took care of the essentials – you can muster a motor in a matter of minutes. A representative meets travellers as the ferry docks at Parikia and a few signatures later you are away.

Paros is not an island with an abundance of five-star hotels and for good reason: this is not really a holiday resort. What is on offer is a simple slice of Greek island life which is the essence of its appeal.

That's not to say, however, that a five-star stay on the island is not an option. A quick visit to [oneoffplaces.co.uk](http://oneoffplaces.co.uk) can yield a selection of places to stay across Europe.

In Paros, the Olive House is among the outstanding offerings and promises all the comforts of a well-appointed home with a friendly welcome.

The beautiful single-storey house in a well-tended garden, complete with olives, vines and lemon trees, is tastefully furnished and properly kitted out to meet the needs of any holidaymaker.

Such a fragrant garden adds to the sensory experience. Its position, high on a hill on the south



west of the island, affords incredible views of the sunset over Antiparos. Here is an enclave of calm. Scents, scenery and silence.

This is not a rental property. It is clearly a home from home, offering plenty of living space inside and out. In addition to the three bedrooms, including one furnished for children, the Olive House offers plenty of living space. It can comfortably accommodate two families holidaying together without surrendering personal space.

Guests are encouraged to pick their own lavender or lemons from the garden and make use of the home-made olive oil. In the unlikely event of any need not already met, the island host willingly and quickly offers help at any time. Modern comforts are offered, including an iPod dock and a wi-fi connection.

Leaving such relaxed luxury could be a struggle but the island beckons.

The main town of Parikia is not the most attractive part of the island although not devoid of charms and the waterfront cafés and restaurants provide good vantage points to watch the ships coming and going.

Parikia has its fare share of ancient monuments but after a few days in Greece and the islands, it's easy to become quite casual about the archaic.

The town is trumped by the fishing village of Naoussa on the northern coast. It is clearly conscious of its beauty and there are plenty of restaurants and cafés to cater for visitors but Naoussa still functions as a working fishing village.

After making a circuit of the lanes and harbour, fresh octopuses laid out on batons to dry in the sun provide a perfect picture opportunity for the passing tourist.

The best beaches are on the south side of the island but in its centre, the pretty hill town of Lefkes is worth stopping by. However, a daytime visit is recommended for drivers who may not enjoy the winding unlit roads on the side of a mountain.

Any visit is not complete without making the short boat journey to Antiparos.

The main draw on this island is the cave – once a stop on grand tours through Europe. In those days, it was acceptable to leave graffiti on the stalactites and stalagmites and the antiquated etchings are still visible.

From its huge stalagmite at the entrance, believed to be the oldest in Europe at 45 million years old, the cavern descends 100 metres although visitors have the convenience of 411 concrete steps and electric lighting.

The attractions on these two ancient islands have stood the test of time.

Island hopping is the perfect way to find your own inner Odysseus without the experience becoming an epic. Paros is certainly worth making a stop. Here is an island paradise found.

Useful Links:

Greek Travel Pages: [www.gtp.gr](http://www.gtp.gr)

Rhino Car Hire: [www.rhinocarhire.com](http://www.rhinocarhire.com)

The Olive House: [www.oliveandstone.com](http://www.oliveandstone.com)

One Off Places: [www.oneoffplaces.co.uk](http://www.oneoffplaces.co.uk)