

## Sailing Greece - Aegean Islands

**Overview:** it's not a chance that Ulysses started his voyage in these waters. Numberless islands, desert coves and beaches, romantic ports, rich tavernas, plenty of wind and well organized services. With just a tiny bit of history and art thrown in...

**The top places to visit:** Kea, Kithnos - Siphnos, Ios, Folegandros, Amorgos, Santorini, Astipalea, Symi, Kastellorizo and Rhodos



### **Our rating:**

Wind and Sea: tough in summer

Kids friendly: not in summer

Lifestyle: fashionable

**Gourmet:** not very refined but excellent ingredients

**Mileage** (approx) :200

**Cruise length:** at least 10-14 days

**When to go:** april to mid june, then september and october

**Harbours and marinas:** excellent public harbours

### **Our top 3 SAILPRO anchorages**

1. Polyaygos
2. Siphnos N of Kamares
3. Amorgos

### **Our Sailing notes**

**Weather and anchorages:** as strange as it may seem, August is the windiest month with the Meltemi that blows steady force 7 from the NE, and they rarely turn the huge fan off. Not much you can do to avoid it, just sail in the lee of the islands, and sail there before July 20 or after August 30.

Luckily geography helped out a lot, with numberless coves and islands. The natives are used to the wind since the dawn of ages and they are excellent sailors and skippers, and always built villages around a sheltered bay, so you have a public harbour even in the smallest islands. Just keep in mind that you need to use your own moorings even in ports, so it's imperative to sail with a good anchor, a long and heavy chain, and plenty of warps to lay ashore!

**Gourmet:** Greece is as far from nouvelle Cuisine as you can imagine, but they certainly know their way about their excellent ingredients. Although greek salad every day might be too much, one cannot but fall in love with feta and onions. My favourite dishes in Greece are grilled octopus and stuffed squid. To die for. If you prefer meat, mutton and lamb is the way to go. Greece is one of the capitals of the grill, so follow the smell of coals, sit down with the very good local brews and wash down the fish and beef barbecues. Local sauces are also surprisingly good, based on yogurt, olives, herbs and cucumber. Tzatziki is the most famous.

Forget wines, though...

### **Restaurants:**

Vourkhari - Chora: tavern in front of the town hall

Tilos-Megari chorio, " Kafenion " Kiria Sofia

Tilos: Mikalis

Symi : TOLOS Mrs Haroula

Rhodos: SAKIS in Canada Street or Jannis in Koskinou

### **Our itinerary**

**Kea** is our first stop on the route, where you can anchor in the calm inner cove at Vourakiri, just a mile from the port. The old village up on the hill is well worth the bust trip with a perfect square and nice tavernas. The one facing the town hall makes the best Paidaka, or lamb chops. It's then 25 miles to Kithnos where you can anchor in 2 nice coves around a sandspit not far from Merikha's port. The next stop is Siphnos, where you can anchor in a natural swimming pool in the bay north of the Kamares harbour. Other good anchorages in Vati, where the beach is the local avenue, and Fikiadha with its nice beach and blue chapels.

On the way to milos stop at **Poliaygos**, a beauty of an island, all white with blue waters and rock pinnacles. Anchor in the bay along the W coast, close to the islet at the entrance, laying out lines ashore to some cleats made out of sandstone.

Between Despotico and Antiparos enjoy the shelter of a deep cove that seems to be always deserted. Enjoy a perfect sunset on the left side from the entrance, suspended between wheat golden fields and clear blue waters.

Another jewel of the small Cyclades is **Skinoussa**, where you can anchor in the delightful harbour and reach the village with a short hike. Excellent tavernas and lamb chops marinated with cinnamon.

It's 30 miles to **Ios**, a decent sized port connected with the village with a good bus service. It's a young and lively place full of tavernas, bars and postcard-white-and-blue houses. If you are looking more into my-private-come kind-of-thing, head SE to Tris Klises.

**Amorgos** is a one of the highlights of the route. The whole northwest coast is a magazine-style collection of coves and bays. The local haven is small but welcoming, and the chora is waiting for your camera. A monastery on the eastern side is among the best of the area. If you are a red-snapper feticist, make a trip to Kalofana on the SW point.

Just before the NE cape Ormos Kalotiri is another not-to-be missed bay, with the close-by Aghios Yalis where the fishermen are based.

Butterfly-shaped **Astipalea** is 40 miles to the east and one here is technically in the Dodecannese. Avoid the harbour and enjoy peace and shelter in Livadhi west of it, under the venetian castle built in the 13th century and then co-opted as a monastery. The village is a 15 minutes walk from the beach.

**Tilos** is 40 miles away and the port has moorings and services. It's a very relaxed and laid back place: enjoy dinner at " Mikalis " the last taverna on main street, visit the Bizantine church and splurge for lunch at " Kafenion ", Mrs Kiria Sofia taverna, the best around the island with a great terrace-with-a-view.

**Khalki** is conveniently placed 10 miles from Rhdes and boast a small and welcoming Venetian village. There is an excellent cove W of the harbour.

Alimia is not far away and a place to go if you are into solitude, because a small church is the only thing you can find, besides a wide and sheltered bay. There is an old fort commanding the landscape, but you need a good dose of stamina to hike there under the sun...

**Symi** is one of the jewels of the Dodecannese. Busy, needless to say, so get there early, because its liveliness and Venetian style deserve a stop. The main drags are 'Vapori' for aperitifs, and Tolos for dinner (ask of Mrs Haroula).

For a swin head W to Thessalona and / or e to Aghio Emiliano ad Est.

A stop in **Lorima** - Buzuk Kale is good plan on the way to Rhodos. Selami's sailor house is excellent and do not try to play backgammon with him if you do not want to feel a useless human being. The damn-fast-dice-thrower pirate built a free dock for his guests, offers excellent seafood with several eastern dishes, and you'll feel in a diffenet space-time cone of the universe.

It's just two hours to **Rhodes**, certainly not my favourite island, but only because I am not a disco-bound teenager. There is little shelter and the harbour is always full....

If you have time or heading towards Turkey, keep in mind that **Kastellorizo** is indeed the best island in Greece. Even if you did not fall in love with the movie Mediterraneo, you will fall for this place the moment you see it.