

Dodecanese

Δωδεκάνησα



Strung out along the coast of western Turkey, like jewels upon an impossibly aquamarine sea, the Dodecanese both entrance and attract passers-by – many of whom return year after year to sample some of the most culturally and geographically diverse islands in the Aegean.

These 18 islands (including satellites) are an entity unto themselves. Under Italian rule until 1947, they maintain an air of slight separateness and, unsurprisingly, still attract large numbers of curious Italian visitors. The islands are a beguiling mix of sea, mountain and meadow and, because they are all close to one another, can easily be 'hopped'. They need that extra effort to get to, but the rewards far outweigh the investment.

The spiritually inclined will make a beeline for Patmos. The developed resorts of Rhodes and Kos have beaches and bars galore, while Lipsi and Tilos have seductive beaches, minus the crowds. The far-flung islands of Agathonisi, Arki, Kasos and Kastellorizo await Greek-island aficionados in pursuit of traditional island life, while everyone gapes at the extraordinary volcanic landscape that geological turbulence has created on Nisyros. The islands' chequered history has also endowed them with a wealth of diverse archaeological remains.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Historical Experience** Viewing Lindos (p527), the most famous of the ancient cities of the Dodecanese
- **Getting Away from it All** Enjoying Kastellorizo (p543) with slow, laid-back life unfussed by mainstream tourism
- **Chill-out Spot** Relaxing on Astypalea (p564), an island of tranquillity, spirituality and beautiful beaches
- **Green Haven** Viewing fertile, volcanic Nisyros (p554)
- **Wine Country** Indulging in Rhodes' wine country (p531) on the slopes of Mt Attavyros
- **Romantic Restaurants** Dining in Rhodes' Old Town (p525)
- **Adrenaline Rush** Cliff-diving around Kalymnos (p572)
- **Sporting Event** Windsurfing fast and furious at Afiartis Bay (p537) on Karpathos



■ POPULATION: 190,071

■ AREA: 2714 SQ KM

HISTORY

The Dodecanese islands have been inhabited since pre-Minoan times, and by the Archaic period Rhodes and Kos had emerged as the dominant islands within the group. Distance from Athens gave the Dodecanese considerable autonomy and they were, for the most part, free to prosper unencumbered by subjugation to imperial Athens. Following Alexander the Great's death, Ptolemy I of Egypt ruled the Dodecanese.

The Dodecanese islanders were the first Greeks to become Christians. This was through the tireless efforts of St Paul, who made two journeys to the archipelago, and through St John, who was banished to Patmos, where he had his revelation.

The early Byzantine era saw the islands prosper, but by the 7th century AD they were plundered by a string of invaders. By the early 14th century it was the turn of the crusaders – the Knights of St John of Jerusalem, or Knights Hospitallers – who eventually became rulers of almost all the Dodecanese, building mighty fortifications, but not mighty enough to keep out the Turks in 1522.

The Turks were ousted by the Italians in 1912 during a tussle over possession of Libya. The Italians, inspired by Mussolini's vision of a vast Mediterranean empire, made

Italian the official language and prohibited the practice of Orthodoxy. The Italians constructed grandiose public buildings in the Fascist style, which was the antithesis of archetypal Greek architecture. More beneficially, they excavated and restored many archaeological monuments.

After the Italian surrender of 1943, the islands became a battleground for British and German forces, with much suffering inflicted upon the population. The Dodecanese were formally returned to Greece in 1947.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Astypalea, Kalymnos, Karpathos, Kos, Leros and Rhodes all have direct flights to Athens. In addition, Rhodes has flights to Astypalea (via Kos and Leros), Iraklio, Kasos (via Karpathos), Thessaloniki, and in summer to Mykonos and Santorini (Thira) in the Cyclades. Additional seaplane service operates out of Kos and Kalymnos linking those islands with Lavrio on the mainland.

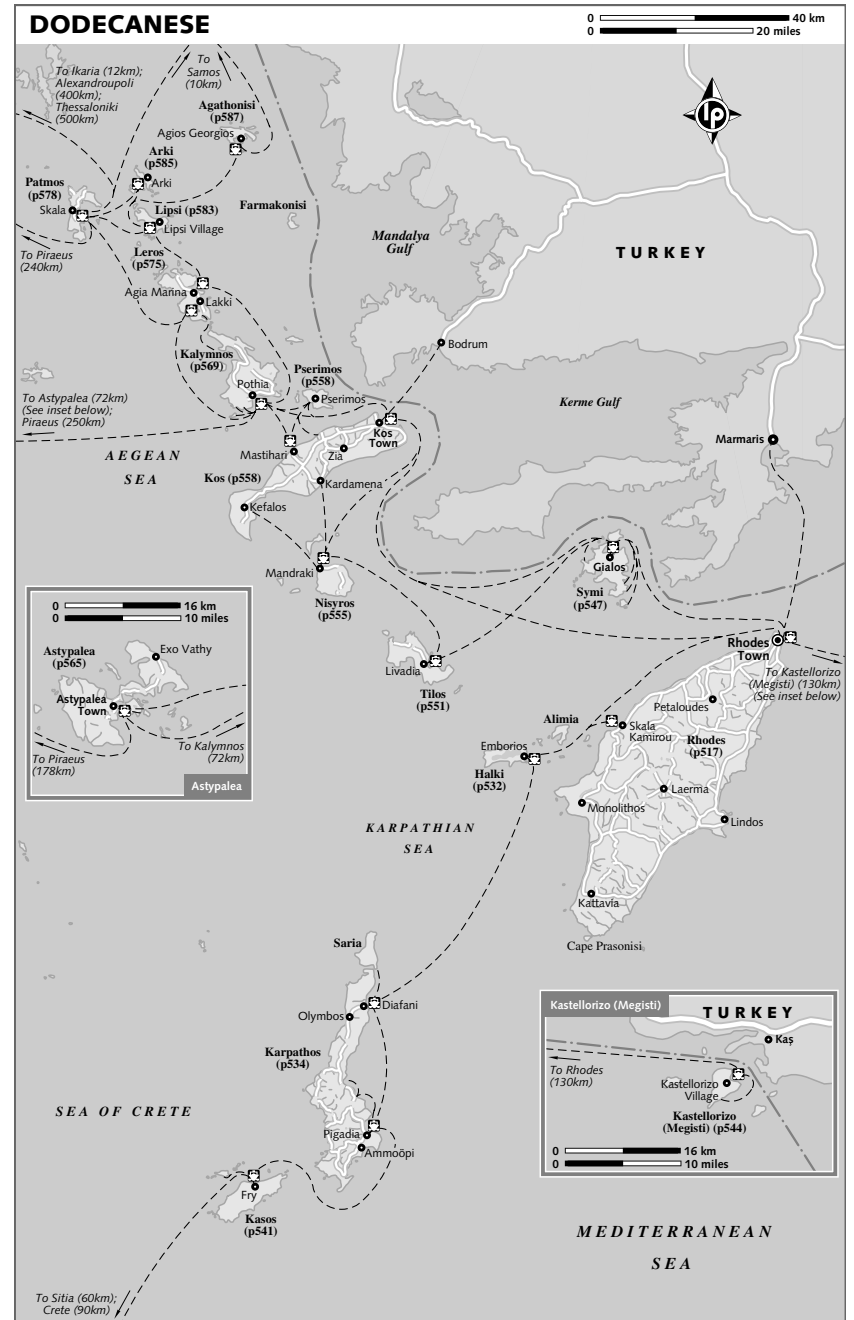
Ferry & Hydrofoil

DOMESTIC

Ferry schedules to the Dodecanese are fairly complex, but they do follow a predictable and rarely varying pattern. Departure times

FERRY CONNECTIONS TO THE DODECANESE

Origin	Destination	Duration	Fare	Frequency
Alexandroupoli	Kalymnos	23hr	€38.50	weekly
	Kos	26hr	€39	weekly
	Rhodes	29hr	€44	weekly
Piraeus	Astypalea	10-12hr	€33.50	5 weekly
	Halki	22hr	€35	2 weekly
	Kalymnos	9-11hr	€42	daily
	Karpathos	18½hr	€33-49	3 weekly
	Kasos	17hr	€32.50	3 weekly
	Kos	10-15hr	€42-45	2 daily
	Leros	11hr	€32-36	daily
	Nisyros	17hr	€44	2 weekly
Sitia	Patmos	7-8hr	€32.50	daily
	Rhodes	15-18hr	€48-51.50	2 daily
	Symi	15-17hr	€44	2 weekly
	Tilos	15hr	€42	1 weekly
Thessaloniki	Halki	7½hr	€20	3 weekly
	Karpathos	4¾hr	€17	3 weekly
	Kasos	2½hr	€10.50	3 weekly
	Rhodes	10hr	€25	3 weekly
Thessaloniki	Kos	18hr	€44	1 weekly
	Rhodes	21hr	€53	1 weekly



in both directions tend to be geared to an early morning arrival at both Piraeus and Rhodes. This means that island-hopping southwards can often involve some anti-social hours.

The table (p514) gives an overall view of ferry connections to the Dodecanese from the mainland and Crete in high season. The service from Alexandroupoli may be subject to seasonal demand, so always check the schedule before committing yourself to the trip.

Aegean Flying Dolphins operates a daily hydrofoil service from the Northeastern Aegean island of Samos to Kos and islands in between.

INTERNATIONAL

There are ferries and hydrofoils to the Turkish ports of Marmaris and Bodrum from Rhodes and Kos, respectively, and day trips to Turkey from Kastellorizo and Symi.

RHODES ΡΟΔΟΣ

Rhodes (*ro-dos* in Greek) is the jewel in the Dodecanese crown. It's big, brash and bold and receives by far the lion's share of visitors to this island group. It's open year-round and enjoys an exceptionally mild climate. It combines all that is needed in a holiday island: beaches, nightlife, culture, scenery, greenery and comfort. Like Crete, its larger neighbour to the southwest, it could almost exist independently of the Greek mainland.

Rhodes grows on you slowly. If you're not captivated at once by its intriguing and almost magical World Heritage-listed Old Town with its labyrinthine back streets and Mediaeval fortifications, you will be by its dreamy beaches, snaking mountain roads, wild almost untouched interior and rocky mountains. The best dining and accommodation is found on Rhodes.

The island is also the focal point for most regional transport and you will almost inevitably pass through the island at some stage.

History

The Minoans and Mycenaeans were among the first to have outposts on the islands, but it wasn't until the Dorians arrived in 1100 BC that Rhodes began to exert power and influence. The Dorians settled in the cities of Kamiros, Ialysos and Lindos,

and made each of them prosperous and autonomous states.

Rhodes continued to prosper until Roman times. It was allied to Athens in the Battle of Marathon (490 BC), in which the Persians were defeated, but had shifted to the Persian side by the time of the Battle of Salamis (480 BC). After the unexpected Athenian victory at Salamis, Rhodes hastily became an ally of Athens again, joining the Delian League in 477 BC. Following the disastrous Sicilian Expedition (416–412 BC), Rhodes revolted against Athens and formed an alliance with Sparta, which it aided in the Peloponnesian Wars.

In 408 BC the cities of Kamiros, Ialysos and Lindos consolidated their powers for mutual protection and expansion by cofounding the city of Rhodes. Rhodes became Athens' ally again, and together they defeated Sparta at the Battle of Knidos (394 BC). Rhodes then joined forces with Persia in a battle against Alexander the Great, but when Alexander proved invincible, quickly allied itself with him.

In 305 BC Antigonos, one of Ptolemy's rivals, sent his son, the formidable Demetrius Poliorketes (the Besieger of Cities), to conquer Rhodes. The city managed to repel Demetrius after a long siege. To celebrate this victory, the 32m-high bronze statue of Helios Apollo (Colossus of Rhodes), one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, was built.

After the defeat of Demetrius, Rhodes knew no bounds. It built the biggest navy in the Aegean and its port became a principal Mediterranean trading centre. The arts also flourished. When Greece became the battleground upon which Roman generals fought for leadership of the empire, Rhodes allied itself with Julius Caesar. After Caesar's assassination in 44 BC, Cassius besieged Rhodes, destroying its ships and stripping the city of its artworks, which were then taken to Rome. This marked the beginning of Rhodes' decline, and in AD 70 Rhodes became part of the Roman empire.

When the Roman empire split, Rhodes joined the Byzantine province of the Dodecanese. It was given independence when the crusaders seized Constantinople. Later the Genoese gained control. The Knights of St John arrived in Rhodes in 1309 and ruled for 213 years until they were ousted by the Ottomans, who were in turn kicked out by the Italians nearly four centuries later. In 1947, after 35 years of Italian occupation,

Rhodes became part of Greece along with the other Dodecanese islands.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Olympic Airlines has at least five flights daily to Athens (€77), two daily to Karpathos (€28) and Kosos (€34), one daily to Kastellorizo (€22) and Iraklio (€82), four weekly to Thessaloniki (€100), three weekly to Astypalea (€47) and two weekly to Samos (€37). Direct inquiries to **Olympic Airlines** (Map p520; ☎ 22410 24571; www.olympicairlines.com; lerou Lohou 9).

Aegean Airlines (☎ 22410 98345; www.aegeanair.com; Diagoras airport) offers flights to Athens, Thessaloniki and Iraklio at similar rates,

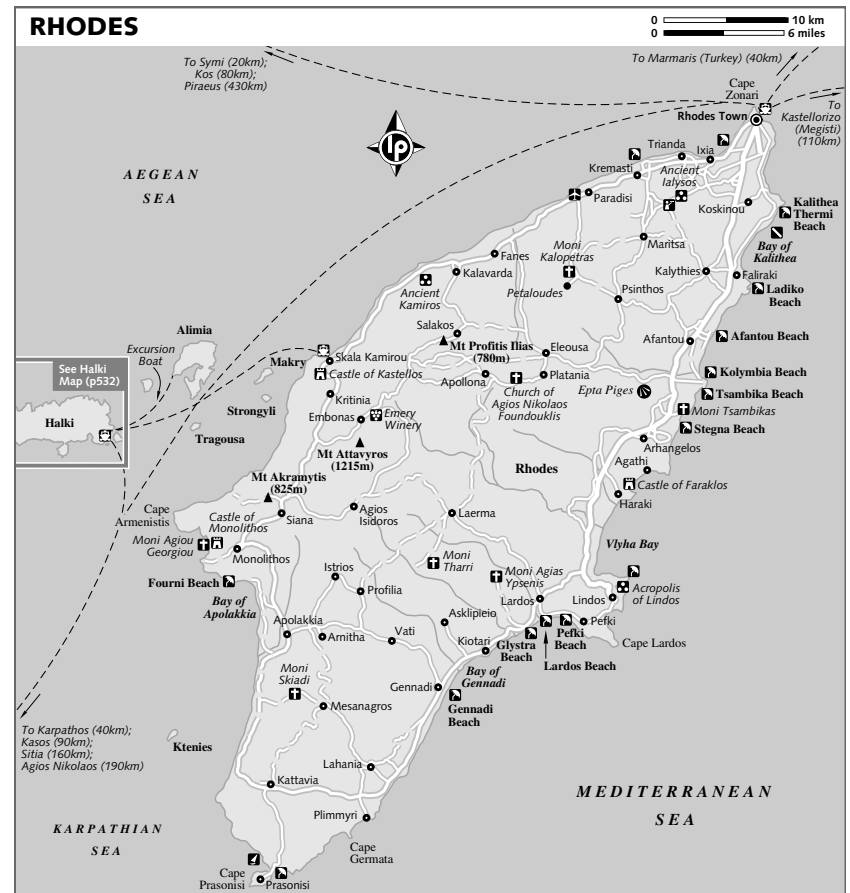
plus a service to Rome (€152, three hours) via Athens.

CAÏQUE

There is a daily car-carrying caïque between Skala Kamirou, on Rhodes' west coast, and Halki (€8.50, 1¼ hours). From Skala Kamirou services depart at 2.30pm, and from Halki at 6am.

CATAMARAN

The *Dodekanisos Express* starts its daily run up the Dodecanese at around 8.30am from the Commercial Harbour (Kolona), stopping at Kos, Kalymnos and Leros daily, with stops at other times in Symi, Lipsi and Patmos. There is usually a seasonal weekly service to Kastellorizo



as well. Its sister vessel the *Dodekanisos Pride* runs a similar schedule starting at around the same time from Patmos.

Tickets can be bought at **Skevos Travel** (Map p520; ☎ 22410 22461; skevos@rho.forthnet.gr; Amerikis 11) or **Dodekanisos Seaways** (Map p522; ☎ 22410 70590; www.12ne.gr; Afstralias 3).

The Tilos-owned *Sea Star* links Rhodes with Tilos. Its schedules tend to fluctuate yearly, but there are generally at least six sailings weekly to Tilos. Check with **Triton Holidays** (Map p520; ☎ 22410 21690; www.tritondmc.gr; Plastira 9, Mandraki) for schedules and tickets, or the *Sea Star* ticket booth on Mandraki Harbour.

There are two daily catamarans from Rhodes' Commercial harbour to Marmaris (50 minutes) from June to September at 8am and 4.30pm, respectively, dropping back to maybe only three or four services a week in winter. Tickets cost €31 one way plus €19 Turkish port tax. Same-day return tickets cost €38 plus €19 tax. Open return tickets cost €42 plus €33 tax. Book online at rhodes.marmarisinfo.com.

EXCURSION BOAT

There are excursion boats to Symi (€22 return) daily in summer, leaving Mandraki Harbour at 9am and returning at 6pm. You can buy tickets at most travel agencies,

but it's better to buy them at the harbour, where you can check out the boats personally. Look for shade and the size and condition of the boat, as these vary greatly. You can buy an open return ticket if you want to stay on Sympi.

FERRY Domestic

Rhodes is the main port of the Dodecanese and offers a complex array of departures. The table (below) lists scheduled domestic ferries from Rhodes to other islands in the Dodecanese and Piraeus in high season. The **EOT** (Greek National Tourist Organisation; Map p520; ☎ 22410 35226; cnr Makariou & Papagou; ☎ 8am-2.45pm Mon-Fri) in Rhodes Town can provide you with current schedules.

International

There is a weekly passenger and car ferry service between Rhodes and Marmaris in Turkey (car/passenger €95/49 including taxes, 1½ hours) on Thursday at 1pm. There is a small discount on open return date rates. Book at www.marmarisinfo.com or contact **Triton Holidays** (Map p520; ☎ 22410 21690; www.tritondmc.gr; Plastira 9, Mandraki) upon arrival to arrange a crossing.

FERRY CONNECTIONS TO/FROM RHODES

Destination	Duration	Fare	Frequency
Agios Nikolaos	12hr	€25.50	2 weekly
Astypalea	8-10hr	€28.50	1 weekly
Amorgos	6hr	€25.50	1 weekly
Chios	13hr	€31.50	1 weekly
Halki	1½-2hr	€8	daily
Iraklio	14hr	€25.50	1 weekly
Kalymnos	3-5½hr	€18.50	6 weekly
Karpathos	3-5½hr	€18-22	5 weekly
Kasos	7-8hr	€22	4 weekly
Kastellorizo	4-5hr	€17	4 weekly
Kos	3½hr	€14-18.50	2 daily
Leros	4½hr	€20-25	daily
Limnos	23hr	€38	1 weekly
Milos	21hr	€34	1 weekly
Nisyros	4½hr	€12	2 weekly
Patmos	6-8½hr	€23-28.50	daily
Piraeus	11½-19hr	€48-51.50	2 daily
Samos	9½hr	€27	2 weekly
Sitía	10hr	€25	3 weekly
Syros	8½-11hr	€30-38.50	3 weekly
Symi	1-2hr	€7-14	2 daily
Tilos	1½-4hr	€12-18.50	5 weekly

HYDROFOIL

South of Mandraki Harbour, **ANES** (☎ 22410 37769; www.anes.gr; Afstralias 88, Rhodes) operates a single hydrofoil, the *Aegli*, from Rhodes to Sympi. Tickets are available at Mandraki Harbour, the main office or from travel agents around town.

Getting Around TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

The Diagoras airport is 16km southwest of Rhodes Town, near Paradisi. There are 21 buses daily between the airport and Rhodes Town's west side bus station (€1.90, 25 minutes). The first leaves Rhodes Town at 5am and the last at 11pm; from the airport, the first leaves at 5.55am and the last at 11.45pm. Buses from the airport leave from the main road outside the airport perimeter.

BICYCLE

A range of bicycles is available for rent at **Bicycle Centre** (Map p520; ☎ 22410 28315; Griva 39; per day €5).

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

There are numerous car- and motorcycle-rental outlets in Rhodes Town. Shop around and bargain because the competition is fierce. A reliable agency is **Drive Rent a Car** (Map p520; ☎ 22410 68243; www.driverentacar.gr). Call ahead for an airport pick-up if required. Book through **Triton Holidays** (Map p520; ☎ 22410 21690; www.tritondmc.gr; Plastira 9, Mandraki) for even cheaper rates.

EXCURSION BOAT

There are excursion boats to Lindos (return €15) daily in summer, leaving Mandraki Harbour at 9am and returning at 6pm.

LOCAL TRANSPORT

Rhodes Town has two island bus terminals, which service one half of the island each. From the **east side bus terminal** (Map p520; Plateia Rimini) there are 18 buses daily to Faliraki (€1.80), 14 to Lindos (€4.70), three to Kolymbia (€2.40), nine to Gennadi (€4.40) via Lardos, and four to Psinthos (€1.90).

From the **west side bus terminal** (Map p520), next to the New Market, there are buses every half-hour to Kalithea Themi (€1.80, 15 minutes), 10 daily to Koskinou (€1.80, 20 minutes), five to Salakos (€3.60, one hour), two to Ancient Kamiros (€4.60, 55 minutes), one to

Monolithos (€6, one hour 20 minutes) via Skala Kamiros (€4.60, one hour 10 minutes), and one to Embonas (€4.60, one hour 10 minutes). The EOT office (p521) gives out schedules.

Unlimited travel tickets are available for one/two/three days (€10/15/25).

Local buses around the city charge a flat €1. They depart from a stand on Mandraki Harbour.

TAXI

Rhodes Town's main taxi rank (Map p520) is east of Plateia Rimini. There are two zones on the island for taxi meters: Zone One is Rhodes Town and Zone Two (slightly higher) is everywhere else. Rates are a little higher between midnight and 6am.

Taxis tend not to use meters but prefer to use set fare rates. All drivers carry a booklet stating the current approved set fares. Request to see it if in doubt. Sample fares: airport €16, Filerimos €15, Petaloudes €25, Ancient Kamiros €32, Lindos €38 and Monolithos €65. Taxi company contact phone numbers include ☎ 22410 64712, ☎ 22410 64734 and ☎ 22410 64778.

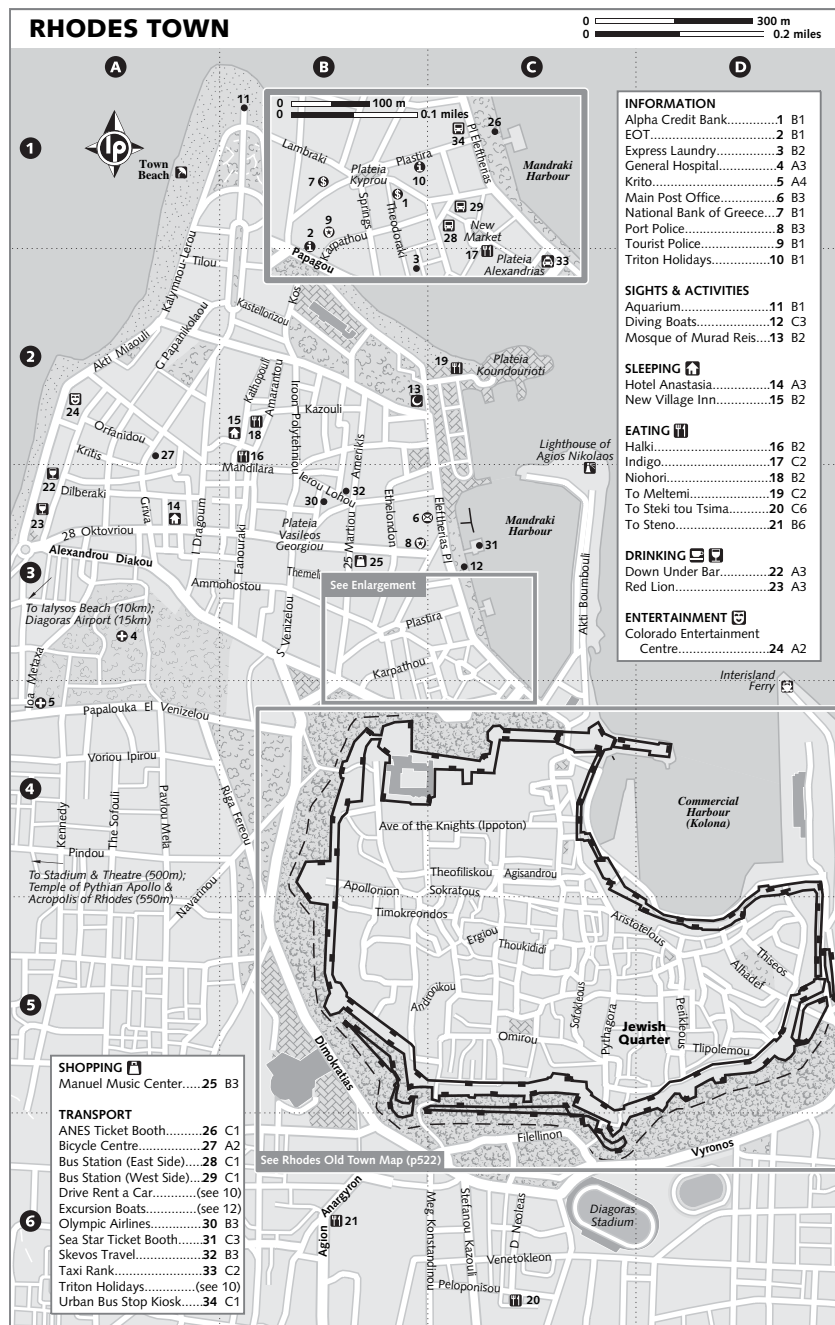
RHODES TOWN

pop 56,128

The heart of Rhodes Town is the Old Town, enclosed within massive walls. Avoid the worst of the tourist crowds by beginning your exploration early in the morning. At any time, away from the main thoroughfares and squares, you will find deserted serpentine alleyways. Much of the New Town to the north is dominated by package tourism, but it does have a few places of interest for visitors and the advantage of being right next to the town's best beaches.

Orientation

The Old Town is nominally divided into three sectors: the Kollakio, or Knights' Quarter, the Hora and the Jewish Quarter. The Kollakio contains most of the mediaeval historical sights of the Old Town, while the Hora, often referred to as the Turkish Quarter, is primarily Rhodes Town's commercial sector and shows off most of the shops and restaurants. The Old Town is accessible by nine *pyles* (main gates) and two rampart-access portals. The whole town is a mesh of Byzantine, Turkish and Latin architecture, featuring quiet, twisting alleyways that are punctuated by lively squares.



The commercial centre of the New Town lies north of the Old Town and is easily explored on foot. Most commercial activity is centred on two blocks surrounding Plateia Kyprou. The hotel district is centred on a large sector bordered by 28 Oktovriou and G Papanikolaou.

The Commercial Harbour (Kolona) is east of the Old Town. Excursion boats, small ferries, hydrofoils and private yachts use Mandraki Harbour, further north.

Information

EMERGENCY

Emergency first aid & ambulance (☎ 22410 25555, 22410 22222)

INTERNET ACCESS

Mango Cafe Bar (Map p522; ☎ 22410 24877; www.mango.gr; Plateia Dorieos 3; per hr €5; ☎ 9.30am-midnight) In the Old Town.

On The Spot Net (Map p522; ☎ 22410 34737; Perikleous 21; per hr €5; ☎ 8am-midnight) In the Hotel Spot.

INTERNET RESOURCES

www.rhodesguide.com A comprehensive guide to what's on in Rhodes.

www.rodos.gr A good cultural and historical background to Rhodes.

LAUNDRY

Express Laundry (Map p520; Kosti Palama 5) Machine washes for €3.

MEDICAL SERVICES

General Hospital (Map p520; ☎ 22410 80000; Papalouka El Venizelou) Just northwest of the Old Town.

Krito (Map p520; ☎ 22410 30020; krito@rho.forthnet.gr; Ioannou Metaxa 3; ☎ 24hr) Private medical provider.

MONEY

All the banks listed have ATMs.

Alpha Credit Bank (Map p522; Plateia Kyprou) In the New Town.

Commercial Bank of Greece (Map p522; Plateia Symis) In the Old Town, plus an ATM near where the boats leave for Turkey on the east side of Commercial Harbour.

National Bank of Greece New Town (Map p520; Plateia Kyprou); Old Town (Map p522; Plateia Mousiou)

POST

Main post office (Map p520) On Mandraki Harbour.

Post office branch (Map p522; Orfeos; ☎ daily) In the Old Town.

TOURIST INFORMATION

EOT (Map p520; ☎ 22410 35226; cnr Makariou & Papagou; ☎ 8am-2.45pm Mon-Fri) Supplies brochures and maps of the city. Has the *Rodos News*, a free English-language newspaper.

Port police (Map p520; ☎ 22410 22220; Mandrakiou)
Tourist police (Map p520; ☎ 22410 27423; ☎ 24hr) Next door to the EOT.

TRAVEL AGENCIES

Triton Holidays (Map p520; ☎ 22410 21690; www.tritondmc.gr; Plastira 9, Mandraki) Perhaps the best overall travel, tourist information and accommodation agency in Rhodes. The exceptionally helpful staff provide a wide range of services catering to individual needs, as well as air, sea and land tickets.

Sights

OLD TOWN

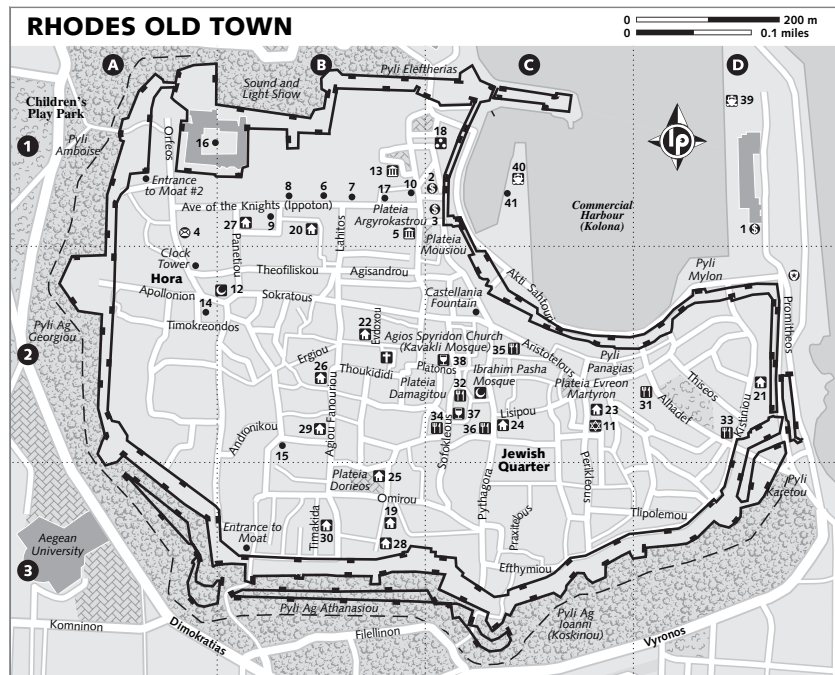
In medieval times the Knights of St John lived in the Knights' Quarter, while other inhabitants lived in the Hora. The 12m-thick city walls are closed to the public but you can take a pleasant walk around the imposing walls of the Old Town via the wide and pedestrianised moat walk.

Knights' Quarter

An appropriate place to begin an exploration of the Old Town is the imposing cobblestone **Avenue of the Knights** (Map p522; Ippoton), where the knights lived. The knights were divided into seven 'tongues' or languages, according to their place of origin – England, France, Germany, Italy, Aragon, Auvergne and Provence – and each was responsible for protecting a section of the bastion. The Grand Master, who was in charge, lived in the palace, and each tongue was under the auspices of a bailiff.

To this day the street exudes a noble and forbidding aura, despite modern offices now occupying most of the inns. Its lofty buildings stretch in a 600m-long unbroken wall of honey-coloured stone blocks, and its flat façade is punctuated by huge doorways and arched windows.

First on the right, if you begin at the eastern end of the Ave of the Knights, is the 1519 **Inn of the Order of the Tongue of Italy** (Map p522); next to it is the **Palace of Villiers de l'Isle Adam** (Map p522). After Sultan Süleyman had taken the city, it was Villiers de l'Isle who had the humiliating task of arranging the knights' departure from the island. Next along is the



INFORMATION		SLEEPING		EATING	
Commercial Bank ATM.....	1 D1	Nelly Dimoglou Dance Company.....	15 B2	Hatzikelis.....	31 D2
Commercial Bank of Greece.....	2 C1	Palace of the Grand Masters.....	16 A1	La Varka.....	32 C2
Mango Cafe Bar.....	(see 25)	Palace of Villiers de l'Isle Adam.....	17 B1	Laganis.....	33 D2
National Bank of Greece.....	3 C1	Temple of Aphrodite.....	18 C1	Marco Polo.....	(see 26)
On The Spot Net.....	(see 23)			Nireas.....	34 C2
Post Office.....	4 A1			O Meraklis.....	35 C2
				Taverna Kostas.....	36 C2
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES		DRINKING		TRANSPORT	
Archaeological Museum.....	5 B1	Kafe Besara.....	37 C2	Catamarans to Turkey.....	39 D1
Chapelle Française.....	6 B1	Mango Cafe Bar.....	(see 25)	Dodekanisos Seaways.....	40 C1
Inn of France.....	7 B1	Resalto Club.....	38 C2	F/B Nisos Kalymnos & Dodekanisos Express	
Inn of Provence.....	8 B1			Catamaran.....	41 C1
Inn of Spain.....	9 B1				
Inn of the Order of the Tongue of Italy.....	10 B1				
Kahal Shalom Synagogue.....	11 C2				
Mosque of Süleyman.....	12 B2				
Museum of the Decorative Arts.....	13 B1				
Muslim Library.....	14 A2				

Inn of France (Map p522), the most ornate and distinctive of all the inns. On the opposite side of the street is a wrought-iron gate in front of a Turkish garden.

Back on the right side is the **Chapelle Française** (Chapel of the Tongue of France; Map p522), embellished with a statue of the Virgin and Child. Next door is the residence of the Chaplain of the Tongue of France. Across the alley-

way is the **Inn of Provence** (Map p522), with four coats of arms forming the shape of a cross, and opposite is the **Inn of Spain** (Map p522).

On the right is the truly magnificent 14th-century **Palace of the Grand Masters** (Map p522; ☎ 22410 23359; lppoton; admission €6; ☎ 12.30-7pm Mon, 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun). It was destroyed in the gunpowder explosion of 1856 and the Italians rebuilt it in a grandiose manner, with

a lavish interior, intending it as a holiday home for Mussolini and King Emmanuel III. It is now a museum, containing sculpture, mosaics taken from Kos by the Italians and antique furniture.

Housed in the old 15th-century knights' hospital is the **archaeological museum** (Map p522; ☎ 22410 27657; Plateia Mousiou; admission €3; ☎ 8am-4pm Tue-Sun). Its most famous exhibit is the exquisite Parian marble statuette, the *Aphrodite of Rhodes*, a 1st-century-BC adaptation of a Hellenistic statue. Less impressive to most is the 4th-century-BC *Afroditi Thalassia* in the next room. The **Museum of the Decorative Arts** (Map p522; ☎ 22410 72674; Plateia Argyrokastrou; admission €2; ☎ 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun), further north, houses a collection of artefacts from around the Dodecanese. A €10 inclusive ticket covers all three of the above sites.

On Plateia Symis, there are the remains of a 3rd-century-BC **Temple of Aphrodite** (Map p522), one of the few ancient ruins in the Old Town.

Hora

Bearing many legacies of its Ottoman past is the **Hora** (Map p522). During Turkish times churches were converted to mosques, and many more Muslim houses of worship were built from scratch, although most are now dilapidated. The most important is the pink-domed **Mosque of Süleyman** (Map p522), at the top of Sokratous. Built in 1522 to commemorate the Ottoman victory against the knights, it was renovated in 1808.

Opposite is the 18th-century **Muslim Library** (Map p522; Plateia Arionos; Sokratous; admission free; ☎ 9.30am-4pm Mon-Sat). Founded in 1794 by Turkish Rhodian Ahmed Hasuf, it houses a

small number of Persian and Arabic manuscripts and a collection of Korans handwritten on parchment.

Jewish Quarter

The **Jewish Quarter** (Map p522) is an almost forgotten sector of Rhodes Old Town, where life continues at an unhurried pace and local residents live seemingly oblivious to the hub-bub of the Hora, no more than a few blocks away. This area of quiet streets and sometimes dilapidated houses was once home to a thriving Jewish community.

Kahal Shalom synagogue (Map p522; www.rhodesjewishmuseum.org; Dosiadou), built in 1577, has a commemorative plaque to the many members of Hora's Jewish population who were sent to Auschwitz during the Nazi occupation. Jews still worship here and it is usually open in the morning. Close by is **Plateia Evreon Martyron** (Sq of the Jewish Martyrs; Map p522).

NEW TOWN

The **Acropolis of Rhodes** (Map p520), southwest of the Old Town on Monte Smith, was the site of the ancient Hellenistic city of Rhodes. The hill is named after the English admiral Sir Sydney Smith, who watched for Napoleon's fleet from here in 1802. It has superb views.

The restored 2nd-century-AD **stadium** once staged competitions in preparation for the Olympic Games. The adjacent **theatre** is a reconstruction of one used for lectures by the Rhodes School of Rhetoric. Steps above here lead to the **Temple of Pythian Apollo**, with four re-erected columns. This unenclosed site can be reached on city bus 5.

North of Mandraki, at the eastern end of G Papanikolaou, is the graceful **Mosque of Murad**

THE KNIGHTS OF ST JOHN

The Knights of St John existed during their tenure in Rhodes within an organisation that is known today as the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta. Its origins are from the Knights Hospitaller, an organisation founded in Jerusalem in 1080 as an Amalfitan hospital to provide care for poor and sick pilgrims on their way to the Holy Land. After the first Crusade in 1099 and the loss of Jerusalem, the knights relocated to Rhodes (via Cyprus) where after a three-year struggle in 1309 they managed to eject the incumbent tenants, the Genoese. The Knights of St John in Rhodes were ostensibly a chivalrous Christian organisation but soon established themselves as purveyors of legitimate and semilegitimate commercial activities – primarily piracy and antipiracy against Ottoman shipping and pilgrims. This naturally irked the Ottoman Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent who set about dislodging the knights from the stronghold. Rhodes capitulated in 1523, after which the remaining knights relocated to Malta and remain to this day.

Reis (Map p520). In its grounds are a Turkish cemetery and the Villa Cleobolus, where Lawrence Durrell lived in the 1940s, writing *Reflections on a Marine Venus*.

If you fancy a fishy experience, the **Aquarium** (Map p520; ☎ 22410 27308; info@hsr-ncmr.gr; Kos 1; admission €3.50; ☎ 9am-8.30pm) is worth a look. The Art Deco building was built during the 1930s by the Italians as a biological research station. Visitors can view anthozoa, molluscs, crabs, echinoderms, sea turtles and specimens from up to 12 types of fish family.

The town **beach** begins north of Mandraki and continues around the island's northernmost point and down the west side of the New Town. The best spots will depend on the prevailing winds but tend to be on the east side.

Activities

GREEK DANCING LESSONS

The **Nelly Dimoglou Dance Company** (Map p522; ☎ 22410 20157; deyappet@otenet.gr; Andronikou 7; admission per person/group €16/11) gives lessons and stages performances (9.15pm on Monday, Wednesday and Friday) in folk dance theatre.

SCUBA DIVING

Three diving schools operate out of Mandraki: **Waterhoppers Diving Centre** (☎/fax 22410 38146, 6972500971; www.waterhoppers.com), **Diving Centres** (☎ 22410 23780) and **Scuba Diving Trident School** (☎/fax 22410 29160). All offer a range of courses, including a 'One Day Try Dive', for €40 to €50. You can get information from their boats at Mandraki Harbour (Map p520). Kalithea Thermi is the only site around Rhodes where diving is permitted.

Sleeping BUDGET

The Old Town has a wide selection of well-priced and relaxing accommodation. Seek out the following.

Hotel Isole (Map p522; ☎ 22410 20682; www.hotelisole.com; Evdouxou 35; s/d incl breakfast €38/48; 🏠) Sequestered away in the back streets, but helpfully signposted, is this cosy pension consisting of seven homely rooms in blue and white. There's a welcoming lobby lounge with a small bar.

Pension Olympos (Map p522; ☎/fax 22410 33567; www.pension-olympus.com; Agiou Fanouriou 56; s/d €40/50; 🏠) This pension has pleasant rooms with fridge and TV, and an attractive little

courtyard. Dream away on its wrought-iron country-style beds with soft mattresses.

Mango Rooms (Map p522; ☎ 22410 24877; www.mango.gr; Plateia Dorieos 3; s/d €45/52; 🏠 year-round; 🏠) This place has clean, nicely furnished rooms with bathroom, TV, ceiling fan, safety box and refrigerator. It has heating in winter.

Pink Elephant (Map p522; ☎ 22410 22469; www.pinkelephantpension.com; Timakida 9; s/d €36/60) The fan-equipped and very presentable rooms have large bathrooms, though there are some cheaper rooms with shared bathrooms. Owner Mari makes guests feel at home away from home.

Hotel Spot (Map p522; ☎ 22410 34737; www.spot-hotlrhodes.gr; Perikleous 21; s/d incl breakfast €45/60; 🏠) The Spot has exceptionally clean, pleasant and tastefully decorated rooms, with fridge. Owner Ilias is a welcoming host. There is also a small book exchange and roof garden, and the hostel offers a wi-fi centre.

Most of the New Town's hotels are modern and characterless, but there are a couple of exceptions.

New Village Inn (Map p520; ☎ 22410 34937; www.newvillageinn.gr; Konstantopedos 10; s/d €24/35) This cosy inn has tastefully furnished rooms with fridge and fan, and a traditional stone-walled courtyard festooned with plants.

Hotel Anastasia (Map p520; ☎ 22410 28007; www.anastasia-hotel.com; 28 Oktovriou 46; s/d incl breakfast €35/51; 🏠) This old-style, renovated hotel, in a former Italian mansion, is a quiet getaway. The high-ceilinged rooms with tiled floors are spotless. The lush garden sports a tortoise and cat family. Italian and French is spoken.

MIDRANGE

Apollo Tourist House (Map p522; ☎ 22410 32003; www.apollo-touristhouse.com; Omirou 28c; s/d €50/60) This is a small, quality pension comprising six rooms, the best of which boasts a four-poster bed. Rooms all have good views and there is a cosy courtyard for breakfasts or the occasional barbecue.

Hotel Via Via (Map p522; ☎/fax 22410 77027; www.hotel-via-via.com; Lisipou 2; d €42-75; 🏠 year-round; 🏠) This pristine boutique hotel, in a discreet quarter of the Old Town, has tastefully furnished and individually named rooms. There's a spacious sun roof where breakfast is served by gregarious Belgian owner Bea.

our pick Pension Andreas (Map p522; ☎ 22410 34156; fax 22410 74285; www.hotelandreas.com; Omirou 28d; s/d €50/75; 🏠 year-round; 🏠) In one of the quietest parts of the Old Town this exceptionally friendly small boutique hotel, with ever-helpful staff, has 11 tastefully decorated and individually named rooms. There is a very social breakfast bar with panoramic views across the Old Town.

TOP END

When it comes to top-class accommodation, Rhodes has it all. For the most atmospheric stay, stick to the Old Town. Getting in with bulky luggage can be a problem. Leaving can be even harder as you will have little incentive to do so.

Hotel Cava d'Oro (Map p522; ☎ 22410 36980; www.cavadoro.com; Kistinou 15; s/d €100/110; 🏠) A handy choice for visitors with luggage as your taxi can come to the door. Constructed from an 800-year-old building, the rooms have solid walls and classy furnishings, including wrought-iron beds.

Nikos & Takis Hotel (Map p522; ☎ 22410 70773; www.nikostakishotel.com; Panetiou 29; s/d €140/160; 🏠) Housed in a former old mansion, the richly decorated rooms at this discreet and rather trendy establishment are pretty plush. Each of the seven rooms is individually named, from the smallish Marokino to the capacious Grand Master, where amenities are aplenty, including piped music in the bathroom. Breakfast is taken on a banana tree-shaded patio.

Marco Polo Mansion (Map p522; ☎ 22410 25562; www.marcopolomansion.gr; Agiou Fanouriou 40-42; s/d €90/170) Featured in glossy European magazines, this old-fashioned Anatolian inn is decorated in rich Ottoman-era colours. A cool and shady lodging, right in the heart of the Old Town, it's run by the effervescent Effie and gastronome husband Spyros.

our pick Avalon (Map p522; ☎ 22410 31438; www.hotelavalon.gr; Ippoton; s/d €285-525; 🏠) For the utmost in luxury and discretion you can't beat the Avalon. As Rhodes' newest boutique getaway, the whole establishment oozes class. Finding it can be a challenge as it is sequestered away in an alley off Ippoton. The furnishing and facilities are world-class and the atmosphere rarefied. From the plasma TV to the programmable shower – enjoy!

Eating BUDGET

Old Town Avoid the restaurant trots along Sokratous and around Plateia Ippokratous. Hit the backstreets to find less touristy places to eat.

Omeraklis (Map p522; Aristotelous 30; soup €4; 🏠 3am-8am) After a night out on the tiles a plate of belly-caressing tripe and entrails soup is what is needed – at least according to Greeks who swear by its hangover-curing properties. It's pretty much all it serves. It's rough, it's ready, it's an experience worth trying.

Laganis (Map p522; ☎ 22410 35571; Alhadeif 16; mains €4-7) If you are looking for an unpretentious places with genuine food and uninflated prices, seek out this family-style taverna in the back streets. Two dishes worth sampling are the succulent fish souvlaki or the mussels filled with cheese and oven-baked.

Taverna Kostas (Map p522; ☎ 22410 26217; Pythagora 62; mains €5-7) For reliability, quality and sheer down-to-earth wholesomeness, Kostas will fit the bill. You can be sure of good grills and fish dishes relying less on flashiness than time-tested ingredients, served up without fuss in good portions.

New Town

The New Town has some surprisingly good places to eat, as long as you're prepared to look.

Halki (Map p520; ☎ 22410 33198; Kathopouli 30; mezedhes €2.50-5; 🏠 dinner) Looking and feeling somewhat out of time, Halki is a thoroughly idiosyncratic eatery almost hidden away in the New Town. Forget about swish décor; choose instead from a wide range of mezedhes and dishes on display. Order the excellent draught house wine.

Niohori (Map p520; ☎ 22410 35116; I Kazouli 29; mains €3-6) Like Halki, this essentially non-touristy eatery makes little concession to appearance. Niohori serves up its own meat – the owner is a butcher – and prepares a mouth-watering array of low-cost ready-cooked meals daily.

To Steno (Map p520; ☎ 22410 35914; Agion Anargyron 29; mezedhes €4-7; 🏠 dinner) It's a short walk out of the Old Town from the Agios Athanasios gate to To Steno and it's worth the effort for the old-style atmosphere and outdoor dining in summer. Dine ouzo-style with mezedhes such as chickpea patties, zucchini fritters or country sausages.

Indigo (Map p520; ☎ 69726 63100; New Market 105-106; mains €8-16; 🍴 dinner) You wouldn't expect to find quality in among the fast-food joints of the New Market. But there is Indigo. Salads feature strongly: the Indigo salad with croutons, rocket, walnut, lettuce oil and garlic entices, as does a 'playful chicken' salad made up of chicken strips in vegetables and a hazelnut salad with blue cheese. Subtle and scrumptious at the same time.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Old Town

Our pick Marco Polo (Map p522; ☎ 22410 29115; Agiou Fanouriou 45-47; mains €8-10) You mightn't know about this seriously select dining locale if you didn't read it here. Original Graeco-Italian creations include pork with balsamic vinegar, rocket and sliced parmesan cheese, pork fillet with *manouri* cheese (a creamier and unsalted version of feta) and fig jam, or Santorini fava lentils with caramelised onions with a sweet wine sauce and mint. Select, but palate-pleasing wine list. Dining at its best in a palm tree caressed courtyard.

La Varka (Map p522; ☎ 22410 75688; Sofokleous 5; mains €6.50-11) Blink and you've missed this quietly satisfying café-restaurant tucked away among a myriad of establishments. The menu is small, but it's fair dinkum Greek. Tourists don't often find them their way here, though it's easy to find. Symbi shrimps excel.

Nireas (Map p522; ☎ 22410 31741; Sofokleous 45-47; mains €6.50-11) Another back-street beauty, Nireas is nominally a fish restaurant but still covers the full gamut of dishes. The *mydia ahnista* (steamed mussels) in a rich flavour-some broth are worth particular mention, as are the skillet-seared *mydia saganaki* (mussels with tomato and feta cheese). Eat mezes (appetiser) style if you can. The locale is quiet and relaxing.

Hatzikelis (Map p522; ☎ 22410 27215; Alhadeif 9; mains €8.50-12) A former bakery turned fish restaurant, Hatzikelis shuns the mainstream tourist trade and sticks to noticeable quality. The shellfish excel. Look for mussels, scallops with garlic butter and *kefalotyri* cheese, fresh clams or sea urchin roe. Divine!

New Town

To Steki tou Tsima (Map p520; ☎ 22410 74390; Peloponissou 22; mezedhes €5-7) To Steki is an unpretentious and totally untouristy fish restaurant on the south side of Old Town. Sample from an

imaginative, and occasionally unusual, array of fish such, as *yermanos* (leatherback) and shellfish-based mezedhes: try grooved *fouskes* (sea squirts) to be different!

To Meltemi (Map p520; ☎ 22410 30480; cnr Plateia Kountourioti & Rodou; mains €6-13) Unusual in that the New Town sports virtually no beachside tavernas, Meltemi occupies a prime spot just north of Mandraki harbour. Dishes run a predictable gamut of fish and grills, while the oven-baked feta and an original 'Meltemi salad' are worth sampling. Piped music and nautical memorabilia complete the scene.

Drinking & Entertainment

OLD TOWN

Feelings run strong from Old Town locals about noise pollution, so there is an ongoing campaign to move disco-style bars out of the walls. What will remain are quieter, talk-oriented venues like the following options.

Kafe Besara (Map p522; ☎ 22410 30363; Sofokleous 11-12) This Aussie-owned bar is one of the Old Town's liveliest, and a great place to hang out for gossip, coffee and cheer.

Mango Cafe Bar (Map p522; ☎ 22410 24877; Plateia Dorieos 3) This bar claims to have the cheapest drinks in the Old Town, as well as internet access (see p521), and is the preferred haunt of local expats, scuba divers and die-hard travellers.

Resalto Club (Map p522; ☎ 22410 20520; Plateia Damagitou; 🎷 11pm-late) This indoor Greek music centre features live music on weekends. The repertoire ranges from *entehna* (artistic compositional) to *laika* (urban popular music) to the ever-present *rembetika* (Greek blues).

Sound & Light Show (Map p522; ☎ 22410 21922; www.hellenicfestival.gr; admission €7) This impressive show takes place from Monday to Saturday next to the walls of the Old Town, off Plateia Rimini and near the Amboise Gate. English-language sessions are staggered, but in general begin at either 9.15pm or 11.15pm. Other languages offered are French, German and Swedish.

NEW TOWN

There is a rash of discos and raucous bars in the New Town. The two main areas are Alexandrou Diakou and Orfanidou, where Western music blares from every establishment.

Down Under Bar (Map p520; ☎ 22410 32982; Orfanidou 37) For a wild night of dancing on the

bar, make for this Aussie-influenced watering hole.

Red Lion (Map p520; Orfanidou 9) For something more subdued, this bar has the relaxed atmosphere of a British pub. Ron and Vasilis will gladly answer questions about Rhodes for the price of a drink.

Colorado Entertainment Centre (Map p520; ☎ 22410 75120; Orfanidou 57) The Colorado consists of six venues in one – Studio Fame, Heaven Club R&B, Colorado Live, Förfesten, Swedco Café and IN 4 U Music Bar – and is more fun than you can shake your rear end at.

Shopping

Look out for gold and silver jewellery, leather goods and ceramics in the Old Town. Shoes are also a good buy, with styles not always found back home.

Manuel Music Center (Map p520; ☎ 22410 28266; 25 Martiou 10-13) All the latest CDs and DVDs are on sale here, including good-quality Greek releases not normally heard or bought by tourists.

Getting Around

Local buses leave from the **urban bus stop** (Map p520; Mandraki). Bus 2 goes to Anapsi, bus 3 to Rodini, bus 4 to Agios Dimitrios and bus 5 to Monte Smith. You can buy tickets at the kiosk on Mandraki.

EASTERN RHODES

Rhodes' best beaches are along the east coast. There are frequent buses to Lindos, but some of the other beaches are a bit of a hike from the road. It's possible to find uncrowded stretches of coast even in high season.

Kalitheia Thermi (admission €2.50), 10km from Rhodes Town, is a restored Italian-built spa. Within the complex are renovated colonnades, domed ceilings and mosaic floors. There is shaded and sheltered swimming available. Buses from Rhodes Town stop opposite the turn-off to the spa. The beach is used by Rhodes' diving schools (see p524). To the right there's a small sandy beach (with a snack bar); take the track that veers right from the turn-off to the spa.

Ladiko Beach, touted locally as 'Anthony Quinn Beach', is in fact two back-to-back coves with a pebbly beach on the north side and volcanic rock platforms on the south. The swimming is good, though the water

is noticeably colder and development is relatively low-key.

At Kolymbia, further down the coast, a right turn leads to over 4km of pine-fringed road to the **Epta Piges** (Seven Springs), a beautiful cool, shady valley where a lake fed by springs can be reached either along a path or through a tunnel. This is a popular tourist attraction in its own right. There are no buses to Epta Piges, so take a Lindos bus and get off at the turn-off.

Back on the coast, **Kolymbia** and **Tsambika** are sandy but somewhat crowded beaches. A steep road (signposted) leads inland 1.5km to **Moni Tsambikas**, from where there are terrific views. The monastery is a place of pilgrimage for childless women. On 18 September, the monastery's festival day, women climb up to it on their knees and then pray to conceive.

Arangelos, 4km further on and inland, is a large agricultural village with a tradition of carpet weaving and making goatskin boots by hand. Just before Arangelos there is a turn-off to **Stegna Beach**, and just after to the idyllic sandy cove of **Agathi**, perhaps the best of the bunch along this coastline. Agathi has three beach restaurants to choose from. The 15th-century **Castle of Faraklos**, above Agathi, was a prison for recalcitrant knights and the island's last stronghold to fall to the Turks. The somnolent fishing port of **Haraki**, just south of the castle, has a pebble and sand beach – not the best for swimming. There are more beaches between here and Vlyha Bay, 2km north of Lindos.

Lindos Λίνδος

pop 1091

Lindos is unquestionably the next most popular tourist destination on Rhodes after the Old Town. Excursion boats set sail daily from Mandraki Harbour and buses from resort hotels to disgorge their willing charges an hour or two later at this once quiet and pretty village with its twin bays. Today Lindos is a pretty *and* busy village, or at least it is between 10am and 4pm when most of the day-trippers congregate. There are local moves afoot to restore some of the original dignity of Lindos, including a ban on rooftop evening dining – a practice that was considered until recently a *de rigueur* experience for visitors to the village.

The village is a showpiece of dazzling white **17th-century houses**, many boasting courtyards with *hohlakia* (black-and-white pebble mosaic

floors). Once the dwellings of wealthy admirals, many have been bought and restored by foreign celebrities. The teeming main thoroughfares are lined with tourist shops and cafés, so you need to explore the labyrinthine alleyways on foot to fully appreciate the place.

Lindos is the most famous of the ancient cities of the Dodecanese, and was an important Doric settlement because of its excellent vantage point and good harbour. It was first established around 2000 BC and is overlaid with a conglomeration of Byzantine, Frankish and Turkish remains.

After the founding of the city of Rhodes, Lindos declined in commercial importance, but remained an important place of worship. The ubiquitous St Paul landed here en route to Rome. The Byzantine fortress was strengthened by the knights, and also used by the Turks.

The 15th-century Church of Agios Ioannis, in the Acropolis, is festooned with 18th-century frescoes.

ORIENTATION & INFORMATION

The village is totally pedestrianised. All vehicular traffic terminates on the central square of Plateia Eleftherias, from where the main drag, Acropolis, begins. The donkey terminus, for rides up to the Acropolis, is a little way along here. Turn right at the donkey terminus to reach the post office, after 50m.

By the donkey terminus is the Commercial Bank of Greece, with an ATM. The National Bank of Greece, located on the street opposite the Church of Agia Panagia, also has an ATM.

Lindianet (☎ 22440 32142; per hr €3.60; 🕒 9am-9pm) Internet access plus ethernet cable connection for laptop owners. In lower village.

Lindos Laundry (☎ 22440 31333; Acropolis; per load €7.50) Laundry service and second-hand English books.

Lindos Sun Tours (☎ 22440 31333; Acropolis) Has room-letting services; also rents cars and motorcycles.

Municipal Tourist Office (☎ 22440 31900; Plateia Eleftherias; 🕒 7.30am-9pm) Helpful, although too few staff, too many tourists. You may have to wait a while.

www.lindos-holiday.com A handy private website with a number of alternative villa accommodation options.

SIGHTS

Acropolis of Lindos

Spectacularly perched atop a 116m-high rock is the **Acropolis** (☎ 22440 31258; admission €6;

🕒 8.30am-2.40pm Tue-Sun Sep-May, until 6pm Tue-Sun Jun-Aug). It's a strenuous 10-minute climb to the well-signposted entrance gate. Once inside, a flight of steps leads to a large square. On the left (facing the next flight of steps) is a trirème, hewn out of the rock by the sculptor Pythocretes; a statue of Hagesandros, priest of Poseidon, originally stood on the deck of the ship. At the top of the steps ahead you enter the Acropolis via a vaulted corridor. At the other end, turn sharp left through an enclosed room to reach a row of storerooms on the right. The stairway on the right leads to the remains of a 20-columned **Hellenistic stoa** (200 BC). The Byzantine **Church of Agios Ioannis** is to the right of this stairway. The wide stairway behind the stoa leads to a 5th-century-BC propylaeum, beyond which is the 4th-century **Temple to Athena**, the site's most important ancient ruin. Athena was worshipped on Lindos as early as the 10th century BC, and this temple has replaced earlier ones on the site. From its far side there are splendid views of Lindos village and its beach.

Donkey rides to the Acropolis cost €5 one way – be aware that the poor creatures should not be carrying anyone over 50kg (112lbs), though this stipulation is rarely enforced. Better still; exercise your legs.

SLEEPING

Accommodation can be expensive, hard to find or already reserved, as much is pre-booked. Budget accommodation is limited essentially to one remaining place.

Pension Electra (☎ 22440 31266; s/d €40/50; 🍽️) Your only budget option. Electra has an expansive and popular roof terrace with superb views and a beautiful shady garden. Rooms all have fridges and there is a communal kitchen. Follow the donkey route to find it.

Filoxenia Guesthouse (☎ 22440 31266; www.lindos-filoxenia.com; d/ste ind breakfast €95/130; 🍽️) Consisting of five double rooms and three suites, these exceptionally tastefully decorated rooms inside a traditional house make for a cosy midrange choice.

EATING

Kalyпсо (☎ 22440 31669; mains €7-7.50) Set in one of Lindos' historic buildings in the lower village, Kalyпсо is one of the better dining choices. Try either sausages in mustard, pork in a pot with oregano wine and spices (*hirino stam-*

nato), or rabbit stew in red wine with pearl onions.

Mavrikos (☎ 22440 31232; mains €7-10) Right by the bus and taxi terminal, Mavrikos is Lindos' longest established and most respected restaurant. The extensive menu contains all the classic Greek dishes. In addition you should look out for individual creations, such as the fillet of port in kumquat sauce, or the chicken with fenugreek, saffron and pickled lemons.

WESTERN RHODES

Western Rhodes is greener and more forested than the east coast, but it's more exposed to winds so the sea tends to be rough, and the beaches are mostly of pebbles or stones. Nevertheless, tourist development has made strong inroads in the suburb resorts of Ixia, Trianda and Kremasti. Paradisi, despite being next to the airport, has retained some of the feel of a traditional village.

Ancient Ialysos Αρχαία Ιαλυσός

Like Lindos, Ialysos, 10km south of Rhodes Town, is a hotchpotch of Doric, Byzantine and medieval remains. The Doric city was built on Filerimos Hill, an excellent vantage point, and attracted successive invaders over the years. The only ancient remains are the foundations of a 3rd-century-BC temple and a restored 4th-century-BC fountain. Also at the site are the **Monastery of Our Lady** and the **Chapel of Agios Georgios**.

The ruined **fortress** (adult €4; 🕒 8am-5pm Tue-Sun) was used by Süleyman the Magnificent during his siege of Rhodes Town. No buses go to ancient Ialysos. The airport bus stops at Trianda, on the coast, from where Ialysos is 5km inland.

Ancient Kamiros Αρχαία Κάμειρος

The extensive **ruins** (adult €4; 🕒 8am-5pm Tue-Sun) of the Doric city of Kamiros stand on a hillside above the west coast, 34km south of Rhodes Town. The ancient city, known for its figs, oil and wine, reached the height of its powers in the 6th century BC. By the 4th century BC it had been superseded by Rhodes. Most of the city was destroyed by earthquakes in 226 and 142 BC, but the layout is still easily discernible.

From the entrance walk straight ahead and down the steps. The semicircular rostrum on the right is where officials made speeches to the public. Opposite are the remains of a **Doric**

temple, with one column still standing. The area next to it, with a row of intact columns, was probably where the public watched priests performing rites in the temple. Ascend the wide stairway to the ancient city's main street. Opposite the top of the stairs is one of the best preserved of the **Hellenistic houses** that once lined the street. Walk along the street, ascend three flights of steps and continue ahead to the ruins of the 3rd-century **great stoa**, which had a 206m portico supported by two rows of Doric columns. It was built on top of a huge 6th-century cistern that supplied the houses with rainwater through an advanced drainage system. Behind the stoa, at the city's highest point, stood the **Temple to Athena**, with terrific views inland.

Buses from Rhodes Town to Kamiros stop on the coast road, 1km from the site.

Ancient Kamiros to Monolithos Αρχαία Κάμειρος προς Μονόλιθο

Skala Kamirou, 13.5km south of ancient Kamiros, is a fairly unremarkable place sporting a few market gardens, a scattering of tavernas and a petrol station. More importantly, it serves as the access port for travellers heading to and from the island of Halki (p531). The road south from here to Monolithos has some of the island's most impressive scenery. From Skala Kamirou the road winds uphill, with great views across to Halki. This is just a taste of what's to come at the ruined 16th-century **Castle of Kastellos**, reached by taking a rough turn-off from the main road, 2km beyond Skala Kamirou. There is a left fork to the wine-making area of Embonas (p531) 8km further on. The main road continues for another 9km to **Siana**, a picturesque village below Mt Akramyitis (825m), famed for its honey and *souma* – a brew made from seasonal fruit, similar to Cretan *raki* (distilled grape spirit).

The village of Monolithos, 5km beyond Siana, has the spectacularly sited 15th-century **Castle of Monolithos** perched on a sheer 240m-high rock and reached via a dirt track. To enter, climb through the hole in the wall. Continuing along this track, bear right at the fork for **Moni Agiou Georgiou**, or left for the very pleasant shingled **Fourni Beach**.

Most people come this way en route to Halki via the afternoon caïque, or on a round-island tour. While waiting for the ferry take a relaxed a lunch at **O Loukas** (☎ 22460 31271; mains

€5-8), the closest taverna to the ferry jetty. The menu is limited but is excellent value. The daily lunch specials – including beer or wine – are €13.

SOUTHERN RHODES

South of Lindos, Rhodes becomes progressively less developed. Although **Pefki**, 2km south of Lindos, does attract package tourists, it's still possible to escape them, away from the main beach.

Lardos is a pleasant village 6km west of Lindos and 2km inland from Lardos Beach. From the far side of Lardos a right turn leads in 4km to **Moni Agias Ypsenis** (Monastery of Our Lady) through hilly, green countryside.

Heading south from Lardos, don't miss the almost hidden **Glystra Beach**, 4km south along the coast road. This diminutive bay is one of the best swimming spots along the whole eastern coastline.

The well-watered village of **Laerma** is 12km northwest of Lardos. From here it's another 5km to the beautifully sited 9th-century **Moni Tharri**, the island's first monastery, which has been re-established as a monastic community. It contains some fine 13th-century frescoes and is worth a visit.

Askipieio, 8km north of Gennadi, is an unspoilt village with the ruins of yet another castle and the 11th-century **Church of Kimisis Theotokou**, which has fine Byzantine wall paintings.

Gennadi Γεννάδι

pop 655

Gennadi (ye-nah-dhi), 13km south of Lardos, is an attractive, largely untouched agricultural, seaside village masquerading as a holiday centre. For independent travellers it's probably the best base for a protracted stay in the south. The village itself, a patchwork of narrow streets and whitewashed houses, is set several hundred metres back from the beach.

There's a few sleeping and eating choices. **Effie's Dreams Apartments** (☎ 22440 43410; www.effiesdreams.com; d/tr €54/58; 🍷 🍷) offers both. It is right by an enormous 800-year-old mulberry tree and has modern, spotlessly clean studios with lovely rural and sea vistas from the communal balcony. The friendly Greek-Australian owners will meet you if you call ahead. Below the apartments, **Effie's Dream Cafe Bar** (☎ 22440 43410; snacks €3-5) serves drinks

and filling snacks, such as country-style sausage with onions and peppers.

I Kouzina tis Mamas (☎ 22440 43547; pasta €5-6) on the main street specialises in pizza and pasta, as well as a wide range of Greek grills.

Gennadi to Prasonisi Γεννάδι προς Πρασονήσι

From Gennadi an almost uninterrupted beach of pebbles, shingle and sand dunes extends down to **Plimmyri**, 11km south. It's easy to find deserted stretches.

From Plimmyri the main road continues to **Kattavia**, Rhodes' most southerly village. The 11km dirt road north to Messanagros winds through terrific scenery. From Kattavia a 10km road leads south to remote **Cape Prasonisi**, the island's southernmost point, once joined to Rhodes by a narrow sandy isthmus but now split by encroaching seas. It's a popular spot for windsurfing.

A good place to sleep is at **Lahania**, signposted 2km off the main highway, in **Studios Alonia** (☎ 22440 46027; studios €42; 🍷 🍷), where each self-catering studio has a kitchenette and fridge. These are owned by the proprietors of **Taverna Platanos** (☎ 22440 46027; mains €3-5), a relaxed taverna in the main square of Lahania that underwent a recent major facelift.

Down on Prasonisi, **Faros Taverna** (☎ 22440 91030; mains €5-8) is one of two tavernas on the beach. The food is uncomplicated and features grills and fish, while the comfortable rooms (doubles €40) attract a mainly windsurfing crowd.

South of Monolithos

Lonely and exposed, Rhodes' southwest coast doesn't see as many visitors as other parts of the island. Forest fires in recent years have devastated many of the west-facing hillsides and there is a general end-of-the-world feeling about the whole region.

The beaches south of Monolithos are prone to strong winds. From the important cross-roads village of **Apolakkia**, 10km south of Monolithos, a road crosses the island to Gennadi, passing through the unspoilt villages of **Arnitha** and **Vati** with an optional detour to **Istrios** and **Profilia**, where you can dine in rustic comfort at **To Limeri tou Listi** (☎ 22440 61578; mains €6-8) on dishes such as rooster in red-wine sauce or other solid country fare.

A turn-off to the left, 7km south of Apolakkia, leads to the 18th-century **Moni Skiadi**.

It's a serene place with terrific views down to the coast, and there is free basic accommodation for visitors.

THE INTERIOR

The east-west roads that cross the island have great scenery and very little traffic. If you have transport, they're well worth exploring. It's also good cycling territory if you have a suitably geared bicycle.

Petaloudes Πεταλούδες

Known as the Valley of the Butterflies, **Petaloudes** (adult €1-3; 🌅 8.30am-sunset 1 May-30 Sep) is one of the more popular 'sights' on the package-tour itinerary. It's reached along a 6km turn-off from the west-coast road, 2.5km south of Paradisi.

The so-called 'butterflies' are in fact strikingly coloured moths (*Callimorpha quadripunctata*) that are lured to this gorge of rustic footbridges, streams and pools by the scent of the resin exuded by the storax trees. While the moths have undoubtedly benefited from having a reserve of their own, there is an inevitable trade-off as they become an object of human curiosity. So regardless of what you may see other people doing, do not clap your hands or make any noises to disturb the butterflies as their numbers are under threat due to such unwanted noise disturbance.

Around Petaloudes

From Petaloudes a winding cross-island road leads to the 18th-century **Moni Kalopetras**, built by Alexander Ypsilandis, the grandfather of the Greek freedom fighter. This same road leads north across the central mountain spine of roads through a rather dry landscape full of olive trees to the pretty village of **Psinthos**, which makes for a very pleasant lunch break.

From Psinthos you can choose to loop back to Rhodes Town (22km), via a fast but undistinguished direct route passing through **Kalythies**, or head further south and pick up the very pretty cross-island route from **Kolymbia** to **Salakos**.

Just off the main square in Psinthos you'll find the well-regarded **Pigi Fasouli Estiatorio** (☎ 22410 50071; mains €5-7), where you dine under cool plane trees next to running water – all to the sound of incessant cicadas. Good dishes on offer are goat and

chickpeas, pork and lima beans, and small pies called *pitaroudia*.

Wine Country

From Salakos you may detour to **Embonas** on the slopes of Mt Attavyros (1215m), the island's highest mountain. Embonas is the wine capital of Rhodes and produces some of the island's best tipples. The red Cava Emery, or Zacosta and white Villare are good choices. You can taste and buy them at **Emery Winery** (☎ 22410 41208; www.emery.gr; admission free; 🌅 9.30am-3.30pm) in Embonas.

Embonas is no great shakes itself, despite being touted by the tourism authorities as a 'traditional village'. However, **Bakis** (☎ 22460 41442; mains €5-8) on the main square is a good spot to try some grills from local meat. The *paidakia* (spare-rib chops), or the chunky *kondosouvli* (Cypriot-style spit-roast kebabs) are particularly succulent.

You may nonetheless wish to detour around Mt Attavyros to **Agios Isidoros**, 14km south of Embonas, a prettier and still unspoilt wine-producing village that you can visit en route to Siana.

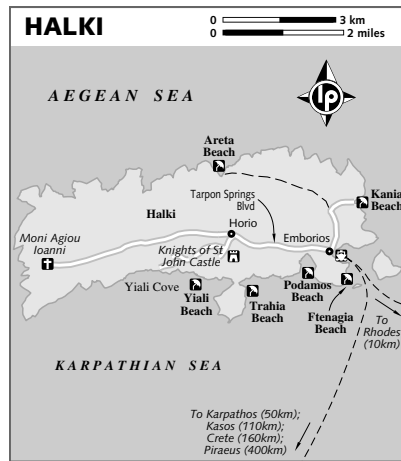
HALKI ΧΑΛΚΗ

pop 313

The dry rocky island of Halki (*hal-ki*) lies almost unnoticed, piggybacked off the western flank of its larger neighbour Rhodes. Out of reach of most day-trip excursions from Rhodes, Halki sees a steady flow of visitors who come for its relaxation value. Almost abandoned at the turn of the 20th century when the sponge-fishing industry took a nose dive, Halki existed in almost forgotten silence until the vacation boom of the 1970s and 1980s saw its fortunes rise once more.

Most people come to stay in restored stone villas that once belonged to sea captains. There's not a lot to do other than chill out, read, contemplate, eat, swim and socialise. There's little traffic on the island and most people walk to where they want to go. Admittedly, the palpable foreign element has sanitised the Greek element somewhat but Halki still has soul – and a Greek one at that.

If you are a bibliophile, a poet, a writer, spiritually motivated or incurably romantic, Halki is ideal for you.



Getting There & Away

CAÏQUE & BUS

There is a daily local ferry to Halki at 2.30pm from Skala Kamirou (€8.50, 1½ hours) on Rhodes. From Halki to Skala Kamirou the ferry leaves at 6am Monday to Friday and Sunday, 7am on Saturday. A bus to Rhodes Town connects with the arriving ferry at 7.40am and at 9.30am on Saturday. There is no bus on Sunday.

Walk 150m from the Skala Kamirou ferry quay to the main road to find the bus stop. The two ferries operating the route are the **Nissos Halki** (☎ 6973460968) and the **Nikos Express** (☎ 6945743539).

FERRY

Ferries serve Halki three times weekly in either direction, with services to Rhodes (€8, two hours), Pigadia on Karpathos (€11.50, three hours), Sitia on Crete (€20, 7½ hours), Santorini (€27, 15 hours) and Piraeus (€34, 22 hours).

A Nisyros–Tilos–Rhodes–Halki service commenced at the time of writing with the small *Panagia Spiliani*. Tickets are available from Chalki Tours and Zifos Travel in Emborios (see right).

Getting Around

There is a minibus that runs hourly from Emborios to and from Moni Agiou Ioanni (€2) and stops in between. There is also an over-priced **taxi** (☎ 6944434429; Emborios), that charges

€4 to Pondamos Beach from Emborios, €6.50 to Ftenagia Beach and €33 return to Moni Agiou Ioanni.

There are no rental cars or motorcycles, but there is a water taxi to the main beaches and excursions to the island of Alimia (€30). Additionally, day excursions are run on Sundays in summer to Tilos (€23) by the two Skala Kamirou ferries (see left).

EMBORIOS ΕΜΠΟΡΕΙΟΣ

pop 52

The picturesque port village of Emborios resembles Gialos on Syri, but on a smaller scale. The port is draped around a narrow horseshoe bay, and surrounded by former sea captains' mansions – some renovated, some in a state of disrepair, yet slowly being renovated. They garland the petite, crystal-blue harbour waters in an almost externally voyeuristic display of blue- and brown-shuttered windows. Cars are banned from the harbour once the ferries have come and gone, so the waterside always enjoys a relaxing, vehicle-free setting.

Orientation & Information

Boats arrive at the middle of Emborios. Most commercial services and accommodation options are within 200m of the harbour. The free quarterly newspaper the *Halki Visitor*, available on the island from the two travel agencies – among other outlets – is a good source of local information.

There's a reliable DodecNet ATM in a stand-alone booth on the harbour itself.

Chalki Tours (☎ 22460 45281; fax 22460 45219) For assistance on accommodation, travel, excursions and currency exchange.

Diafora (☎ 22460 45061; per 30min €6) Internet access; behind the bakery in Emborios.

Doctor (☎ 22460 45206; ☒ 9am–noon & 6–8pm Mon–Fri) Can be contacted on call.

Port police (☎ 22460 45220) On the harbour.

Post office (☒ 9am–1.30pm Mon–Fri) On the harbour.

www.chalki.gr A helpful reference point.

www.halkivisitor.com A useful website hosted by the local newspaper.

Zifos Travel (☎ 22460 45028; zifos-travel@rho.forthnet.gr) For assistance on accommodation, travel, excursions and currency exchange.

Sights

Halki's main visual feature are the **old mansions** that festoon the harbour. Many have been, or are being, restored to their former glory, while

others are in a complete state of disrepair, overgrown with weeds and decrepit. Either way they give Halki that picturesque look that visitors so appreciate.

The impressive stone **clock tower** at the southern side of the harbour is a gift from the Halkiots of Florida. While the clock tower may look resolutely impressive, don't rely on it for the time; each of the four faces is stuck on a different hour of the day.

The **Church of Agios Nikolaos** has the tallest belfry in the Dodecanese and boasts a particularly well-made and impressive pebbled courtyard on the east side. There is a small upstairs **museum** (adult €2; ☒ 6–7pm Mon & Fri, 11am–noon Sun) with ecclesiastical exhibits.

Sleeping

Most villa and studio accommodation is pre-booked by foreign tour companies. What little private accommodation there is can be in high demand, so bookings are best. There is no formal hotel as yet on the island, though the old sponge factory on the south side of the harbour was due to open by the time of this book's publication.

Avgi Rooms (☎ 22460 45045; s/d €30–40) Slap-bang in the middle of the harbour next to the minimarket are a clutch of simple rooms for travel-weary voyagers arriving from an afternoon or evening ferry. Call ahead to be sure of a bed.

Captain's House (☎ /fax 22460 45201; captains.house@ath.forthnet.gr; d €35–40) This homey 19th-century house, with period furniture and a tranquil tree-shaded garden, is perhaps the most comfortable place to stay for solo travellers. Bookings are always recommended.

Mouthouria (☎ 22460 45071; halkifrances@yahoo.co.uk; house €65–95, minimum stay 2 nights) Rent a whole renovated captain's house that can accommodate up to six people. It's spacious, fully equipped, has superb south-side harbour views, and is ideal for longer stays and romantic getaways.

our pick **Villa Praxitheia** (☎ 69724 22727; www.vilapraxitheia.com; apt €140–210) If you like to be close to the water, check out this set of fully furnished high-ceilinged and wooden-floored rooms. Available as individual rooms or as an apartment package, they are a 200m hike to the right of the port jetty. Owned by the same family as Villa Aristeia, it's ideal for couples or families with up to two children.

Eating

Mavri Thalassa (☎ 22460 45021; mains €4–6) This restaurant at the south side of the harbour is generally well regarded and offers fresh seafood dishes. The whole grilled calamari, when available fresh, is delicate and soft, while the local, minuscule Halki shrimps – eaten whole – are initially crunchy and then beautifully succulent.

Maria's Taverna (☎ 22460 45300; mains €4–7) Dishes up solidly satisfying and reliable home-cooked fare, with Halki lamb stew being the house speciality and spaghetti bolognese well recommended. Its drawcard is its central location under the few shady trees left in the port village.

Avra (☎ 69451 48196; mains €4–7) Avra offers fast, efficient service and a comprehensive and tempting mezes and mains menu. The Georgian owners serve excellent chicken dishes, while Halki shrimps downed with draught white wine will assuage jaded travel taste buds.

Remezzo (☎ 22460 45010; mains €5–7) Touting itself as a pizza and pasta joint, its menu transcends Italian offerings. The Mexican bean and corn-charged salad gives respite from the omnipresent 'Greek salad' while the baked *halvas* and apple desert will caress post-prandial taste buds.

AROUND HALKI

Podamos Beach is the closest and the best beach, located 1km from Emborios in the direction of Horio. The narrowish beach is sandy and the water is shallow – ideal for kids. For food you can try the **Podamos Beach Taverna** (☎ 22460 45295; mains €5–7; ☒ lunch), which also offers four basic rooms. **Ftenagia Beach**, past the headland and 500m to the south of Emborios, is a mite short in the sand stakes, but there is excellent rock swimming and it offers good snorkelling. The **Ftenagia Beach Taverna** (☎ 6945998333; mains €5–7; ☒ lunch & dinner) is a cosy waterside eatery with friendly service and a range of satisfying lunch and dinner choices.

Horio, a 30-minute walk along Tarpon Springs Blvd from Emborios, was once a thriving community of 3000 people, but it's now almost completely derelict, bar a small church and a few renovated structures. A barely perceptible path leads from Horio's churchyard to a **Knights of St John castle**, with spectacular views.

Moni Agiou Ioanni is a two-hour, unshaded 8km walk along a broad concrete road from Horio. The church and courtyard, protected by the shade of an enormous cypress tree, is a quiet, tranquil place, but it comes alive each year on 28 and 29 August during the feast of the church's patron, St John.

KARPATHOS ΚΑΡΠΑΘΟΣ

pop 6084

Like an elongated bridge between Rhodes and Crete, Karpathos (*kar-pa-thos*) offers a winning mix of size, scenery, beach scenes, food and culture, making a visit to this southern Dodecanese destination a winner. While off the beaten track somewhat, the island is well served by transport and even attracts a slow but steady trail of packaged visitors.

It's an island with an anonymous history and doesn't feature prominently in the chronicles of the region. Many of its inhabitants migrated to the USA, from where they slowly trickle back and invest their overseas earnings into their homeland. It's an island with a pleasant feel – a comfortable mix of mountain, sea and plains. It showcases some stunning beaches with excellent diving, while windsurfing devotees flock to its windy southern shores to engage in fast and furious water fun.

The north of the island is an almost separate destination. Isolated for years from the south by an atrocious and precipitous road, it stubbornly survives and proudly sports a village that is as culturally idiosyncratic as anywhere in the Aegean.

Getting There & Away

AIR

In summer there are 10 flights weekly to and from Athens (€73), seven weekly to Kasos (€25, five minutes) and Sitia (€47, one hour), and up to three daily to Rhodes (€28, 25 minutes). **Olympic Airlines** (☎ 22450 22150; www.olympicairlines.com) is on the central square in Pigadia. The airport is 13km southwest of Pigadia.

FERRY

LANE Lines of Crete provides three services weekly to Rhodes (€18.50, four hours) via Halki (€11.50, three hours), as well as to Piraeus



(€33, 1½ hours) via Kasos (€7.50, 1½ hours), Sitia (€17, 4¼ hours), Agios Nikolaos (€20, seven hours), Milos (€33, 13 hours) and Santorini (€26, 10 hours).

Tickets can be bought from **Possi Travel** (☎ 22450 22235; possitvl@hotmail.com; Apodimon Karpathion) in Pigadia.

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

There is no airport bus. Travellers must take a taxi (€15) or seek independent transport.

BUS

Pigadia is the transport hub of the island; a schedule is posted at the **bus terminus** (☎ 22450 22338; M Mattheou). Buses (€1.50 to €2) serve most of the settlements in southern Karpathos, including the west-coast beaches. There is no bus between Pigadia and Olymbos or Diafani in the north, but in summer a bus meets the excursion boats from Pigadia at Diafani and connects to Olymbos.

CAR, MOTORCYCLE & BICYCLE

On the east side of Pigadia, **Rent a Car Circle** (☎ 22450 22690; 28 Oktovriou) rents cars and motorcycles. **Possi Travel** (☎ 22450 22148; possitvl@hotmail.com; Apodimon Karpathion) also arranges car rental.

The precipitous, and at times hairy, 19.5km stretch of road from Spoa to Olymbos is being slowly graded and will one day be sealed. You can drive it with care; do not tackle this road by motorcycle or scooter. If you rent a vehicle and plan to drive to Olymbos, opt for a small jeep and fill up your tank before you leave.

EXCURSION BOAT

In summer there is a daily excursion boat from Pigadia to Diafani (return including the bus to Olymbos €20, one way excluding the bus to Olymbos €8). There are also frequent boats to the beaches of Kyra Panagia and Apella (€10). Tickets can be bought at the quay.

From Diafani, excursion boats go to nearby beaches and occasionally to the uninhabited islet of Saria, where there are some Byzantine remains. See p539 for details.

TAXI

Pigadia's **taxi rank** (☎ 22450 22705; Dimokratias) is close to the centre of town. A price list is displayed. A taxi to Ammoöpi costs €8, the airport €15, Arkasa and Pyles €16, and Kyra Panagia €20.

PIGADIA ΠΗΓΑΔΙΑ

pop 1692

After being spoilt with the picturesque harbours of Symi, Chalki and Kastellorizo, Pigadia (*pi-gha-dhi-ya*), Karpathos' capital and main port, does not immediately grab your attention. It's a modern town and is attractive enough in its own way, but without any eminent buildings or sites. Much of the cement-based architecture was erected during a boom in the 1960s and '70s. Upon further investigation, however, Pigadia is a pleasant and busy town. It is built on the edge of **Vrondi Bay**, a 4km-long sandy beach where you can rent water-sports equipment. A 2km walk southwest along the beach are the remains of the early Christian **Basilica of Agia Fotini**.

Orientation & Information

The ferry quay is at the northern end of the wide harbour. It's a short walk to the centre of Pigadia, which is punctuated by the main street, Apodimon Karpathion. This in turn leads west to the central square of Plateia 5 Oktovriou.

Caffe Galileo Internet 2000 (☎ 22450 23606; Apodimon Karpathion; per hr €3; ☎ 9am-2pm & 6pm-1am) Offers internet access.

National Bank of Greece (Apodimon Karpathion) Has an ATM.

NewsStand (☎ 22450 22718; Dimokratias) Sells foreign newspapers and magazines.

Police (☎ 22450 22224) Near the hospital at the western end of town.

Possi Travel (☎ 22450 22148; possitvl@hotmail.com; Apodimon Karpathion) The main travel agency for ferry and air tickets.

Post office (Ethnikis Andistasis) Near the hospital.

Pot Pourri (☎ 22450 29073; Apodimon Karpathion; per hr €3; ☎ 7am-1am) Offers internet access.

Tourist information office (☎ 22450 23835; ☎ Jul-Aug) In a kiosk in the middle of the seafront.

www.inkarpathos.com Mainly local information – mixed Greek and English.

www.karpathos.com General travel and island information in English.

Sleeping

There's plenty of accommodation in Pigadia; a few enterprising owners meet the boats.

Avra Hotel (☎ 22450 22388; fax 22450 23486; 28 Oktovriou 50; s/d €20/25) This E-class hotel has small but comfortable rooms with ceiling fan, fridge and a small common kitchen.

Elias Rooms (☎ 22450 22446; www.eliasrooms.com; s/d €20/25, s/d apt €25/35; 🏠) Cosy Elias Rooms is located in a quiet part of town with great views and a lot of convenience. Choose a room or a larger traditional apartment. Owner Ilias Hatzigeorgiou is a mine of local information.

Hotel Karpathos (☎ 22450 22347; fax 22450 22248; s/d €30/35; 🏠) Where budget takes precedence over complete comfort you might just give this C-class hotel a look-in. Appearing a tad old and jaded from the outside, the rooms inside are well-lit, airy and comfortable enough. It also has a TV and fridge.

Amaryllis Hotel (☎ /fax 22450 22375; www.amaryllis.gr; s/d €35/50; 🏠) In a quiet part of Pigadia is this C-class hotel, offering a mixture of airy and exceptionally clean studios and apartments.

All have kitchenette and TV, and at least half of them enjoy sea views.

Hotel Titania (☎ 22450 22144; www.titaniakarpathos.gr; s/d €40/55; 🏠) Handy for out-of-season travellers, the Titania is open all year. While the lobby looks a bit gloomy with its heavy, dated furniture, the rooms are of standard comfort and do have a fridge and a TV. Request a sea-view room if you can.

Odyssey Hotel (☎ 22450 23240; www.odyssey-karpathos.gr; studios €50/65 🏠) When self-catering is your preferred option, look no further than this tidy and welcoming complex set back in a quiet part of Pigadia. Owner Helen Stamatidis offers a choice of small to capacious studios that can cater for between four and six people. They are well equipped, very comfort-

able and, most importantly for a longer stay, have room to breathe.

Eating

There are plenty of choices when it comes to eating. The waterfront establishments tend to be hit and miss when it comes to quality, though there are some exceptions. *Makarounes* (home-made pasta cooked with cheese and onions) is the local speciality.

I Zoi ton Angelon (☎ 22450 22984; Apodimon Karpathion; mains €5-7.50) Overlooking the harbour and set around a balcony running along the building, this quirky little eatery does some top dishes. There's a vegetarian platter for meat avoiders. Then there's a rich and filling beef stew, runner beans in tomato sauce, sardines and an excellent spicy cheese salad.

To Perigiali (☎ 22450 22334; Apodimon Karpathion; mains €3-8) Lurking unobtrusively among its more commercial neighbours, this little *ouzerie* (place that serves ouzo and light snacks) is a cut above most. Fish mezedhes feature predominantly, though you might graze on the rich Karpathian salad with capers or sample some steamed snails.

Mike's Restaurant (☎ 22450 22727; grills €6-8) One of the longer-standing and more popular eateries, and now under the management of Manolis and Minas, Mike's serves consistently good, solid fare with bright service. Among the specials are chicken spaghetti and stuffed zucchini flowers.

I Anna (☎ 22450 22820; Apodimon Karpathion; mains €5.50-9) Ignore the fading picture menus and tacky restaurant sign and snap up Pigadia's freshest fish, caught daily off the owner's own boats. Other suggested dishes are fisherman's macaroni with octopus, shrimps and mussels, or the Karpathian sardines in oil.

our pick To Helliniko (☎ 22450 23932; Apodimon Karpathion; daily specials €5-11; 🏠 year-round) Boasting a pleasant outdoor terrace and a tasteful interior, the Helliniko is very popular. Check the daily specials board for the best deal. The Karpathian goat cooked in a tomato purée is particularly commendable, as is the hearty Karpathian salad, which includes egg and potato.

SOUTHERN KARPATOS

Ammoöpi Αμμοόπη

If you are seeking sun and sand, and some of the best and clearest water for snorkelling in the whole of the Aegean, head for Ammoöpi

(amm-oh-oh-pee), 5km south of Pigadia. Ammoöpi is a scattered beach resort without any real centre or easily identifiable landmarks.

In addition to snorkelling, die-hard windsurfers in the know head for the broad **Afiartis Bay**, a further 8km south of Ammoöpi, to enjoy some world-class conditions. The bay supports windsurfing centres and caters for advanced surfers at the northern end and beginners in the sheltered Makrygialos Bay lagoon at the southern end. While most surfers come on package tours from Germany, casual 'blow-ins' are more than welcome. One particularly good outfit is **Pro Center** (☎ 22450 91062; www.chris-schill.com; Afiarti).

SLEEPING & EATING

All sleeping and eating recommendations are at the northern end of Ammoöpi. There is a pretty wide choice of options. The places to eat are rather scattered.

Hotel Sophia (☎ /fax 22450 81078; www.sophiahotel.gr; d/tr €40/47; 🏠) For starters, this is a quiet and comfortable midrange hotel at the northern end of the settlement.

Blue Sea Hotel (☎ /fax 22450 81097; huguette@rho.forthnet.gr; d/tr incl breakfast €45/50) Just in front of Hotel Sophia and marginally better, this hotel has 27 comfortable double rooms, each with fridge and ceiling fan.

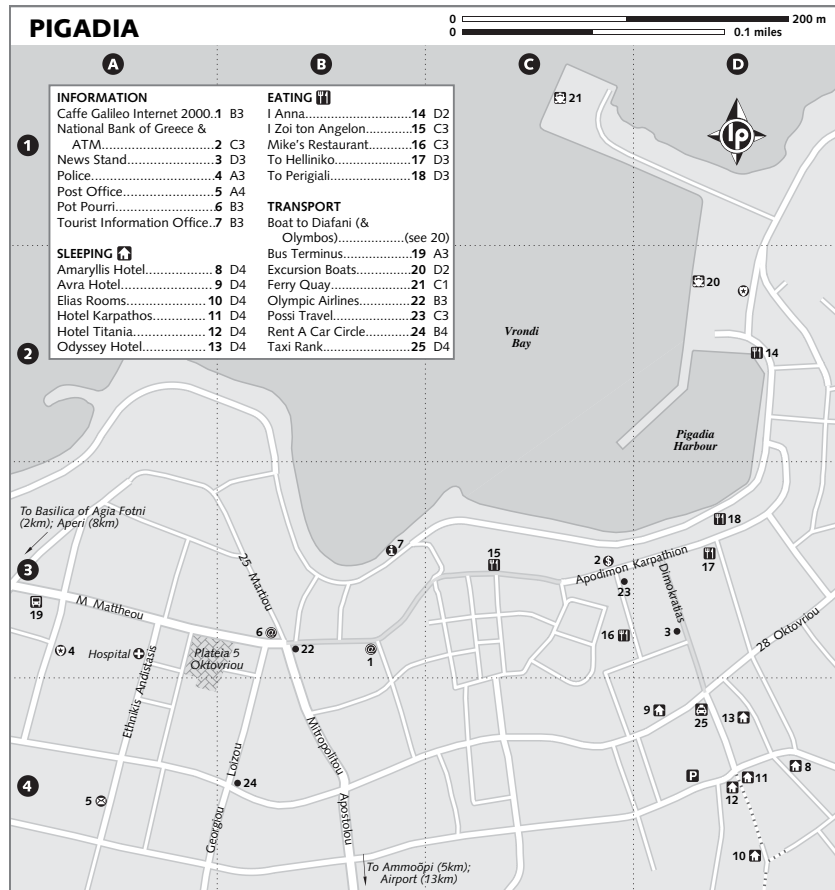
our pick Vardes (☎ /fax 22450 81111; www.hotelvardes.com; s/d €45/55; 🏠) For a really laid-back and relaxing choice try Vardes, a small block of tasteful, spacious and airy studios, set back against the hillside among a lush olive grove and a few banana palms. All have large, breezy rooms, shaded balcony, phone and TV.

Ammoöpi Taverna (☎ 22450 81138; mains €4-7) At the far northern end of Ammoöpi and right on the beach, the food here is uniformly good. Look for the daily specials – the clove-laced *mousakas* (sliced eggplant and mincemeat arranged in layers and baked) excels. There is a fairly genuine 'Greek music night' once a week.

Taverna Helios (☎ 22450 81148; mains €5-7) Just back from the main beach and handy for lunch after a swim, Helios offers Greek and international cuisine with large portions.

Menetes Μενετές pop 450

Menetes (me-ne-tes) is perched precariously on top of a sheer cliff overlooking the rolling landscape leading to Pigadia, 8km distant.



It's a picturesque, unspoilt village with pastel-coloured neoclassical houses lining its main street. Behind the main street are narrow, stepped alleyways that wind between more modest whitewashed dwellings. The village has a small but well-presented **museum** (admission free) on the right as you come in from Pigadia. Opening hours are upon request – the owner of Taverna Manolis will open it up for you.

There is only one place to stay and that's on the north side of Menetes; **Mike Rigas Domatia** (☎ 22450 81269; d/tr €20/25), signposted on the outside as 'Rigas Kato Nero'. Its eight rooms bask in a traditional flower-bedecked Karpathian house, caressed by a fruit and vegetable-filled garden and accompanied by a menagerie of languid dogs and cats.

Stop by **Taverna Manolis** (☎ 22450 81103; mains €5-7) for generous helpings of grilled meat, or take a break at **Dionysos Fiesta** (☎ 22450 81269; mains €5-7), specialising in local dishes, including an omelette made with artichokes and Karpathian sausages.

Top culinary marks go to **Pelagia Taverna** (☎ 22450 81135; mains €5-8), on the road down to (or up from) Ammoöpi, where free-range goat and lamb are on offer. Opt for the Karpathian salad, the local sheep's milk and white *manouri* cheese or the excellent mashed fava lentils served with raw onion.

Arkasa & Finiki Αρκάσα & Φινίκι

The west coast is a little wilder than the Pigadia side, yet it has its own beauty. There are few settlements and only a few decent places to swim. Coming from Pigadia via Menetes you will come across the two main settlements. Arkasa (ar-ka-sa), 9km from Menetes, has morphed from being a traditional Karpathian village into a low-key resort of sorts. The village itself is set back from its beach annexe.

Follow a turn-off for 500m to the remains of the 5th-century **Basilica of Agia Sophia**, where two chapels stand amid mosaic fragments and columns. **Agios Nikolaos Beach** is just south across the headland from here.

The serene fishing village of Finiki (fi-ni-ki) lies 2km north of Arkasa. The best local swimming is at **Agios Georgios Beach** between Arkasa and Finiki, though the small, sandy and protected beach in Finiki itself is OK. **Kamarakia Beach**, signposted before Agios Georgios, is a narrow protected cove, but there are strong sea currents.

Sleeping is neat at **Glaros Studios** (☎ 22450 61015; fax 22450 61016; Agios Nikolaos; studios €55-60), right on Agios Nikolaos Beach. Done out in Karpathian style, the few studios have raised sofa-like beds and large terraces with sun beds that enjoy a cool sea breeze. There's a relaxed adjoining restaurant with a limited but satisfactory menu.

On the road to Finiki, **Eleni Studios** (☎ /fax 22450 61248; www.elenikarpathos.gr; Arkasa; apt €50; 🚽) has fully equipped and very tidy apartments built around a relaxing garden. There's an on-site bar, too, for sunset drinks.

In Finiki, an obvious yet recommendable place to eat is the **Finiki View Taverna** (☎ 22450 61026; mains €5-7.50). Taking poll position on the location stakes overlooking the beach this place does look touristy, but it's Greek enough when it comes to the crunch. The whitebait, octopus salad or the caper salad are all excellent options.

Some 9km north of Finiki, just before the road winds uphill to Lefkos, are the secluded **Pine Tree Studios** (☎ 69773 69948; pinetree_adia@hotmail.com; Adia; d €35; 🚽). These comfortable studios with views over to Kasos make for a quiet rural retreat and include an excellent yet casual outdoor restaurant specialising in dishes cooked in a wood oven. Taste the *katsiki stifadho* (goat in red-wine sauce). The studios are equipped with fridge and kitchenette. Owner Nikos Papanikolaou will tell you about a therapeutic mineral water spring nearby. Don't miss it.

Walkers might want to hike up the **Flaskia Gorge**, or as an easier option hike to the nearby **Iliondas Beach**. Again Nikos Papanikolaou will provide details.

Lefkos Λευκός pop 120

LeLefkosfkos (lef-kos), 13km north of Finiki and 2km down from the main coastal road, is a burgeoning resort centred on a series of attractive, sandy coves. In summer Lefkos can get crowded, but at other times it still has a rugged, all-mine feel about it.

Archaeology buffs may care to explore the underground remains of a **Roman cistern**, reached by heading up the approach road and looking for the brown-and-yellow sign on the left to the 'catacombs'.

Accommodation is often prebooked but you can almost always find a spot upon arrival. There are many options, among which

a solid choice would have to be **Le Grand Bleu** (☎ /fax 22450 71400; www.legrandbleu-lefkos.gr; studio/apt €55/90; 🚽), a set of tastefully decorated studios and larger apartments fully equipped for easy self-catering; wi-fi should be available by the time you read this. It overlooks the curving Gialou Horafi middle beach.

Nearby and abutting the beach in the Frangolimnionas neighbourhood of Lefkos are the three separate blocks of **Aegean View Studios** (☎ /fax 22450 71462; studios €45), run by a Greek Australian. An uncomplicated and economical bet, all studios are airy and have modern kitchenettes.

Come dine time, head to the little harbour where, of the handful of tavernas, **Dramundana** (☎ 22450 71167; mains €5-8) is an unfussy, homey place with a dishes to look and pick. Fish cakes and fragrant chicken stand out. Better still, **Le Grand Bleu** (☎ /fax 22450 71400; mains €7.50-12) also boasts a commendable taverna. It offers a shady retreat from the beach, and is neat and flower-decked. Mezedhes include garlic mushrooms and a vegetarian-cooked *imam baildi* (eggplant in oil with herbs), while the Karpathian mixed platter comprising sausages, cheese, capers and sardines will fill.

GETTING THERE & AROUND

There are daily buses to Lefkos and a taxi from Pigadia costs €24. Hitching can be slow as there is not much traffic.

Lefkos Rent A Car (☎ /fax 22450 71057; sissamis@hol.gr) is a reliable outlet with competitive prices: €30 a day in summer for a small car. Owner Nikos will deliver vehicles, free of charge, to anywhere in southern Karpathos.

NORTHERN KARPATHOS

Diafani Διαφάνι pop 250

Diafani is Karpathos' small northern port, where scheduled ferries stop regularly and in summer an excursion boat arrives daily from Pigadia. It's a lazy indolent kind of place and is in stark contrast to its busy sister port, Pigadia, to the south. If you are visiting Olymbos by boat, you will pass through Diafani. In summer, buses meet the daily excursion boat and transport visitors to Olymbos. Otherwise, scheduled buses leave for Olymbos daily at 7.30am, 2.30pm and 5pm year-round.

There's no post office or ATM, so bring cash supplies with you. Currency-exchange facilities are available, however.

There's a fair smattering of accommodation choices. These include the comfortable **Balaskas Hotel** (☎ /fax 22450 51320; www.balaskashotel.com; s/d €30/40; 🚽), a pleasant option set back from the waterfront, where all rooms have fridge, TV and phone. On the waterfront itself, at the northern end, **Thalassa View Apartments** (☎ 6977620011; studios €35-45; 🚽) are modern and very comfortable, and handy for a quick swim off the pebbled harbour beach.

There are a number of places to dine along the waterfront. **Rahati** (☎ 22450 51200; mains €4-6.50) is a newish eatery with a line of organic dishes, such as green beans in tomato sauce, as well as octopus in red wine sauce and the more common fish options. **La Gorgona** (☎ 22450 51509; mains €4-7) is a casual, Italian-style café-restaurant with top-class coffee, snacks and a variety of pasta offerings.

You can take short excursion trips on the *Captain Manolis* out of Diafani to the remoter and otherwise inaccessible – other than on foot – reaches of Karpathos. The boat typically leaves for trips to the satellite island of **Saria** at around 10.30am.

Walkers may want to explore the region on foot. The Road Editions *1:60,000 Karpathos-Kasos* map (available in Pigadia) details several walking trails to the Hellenistic site of **Vrykounda** with its few remaining walls, via the agricultural village of **Avlona**, with a seasonal taverna, or to the sheltered bay and anchorage of **Tristomo**. Take all your food and water with you as there are no facilities up here. An alternative coastal track will bring you back via **Vananda Beach**, where there is a camping ground.

Olymbos Ολυμπος pop 330

Clinging to the ridge of barren Mt Profitis Ilias (716m), and 4km inland from Diafani, Olymbos is ostensibly a living museum where, to this day, the inhabitants speak in a vernacular that contains some Doric words. Women are seen wearing bright, embroidered skirts, waistcoats, headscarves and goatskin boots, and still bake their bread in outdoor communal ovens. The interiors of the houses are decorated with embroidered cloth and their façades feature brightly painted, ornate plaster reliefs.

Olymbos, however, is no longer a pristine backwater caught in a time warp. Tourism has taken hold in a big way and is now a

vital money spinner for the villagers. The 'traditional' village is finding it ever harder to remain genuine and is in danger of becoming a kind of kitsch eco-Disney for day-trippers from Pigadia. Olymbos is certainly fascinating and picturesque, but is sadly rather overrated for what it ultimately has to offer.

Accommodation in the village is pretty basic. At the far end of Olymbos and close to the central square, **Hotel Aphrodite** (☎ 22450 51307; filippasfilipakkis@yahoo.gr; d €40) is as good as it's going to get. It has simply furnished, airy rooms and impressive west-facing sea views. If you don't mind a shoebox-sized sleeping space reminiscent of Japanese cubicle hotels, the 'traditional' rooms of the **Olymbos Taverna** (☎ 22450 51252; s/d €30/35) might just suffice for a night's sleep.

Makarounes is served in Olymbos in most restaurants. The best place to eat would have to be the atmospherically endowed **Taverna O Mylos** (☎ 22450 51333; mains €4-7.50) on the north side of the village. Built around a restored and working windmill, the excellent food is cooked in a wood oven and features organic meat and vegetable produce, including goat in red-wine sauce, artichokes and filling *pites* (pies).

At the south side of the village, on the main street, **Olymbos Taverna** (☎ 22450 51252; mains €3-4) is a good place for *makarounes*, and there's a daily changing menu of oven-cooked specials that includes artichokes in oil, or *mizithropittes* (small *pites* made from a sweet cottage cheese).

KASOS ΚΑΣΟΣ

pop 980

Strung like a punctuation mark between Karpathos and Crete, Kasos (*ka-sos*) is one of the remotest outposts of the scattered Aegean islands. Most travellers don't even know of its existence. Few ever make it to the far southwest Dodecanese, where this speck of rock and people thrives almost unnoticed, yet welcomes its visitors with a broad smile and a warm embrace. There are no enticing beaches, throbbing nightlife or major archaeological sites, and on the face of it, little to entice a wayward traveller. Yet Kasos attracts in its own inimitable way.

It's an island of olive and fig trees, prickly pears, dry-stone walls, sheep, goats and birds. Its craggy peaks are often shrouded in mist and ferries are frequently diverted. The Kasioti are friendly, curious and open, yet not totally driven by the tourist euro. Come for a day or two and you may end up staying a week. It's that kind of place.

History

Despite being diminutive and remote, Kasos has an eventful history. During Turkish rule the island flourished, and by 1820 it had 11,000 inhabitants and a large mercantile fleet. Mohammad Ali, the Turkish governor of Egypt, regarded this fleet as an impediment to his plan to establish a base on Crete from which to attack the Peloponnese and quell the uprising. On 7 June 1824 Ali's men landed on Kasos and killed around 7000 inhabitants. This massacre is commemorated annually on the anniversary of the slaughter, and Kasioti return from around the world to participate. During the late 19th century, many Kasioti emigrated to Egypt and around 5000 of them helped build the Suez Canal. During the last century many emigrated to the USA.

Getting There & Away

AIR

There are up to eight flights weekly in summer to Rhodes (€38, 1¼ hours), Karpathos (€25, 10 minutes) and Sitia (€42, 40 minutes). **Olympic Airlines** (☎ 22450 41555; www.olympicairlines.com; Kritis) is at the airport.

EXCURSION BOAT

The **Athina excursion boat** (☎ 22450 41047, 6977911209) travels daily in summer, departing at 3pm and returning at 7pm from Fry to the uninhabited Armathia Islet (return €15), where there are some superb sandy beaches.

FERRY

LANE Lines of Crete includes Kasos on its long run to/from Rhodes and Piraeus via Karpathos, Crete and Milos. Destinations include Piraeus (€32.50, 17 hours), Rhodes (€22, 6½ hours) and Sitia (€10.50, 2½ hours). There are usually three departures weekly in each direction.

A small local *caïque* runs three times weekly between Fry and Finiki on Karpathos. Check locally for details.

Getting Around

The local bus serves all the villages of the island with a dozen or so scheduled runs; tickets are all €0.60. There are two **taxis** (☎ 6977944371, 6973244371) on the island. Scooters or cars can be rented from **Oasis – Renta-a-Car & Bikes** (☎ 22450 41746) in Fry.

FRY ΦΡΥ

pop 270

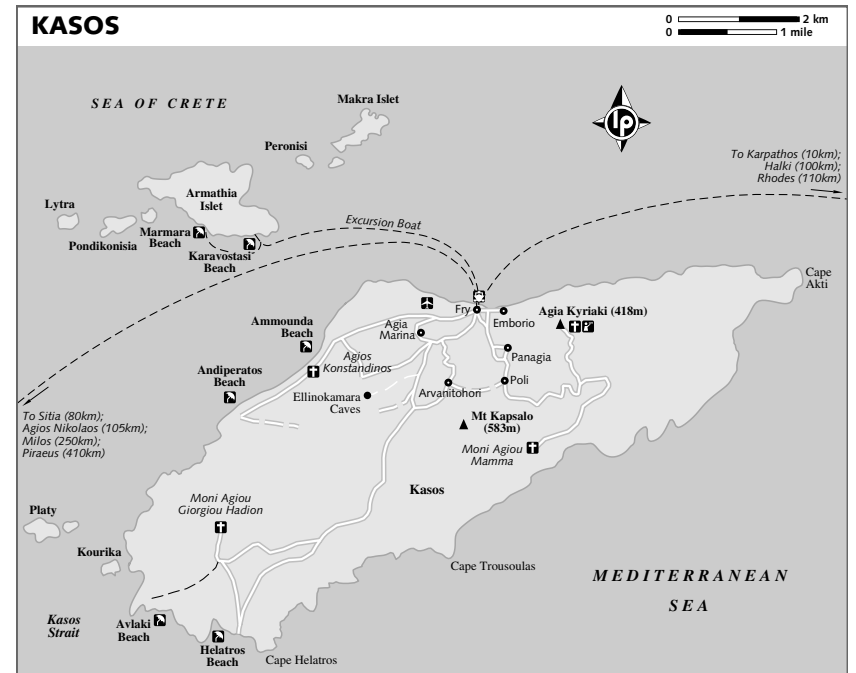
Fry (*free*) is the island's capital and port. It's a pleasant, ramshackle kind of place, with little tourism, though it attracts many returned Kasioti Americans. The sizable village can be thoroughly explored in under an hour. Its narrow whitewashed streets are usually busy with locals in animated discussion. The village's focal point is the cramped yet picturesque old fishing harbour of Bouka. The annex settlement of Emborio is located 1km east of Fry.

THE SHORTEST FLIGHT

Forget inflight movies and meals when flying from Kasos to Karpathos or vice-versa. You barely have time to buckle your seat-belt before you're preparing for landing. At just five minutes, this Olympic Airlines Karpathos-Kasos sector is the shortest of the airline's routes. As you lift off in a Canadian-built de Havilland DHC-8 (Dash 8) prop aircraft, you'll barely have time to view the rugged coastline of Kasos slip away to your right as you skim across the waves to Karpathos airport at the southern tip of that island. 'Cabin crew prepare for landing.' You've arrived.

Orientation & Information

Fry's large harbour complex abuts the port village right next to its main square, Plateia Iroön Kasou. Turn left from the harbour to get to Emborio. The airport is 1km west along the coast road from Fry (not 8km as signposted from near Bouka harbour). Fry's main street is Kritis.



A stand-alone Commercial Bank ATM is next to the port entrance, while there's a Co-Operative Bank of the Dodecanese branch, with ATM, on Plateia Iroön Kasou.

ACS Internet (☎ 22450 42751; zwankie@otenet.gr; per hr €3; ☎ 10am-2pm & 5pm-12am) Offers wi-fi.

Pharmacy (☎ 22450 41164) For all medicinal needs.

Kasos Maritime & Travel Agency (☎ 22450 41495; www.kassos-island.gr; Plateia Iroön Kasou) For all travel tickets.

Police (☎ 22450 41222) On a narrow paved street running south from Kritis.

Port police (☎ 22450 41288) Behind the Agios Spyridon Church.

Post office (☎ 22450 41255; ☎ 7.30am-2pm Mon-Fri) Diagonally opposite the Police.

www.kasos.gr An informative website in Greek and English.

Sights

Fry's minuscule **Archaeological Museum** (☎ 22450 41865; admission free; ☎ 9am-3pm) won't turn heads, but it is a commendable effort to display some of the island's treasure. It includes a thematic display on the 'sea' – wine amphorae and other objects pulled from ancient shipwrecks – and 'lighting', a collection of ancient oil lamps. Finds from Polis indicate a human presence on the island since the 4th century BC. Downstairs a cultural display exhibits objects from the life of the last century on the island.

Sleeping

There is a growing number of accommodation options in Kasos. With the exception of the days on either side of 7 June (Holocaust Memorial Day) – a room can normally be found quite easily.

Fantasis (☎ 69779 05156; www.fantashotel.gr; Fry; d/t incl breakfast €40/45; ☎) These six airy and spruce rooms are only 600m from the port just outside Fry and make for a good quiet retreat. All have balconies plus a fridge and TV.

our pick **Evita Village** (☎ 22450 41731, 6972703950; evitavillage@mail.gr; Fry; s/d €40/50; ☎) Currently the best accommodation option on the island, these meticulously equipped studios are airy, spacious and tasteful. They sport every kitchen appliance imaginable, along with TV and DVD, and sleep up to three people.

Anagnisis Hotel (☎ 22450 41495; www.kassos-island.gr; Plateia Iroön Kasou; s/d €40/50; ☎) The only official hotel on the island overlooks Fry's main square. The establishment looks rundown and a shade creaky, and the rooms are

on the small side. Nonetheless it's central and handy for most of Fry's facilities.

Galanou Viou Apartments (☎ 22450 41235; Fry; studios €50; ☎) Opened mid-2007, these self-catering studios are located on a hillside on the southern side of Fry. They comprise six tastefully equipped and furnished units with modern equipment.

Eating & Drinking

Fry is not over endowed in the eating stakes, but there are at least one or two decent places to dine.

O Mylos (☎ 22450 41825; Plateia Iroön Kasou; mains €3.50-4.50) This cosy corner overlooking the west side of the port is the most reliable eatery. The food is wholesome, with fish, meat and casserole dishes on the menu, as well as the odd home-cooked special. Ask for *roikio* – an unusual, locally produced green salad.

Apangio (☎ 22450 41880; Bouka; mezedhes €3-5; ☎ 9am until late) Enjoying a very atmospheric Bouka harbour location, the Apangio is a classy *ouzerie*-cum-café, serving select mezedhes, drinks, snacks, coffee and late breakfasts.

Taverna Emborios (☎ 22450 41586; mains €6-8) A 20-minute walk out to Emborio will lead you to this pleasant, spacious eating option that overlooks the bay. The local goat in red-wine sauce melts on your palate, while you may be daring enough to try *bousti* – stuffed goat or sheep intestines.

Cafe Zantana (☎ 22450 41912; Bouka) Kasiois congregate at this trendy café that overlooks Bouka harbour. Mihalis, the owner, makes excellent cappuccinos and cocktails and cooks up a fine breakfast omelette.

Entertainment

Perigali Bar (☎ 22450 41767; Bouka) This diminutive bar, between Bouka and Plateia Iroön Kasou, is Kasos' only nightclub. The music is a mixture of Greek and non-Greek sounds.

AROUND KASOS

Emborio is the satellite port of Fry used for small craft. Its beach is sandy and the water is clean and clear. It's the nearest place to Fry for a quick dip.

The rather mediocre **Ammounda Beach**, beyond the airport near the blue-domed church of Agios Konstandinos, is the next nearest to Fry. There are slightly better beaches further along this stretch of coast, one of them being

the fine-pebble **Andiperatos Beach** at the end of the road system. Neither Ammounda or Andiperatos has shade.

The island's best beach is the isolated pebbled cove of **Helatros**, near Moni Agiou Georgiou Hadion, 11km southwest from Fry along a paved road. The beach has no facilities or shade and you'll need your own transport to reach it. **Avlaki** is another decent yet small unshaded beach here, reached along a track from the monastery.

Agia Marina, 1km southwest of Fry, is a pretty village with a gleaming white-and-blue church. On 17 July the **Festival of Agia Marina** is celebrated here. Agia Marina is the starting point for the former rock shelter known as **Ellinokamara**, with its odd, stone-blocked entrance. Follow the Hrysoulas signpost at the southern end of Agia Marina. Proceed 500m to the end of the road then follow a path between stone walls for about seven minutes. Look for a badly signed and gated track upwards and to the left to reach the cave.

From Agia Marina the road continues to verdant **Arvanitohori**, with abundant fig and pomegranate trees. **Poli**, 3km southeast of Fry, is the former capital, built on the ancient acropolis. **Panagia**, between Fry and Poli, now has fewer than 50 inhabitants; its once-grand sea captains' and many ship owners' mansions are either standing derelict or under repair.

Monasteries

The island has two monasteries: **Moni Agiou Mamma** and **Moni Agiou Georgiou Hadion**. The uninhabited Moni Agiou Mamma, on the south coast, is a 1½-hour walk from Fry or a 20-minute scooter ride. The road winds uphill through a dramatic, eroded landscape of rock-strewn mountains, crumbling terraces and soaring cliffs. Occasionally clouds and mist swirl over the road as it crests the ridge high above Poli and dips dramatically down to the monastery at the end of the paved road. A lively *panigyri* (annual religious feast) takes place here on 2 September yearly. Detour to the chapel of **Agia Kyriaki** (no obvious sign) for aerie-like views over Fry and the basin villages.

Similarly, there are no monks at Moni Agiou Georgiou Hadion, but there is a resident caretaker for most of the year. Free accommodation may be available for visitors, but don't bank on it. The *panigyri* at Agiou Georgiou Hadion takes place during the week after Easter.

KASTELLORIZO (MEGISTI)

ΚΑΣΤΕΛΛΟΡΙΖΟ (ΜΕΓΙΣΤΗ)

pop 430

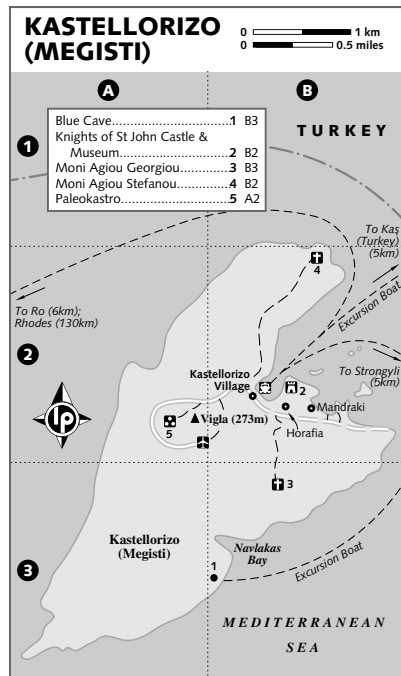
Leaping to unexpected fame thanks to the 1991 Italian film *Mediterraneo*, Kastellorizo (ka-stel-o-rizo) is truly the last outpost in the Greek islands. Omitted on many maps, this literal speck of Greek territory lies tucked beneath the underbelly of neighbour Turkey. It's nearest human inhabitants are in the Turkish port of Kaş, a mere 2.5km across the water and clearly visible. Kastellorizo is 130km east of Rhodes and is named after the Knights of St John castle, the ruins of which now overlook the port and main settlement. You'll probably come to Kastellorizo for one of three reasons: you're a third-generation Kastellorizian and it's your mission to see your grandparents' homeland; you're Italian and you just *have* to see where the movie was made; or you are truly curious and determined: perhaps even lost. Either way you have arrived – now go discover.

History

Kastellorizo has a tragic history. Once a thriving trade port serving Dorians, Romans, crusaders, Egyptians, Turks and Venetians, Kastellorizo came under Ottoman control in 1552. The island was permitted to preserve its language, religion and traditions, and its cargo fleet became the largest in the Dodecanese, allowing the islanders to achieve a high degree of culture and advanced levels of education.

Kastellorizo lost all strategic and economic importance after the 1923 Greece-Turkey population exchange. In 1928 it was ceded to the Italians, who severely oppressed the islanders. Many islanders chose to emigrate to Australia, where a disproportionate number still live.

During WWII Kastellorizo suffered bombardment, and English commanders ordered the few remaining inhabitants to abandon the island. Most fled to Cyprus, Palestine and Egypt. When they returned they found their houses in ruins and re-emigrated. The island has never fully recovered from its population



Travel (☎ 22460 70630, 6937212530; www.kastellorizo.gr) in Kastellorizo Village sells tickets.

The *Dodekanisos Express* catamaran runs once a week to/from Rhodes (€33, 2½ hours), usually on Monday or Friday, but the scheduled day changes yearly. Contact **Dodekanisos Seaways** (Map p522; ☎ 22410 70590; www.12ne.gr; Aftalias 3) in Rhodes for the current schedules.

Getting Around EXCURSION BOAT

Excursion boats go to the islets of Ro, Strongyli and the spectacular Blue Cave (Parasta), famous for its brilliant blue water, produced by refracted sunlight. Visitors are transferred from a larger caique to a small motorised dingy in order to enter the very low cave entrance – claustrophobics be warned. Bring your bathing gear as the boatman usually allows visitors a quick dip in the cave itself. Captained by **Georgos Karagiannis** (☎ 6977855756), the *Varvara* and the *Agios Georgios* are the two most popular boats.

The trip to the cave costs €15, and the longer trip to Ro, Strongyli and around Kastellorizo costs €20. All leave at around 9am daily and return by 1pm.

Excursion Boat to Turkey

Islanders go on frequent shopping trips to Kas in Turkey, and day trips (€20) are also offered to tourists. Passports are required by the police 24 hours beforehand. Look for the signs along the middle waterfront.

The status of Kastellorizo as a legal entry port to/from Greece has been the subject of heated debate in recent years. At the time of writing it looked as though the impasse had been resolved and that the island would become an official exit and entry port. Check with the Kastellorizo police to be on the safe side. Travellers from Turkey may have to take pot luck.

KASTELLORIZO VILLAGE pop 275

Besides Mandraki, its satellite neighbourhood over the hill and to the east, Kastellorizo Village is the only settlement on the island. Built around a U-shaped bay, the village's waterfront is skirted by imposing, spruced-up, three-storey mansions with wooden balconies and red-tiled roofs. It is undoubtedly pretty nowadays, but the alluring façade of today's waterfront contrasts starkly with back-

streets of abandoned houses overgrown with ivy, crumbling stairways and winding stony pathways. Newer, brightly painted houses are emerging like gaudy mushrooms from among the ruins, while some of the older, ruined houses are slowly being restored to their former glory.

Orientation & Information

The quay is at the southern side of the bay. The central square, Plateia Ethelondon Kastellorizo, abuts the waterfront almost halfway round the bay, next to the yachting jetty. The settlements of Horafia and Mandraki are reached by ascending the wide steps at the east side of the bay.

There are a couple of cardphones, while mobile-phone users can pick up both Greek and Turkish networks. There is no wi-fi access on the island.

Health Centre (☎ 22460 49267) For basic health needs.

National Bank of Greece (☎ 22460 49054) ATM equipped.

Papoutsis Travel (☎ 22460 70630; www.kastellorizo.gr) For air and sea tickets.

Police station (☎ 22460 49333) On the bay's western side.

Post police (☎ 22460 49333) At eastern tip of the bay.

Post office (☎ 22460 49298) Next to the police station.

Radio Café (☎ 22460 49029; per hr €3) For internet access.

Sights

The **Knights of St John Castle** stands above the quay. A rickety metal staircase leads to the top from where there are splendid views of Turkey. Lower down the castle grounds, a well-displayed collection is held at the **museum** (☎ 22460 49283; admission free; ⚡ 7am-2pm Tue-Sun). Beyond the museum, steps lead down to a coastal pathway, from where more steps go up the cliff to a **Lycian tomb** with a Doric façade, which dates back as far as the 4th century BC. There are several along the Anatolian coast in Turkey, but this is the only known one in Greece.

Moni Agiou Georgiou is the largest of the monasteries that dot the island. Within its church is the subterranean Chapel of Agios Haralambos, reached by steep stone steps. Greek children were given religious instruction here during Turkish times. The church is kept locked; ask around the waterfront for the whereabouts of the caretaker. To reach the monastery, ascend the conspicuous zigzag-

ging white stone steps behind the village and at the top follow the prominent path.

Moni Agiou Stefanou, on the north coast, is the setting for one of the island's most important celebrations, the feast of Agios Stefanos on 1 August. The path to the little white monastery begins behind the post office. From the monastery, a path leads to a bay where you can swim.

Paleokastro was the island's ancient capital. Within the old city's Hellenistic walls are an ancient tower, a water cistern and three churches. Concrete steps, just beyond a soldier's sentry box on the airport road, mask the beginning of the pretty steep path to Paleokastro.

Sleeping

There is generally sufficient accommodation in Kastellorizo Village for most visitors, but it tends to be a little on the pricey side for the quality it offers. Book ahead in high season to be sure of a berth.

Villa Kaserma (☎ 22460 49370; fax 22460 49365; d/tr €35/43; ⚡) Set back high on the western side of the harbour, this red-and-white coloured pension has oldish, fridge-equipped rooms with perhaps the best views of Kastellorizo harbour.

Pension Asimina (☎ 22460 49361; s/d €40/50; ⚡) Equipped with optional ceiling fans as well as fridge and TV, most of these very tidy double and triple rooms have private bathrooms. It's behind the fish market and to the right.

Poseidon (☎ 22460 49257; www.kastellorizo-poseidon.gr; s/d €50/60) Comprising two yellow-, white- and blue-painted restored houses, the Poseidon offers large, well-furnished rooms, some with wrought-iron balconies. You'll find the establishment on the west side of the harbour, one block back from the waterfront.

Pension I Orea Palameria (☎ 22460 49282; fax 22460 49071; d/tr €45/65) This converted building on the small square at the northwest corner of the waterfront has spotless rooms with kitchen and dining areas. Inquire about them at To Mikro Parisi (p546).

Mediterraneo (☎ 22460 49007; www.mediterraneo-kastellorizo.com; s & d €60-80) At the far western tip of the harbour, these smallish but otherwise comfortable rooms offer a quiet accommodation choice, yet are very convenient for a quick harbour dip. There's a more expensive suite available.

loss. In recent years returnees have been slowly restoring buildings and the island is now enjoying a tenuous but pleasant period of resurgence and resettlement.

Getting There & Away

AIR

During the summer months of July and August there are daily flights to and from Rhodes (€26, 20 minutes), dropping to three weekly at other times. Tickets are available from **Papoutsis Travel** (☎ 22460 70630, 6937212530; www.kastellorizo.gr) in Kastellorizo Village. You can either take the sole island **taxi** (☎ 6938739178) to get from the airport to the port (€5), or the local community bus (€1.50). The bus leaves the square by the port 1½ hours prior to each flight departure.

CATAMARAN & FERRY

Kastellorizo's links to the Dodecanese archipelago is limited to a ferry and catamaran service. Ferry links are subject to seasonal changes. **ANES** (☎ 22460 71444; www.anes.gr) runs between Kastellorizo and Rhodes (€23.50, 7½ hours) and beyond twice weekly. **Papoutsis**

our pick **Kastellorizo Hotel Apartments** (☎ 22460 49044; www.kastellorizohotel.gr; s/d €74/100; 🏠 📺 📞) The best accommodation is on the west side of the harbour. All of these spacious, airy rooms have satellite TV, phone and fridge. The pint-sized pool is mainly for sitting in, but you can jump into the harbour's beckoning quartz-blue waters from directly in front of the hotel.

Eating

Eating in Kastellorizo is fun as a number of restaurants have tables that perch precariously over the harbour edge. One false move and you are in for a ducking. Food offerings are predictable, but generally of good and nonplasticised tourist quality.

our pick **Radio Café** (☎ 22460 49029; breakfast & snacks €2-5) Other than internet access, this newish Dutch-Greek run café dishes up filling and moderately priced breakfasts – including the best coffee on the island – as well as light snacks, and pizzas and foccacias in the evening. It's also a hot spot to watch the sun sink low with a cooling white-wine spritzer in hand.

Akrothalassi (☎ 22460 49052; mains €3-5) Popular with visiting Greeks, this relaxed taverna on the southwest side of the harbour has the advantage of midday shade under grape vines. It also does exceptionally good *mayirefta* (ready-cooked meals), such as spring veal, with capsicum and onion served with basmati rice.

Kaz Bar (☎ 22460 49067; mezedhes €3-6; 🍷 15 Jun-30 Sep) For an alternative take on mezedhes, drop by owner Colin Pavlidis' bar-cum-bistro on the middle waterfront. Pizza, chicken wings and spring rolls, as well as original salads, feature on the menu and there's a decent selection of Greek wines.

Sydney Restaurant (☎ 22460 49302; mains €4.50-6) Hearty home-cooked dishes and grilled fish feature at Sydney, a little further around from To Mikro Parisi. It's a popular low-key eatery, with its tables teetering precipitously on the edge of the harbour.

To Mikro Parisi (☎ 22460 49282; mains €5-7) Going strong since 1974, To Mikro Parisi still serves generous helpings of grilled fish and meat. Fish soup is the house speciality, but the rich *stifadho* (sweet stew cooked with tomato) is equally satisfying.

Entertainment

There are several easy-going cafés on the waterfront. **Kaz Bar** (☎ 22460 49067; mezedhes €3-6; 🍷 15 Jun-30 Sep), when open, is a good place to kick off.

Next door, Meltemi has tempting waterside chairs and cold beers, while the Eolis on the east side of the harbour is a popular late-night hangout that commonly kicks on into the small hours.

SYMI ΣΥΜΗ

pop 2606

You can hardly miss Symi (*see-me*). It's one of the most popular day-trip destinations from Rhodes. It's also a popular holiday destination in its own right. Like other islands in the southern Dodecanese, it's rocky, mostly dry, postcard pretty, and a popular port of call for yachties and other sea-struck travellers. The island's past was once a different call. Shipbuilding, sponge diving and commerce were the island's mainstay economies; now it's tourism and more tourism.

You could perhaps be forgiven for believing that the island has been colonised by northern Europeans; so prevalent is their presence – there is even a local English-language newspaper – and the large crowds of day-trippers add to the image. It has a picturesque harbour with restored and tiered sea captains' houses. Most visitors congregate here, but there is also a surprisingly green interior, a sprinkling of scattered beaches and an enormous monastery that is one of the few religious sites that warrants its own ferry connection.

History

Symi has a long tradition of both sponge diving and shipbuilding. During Ottoman times it was granted the right to fish for sponges in Turkish waters. In return, Symi supplied the sultan with first-class boat builders and top-quality sponges scooped straight off the ocean floor.

These factors, and a lucrative shipbuilding industry, brought prosperity to the island. Gracious mansions were built and culture and education flourished. By the beginning of the 20th century the population was 22,500 and the island was launching some 500 ships a year. But the Italian occupation, the introduction of the steamship and Kalymnos' rise as the Aegean's principal sponge producer put an end to Symi's prosperity.

The treaty surrendering the Dodecanese islands to the Allies was signed in Symi's Hotel (now Pension) Catherinettes (p548) on 8 May 1945.

Getting There & Away

EXCURSION BOAT

There are daily excursion boats between Symi and Rhodes. The Symi-based *Symi I* and *Symi II*, operated by ANES (☎ 22460 71444; www.anes.gr), are the cheapest and usually go via Panormitis; tickets (return €12) can be bought on board.

Symi Tours (☎ 22460 71307; fax 22460 72292) has excursion trips from Gialos to Datça in Turkey (including Turkish port taxes €35).

FERRY, CATAMARAN & HYDROFOIL

Symi has only two long-haul ferries a week heading north to other Dodecanese islands and Piraeus (€44, 15 to 17 hours). ANES (☎ 22460 71444; www.anes.gr) transports cars and people between Symi and Rhodes (one way €7, one

hour and 10 minutes), while there is a twice-weekly link with Kastellorizo (€23.50, 7½ hours).

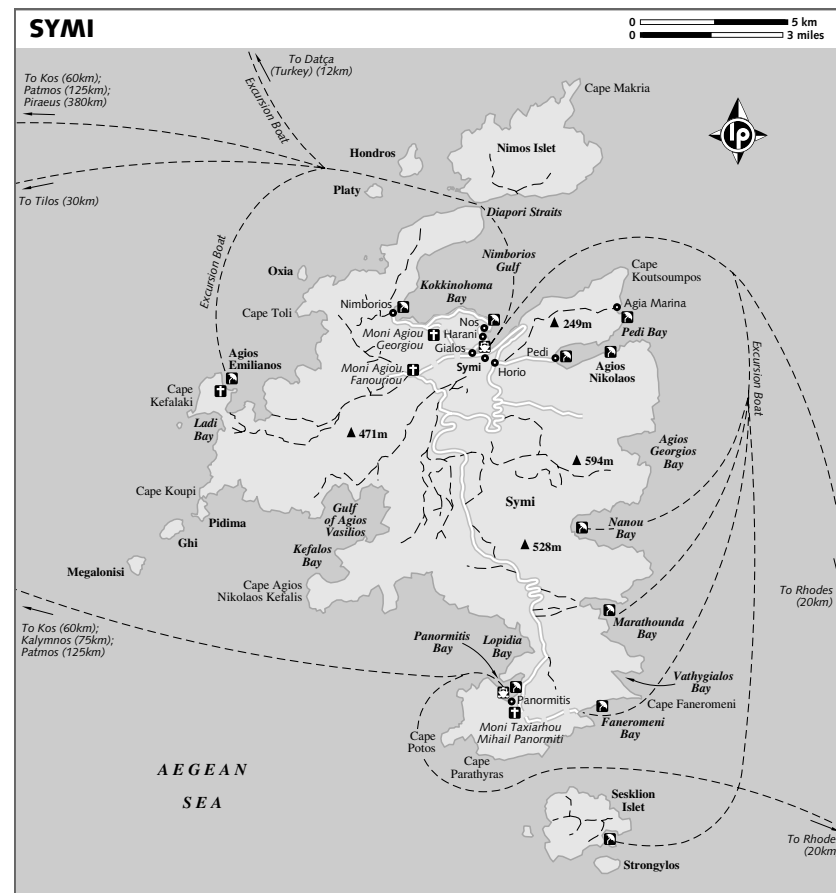
The *Dodekanisos Express* and *Dodekanisos Pride* catamarans service the island at least four times weekly with connections to Rhodes (€14, 50 minutes) and islands further north. One service calls in at Panormitis on the south side of the island.

The ANES-owned *Aigli* hydrofoil also connects Symi with Rhodes (€14, one hour).

Getting Around

BUS & TAXI

The bus stop and taxi rank are on the south side of the harbour in Gialos. The grey **minibus** (☎ 6945316284) makes frequent runs between



Gialos and Pedi beach (via Horio). The flat fare is €1. Another minibus runs twice daily between Gialos and Panormitis. Taxis depart from a rank 100m west of the bus stop.

EXCURSION BOAT

Several excursion boats do trips to Moni Taxi-arhou Mihail Panormiti and Sesklion Islet, where there's a shady beach. Check the boards for the best-value tickets. There are also boats to Agios Emilianos beach, on the far west side of Symi.

WATER TAXI

The small **boats** (☎ 22460 71423) *Konstantinos* and *Irini* do trips (€10 to €15) to many of the island's beaches, leaving at 10.15am and 11.15am respectively.

GIALOS ΓΙΑΛΟΣ

pop 2200

Gialos, Symi's port, is by all accounts a visual treat. Neoclassical mansions in a harmonious medley of colours are heaped up the hills flanking its harbour. Behind their strikingly beautiful façades, however, many of the buildings are derelict. It is a slightly claustrophobic place and can get unbearably hot in summer.

Orientation & Information

The town is divided into two parts: Gialos, the harbour, and Horio above it, crowned by the *kastro* (castle). Arriving ferries, hydrofoils and catamarans dock just to the left of the quay's clock tower; excursion boats dock a little further along. The centre of activity in Gialos is the promenade at the centre of the harbour. Kali Strata, a broad stairway, leads from here to hill-top Horio.

There is no official tourist office in Symi Town. The *Symi Visitor* is a free English-and-Greek-language newspaper distributed by street-side newspaper vendors and restaurants. **Kalodoukas Holidays** (☎ 22460 71077; www.kalodoukas.gr) At the beginning of Kali Strata; rents houses and organises excursions.

Laundry (☎ 22460 70065) On the middle waterfront.

Police (☎ 22460 71111) By the ferry quay.

Port police (☎ 22460 71205) By the ferry quay.

Post office (☎ 22460 71315) By the ferry quay.

Roloi bar (☎ 22460 71595; per hr €4; ☎ 9am-3am)

For internet access; a block back from the waterfront.

Symi Tours (☎ 22460 71307; fax 22460 72292) Does excursion trips, including to Datça in Turkey.

Symi Visitor Office (☎ 22460 72755)

www.symivisitor.com A useful source of island information and gossip.

Sights

Horio consists of narrow, labyrinthine streets crossed by crumbling archways. As you approach the **Knights of St John Kastro** dominating Horio, the once-grand 19th-century neoclassical mansions give way to the modest stone dwellings of the 18th century. The castle incorporates blocks from the ancient acropolis, and the **Church of Megali Panagia** is within its walls.

On the way to the *kastro*, Hellenistic, Byzantine and Roman exhibits, as well as some folkloric material, are kept in the **Archaeological and Folklore Museum** (admission €1.50; ☎ 10am-2pm Tue-Sun) in the Lieni suburb of Horio. In the port of Gialos the **Naval Museum** (admission €2; ☎ 10am-2pm Tue-Sun) has some noteworthy wooden models of ships and other naval memorabilia.

Activities

Symi Tours (☎ 22460 71307; fax 22460 72292) has multilingual guides who lead **guided walks** around the island. The publication *Walks in Symi* by Lance Chiltern list 20 walks on the island for novices and pros alike. Call into the **Symi Visitor Office** (☎ 22460 72755) to purchase a copy.

Sleeping

Most accommodation is in studios or a few private rooms. There are a couple of good hotels as well.

Pension Catherinettes (☎ 22460 71671; marina-epi@rho.forthnet.gr; Gialos; d €58; ☎ ☎) The historic Catherinettes (see History, p546) is on the north side of the harbour. The pink-stuccoed pension has wrought-iron balconies and some of the rooms have magnificently painted high ceilings.

Hotel Fiona (☎ 22460 72755; www.symivisitor.com/fiona.htm; Horio; s/d €55/60) This hotel in Horio has lovely rooms, with wood-panelled ceilings and great views, and is a shade cooler than accommodation in Gialos as it catches welcome breezes. To reach it, turn left at the top of the stairs and walk for 50m.

Hotel Nireus (☎ 22460 72400; www.nireus-hotel.gr; Mouragio; s/d €47/80; ☎) One of the two regular hotels in Gialos, the prominently sited Nireus, by the clock tower, has traditional rooms and suites with fridge, TV and phone.

Opera House Hotel (☎ 22460 72034; operasym@otenet.gr; Gialos; studios €85-100; ☎) Named after Australia's Sydney Opera House, these spacious fully

self-contained studios in a peaceful garden are well signposted 150m back from the harbour.

Eating

There are plenty of eating options. Many are mediocre, while a handful excel.

GIALOS

Taverna Neraïda (☎ 22460 71841; mains €4-5) Serving unpretentious and solid Greek dishes, Neraïda is an excellent, low-priced option, a block back from the waterfront and opposite the carpark. Fish *souvlaki* features on the menu, as does a range of vegetarian dishes. Walk into the kitchen and select from the dishes on display.

Tholos (☎ 22460 72033; mains €5-9) Out on the headland just before Nos beach, this little low-key taverna is a good choice to escape the crowds in Gialos and dine on good-quality fare, including grills, mezedhes and the ubiquitous fish dishes. Cabbage rolls with fava lentil purée or with mushrooms and dill are two good vegetarian options.

Estiatorio Mythos (☎ 22460 71488; mezedhes €4-10) Voted best restaurant in Greece by one of the UK dailies, this neat little harbour-side taverna serves up imaginative food. At lunch it's mainly pasta dishes, while mezedhes feature in the evening. For palate pleasing, consider calamari stuffed with pesto, or fish fillet parcels in a saffron cream sauce.

ourpick Mylopetra (☎ 22460 72333; mains €7-15; ☎ dinner) Considered locally to be one of the better restaurants on Symi, Mylopetra takes care with its ingredients and serves up Mediterranean-Greek creations, including home-made bread and pasta dishes. The menu changes yearly, but among the better creations have been lamb in a hollandaise sauce, or skate with mushrooms in a light peanut sauce.

HORIO

Restaurant Syllogos (☎ 22460 72148; mains €5-7) Similar in style to Giorgos, Syllogos offers imaginative fare such as chicken with prunes, pork with leek, fish with rosemary and tomato, plus vegetarian options like artichokes in egg and lemon sauce, or *spanakopita* (spinach pie).

Filos (☎ 22460 71007; mains €6-9) Decked out in terracotta and Grecian urns, this place is pre-disposed to relaxed dining with its Minoan-style mien. The menu is stock standard Greek but its *kleftiko* (oven-baked lamb) has been known to please diners. It's at the top of Kali Strata.

Giorgos (☎ 22460 71984; mains €6-9) There is an always-changing and enticing menu of oven-cooked dishes here, with such mouth-watering offerings as chicken stuffed with rice, herbs and pine nuts, lamb in vine leaves, or stuffed onions.

Entertainment

There are several lively bars in the streets behind the south side of the harbour.

Vapori Bar (☎ 22460 72082) Drop by here during the day to read the free papers and then in the evenings for schmoozing, drinks and cruising.

Roloi Bar (☎ 22460 71595) A busy, happening little watering hole one block inland from the south side of the port, Roloi is open most of the day and a large part of the night.

Jean and Tonic Bar (☎ 22460 71819; ☎ 9pm-late) In Horio, Barry White and Tina Turner still reign in this convivial home away from expat home, the self-styled 'late place'. Proprietor Jean welcomes Aston Villa fans. And you can have a soothing G&T or two, too.

ourpick Kali Strata Bar (☎ 69744 27948; ☎ all day) In Horio at the top of the Kali Strata is the perfect antidote to the maddening crowds of Gialos. Escape for a sunset cocktail with a Latin twist and some classy, sassy chill music.

AROUND SYMI

Pedi is a little fishing village and busy mini-holiday resort in a fertile valley 2km downhill from Horio. It has some sandy stretches on its narrow beach and there are rooms and studios to rent, as well as hotels and tavernas. Walking tracks down both sides of the bay lead to **Agia Marina** beach on the north side and **Agios Nikolaos** beach on the south side. Both are sandy, gently shelving beaches, suitable for children.

Nos is the closest beach to Gialos. It's a 500m walk north of the campanile at Panormitis Bay. There is a taverna, bar and sun beds (per person €4).

Nimborios is a long, pebbled beach 3km west of Gialos. It has some natural shade, as well as sun beds and umbrellas. You can walk there from Gialos along a scenic path – take the road by the east side of the central square and continue straight ahead; the way is fairly obvious, just bear left after the church and follow the stone trail. Over this way you can stay at **Niriides Apartments** (☎ 22460 71784; www.niriideshotel.com; apt €60-80) in one of eight capacious units on the hillside, in a very quiet location.

Water taxis are the only convenient way to get to **Agios Georgios Bay** and the more developed beach at **Nanou Bay**, which has sun beds, umbrellas and a taverna.

The more remote **Marathounda Bay** beach can be reached by road, while **Agios Emilianos** beach, on the far west side of Symi, is best reached by excursion boat.

Moni Taxiarchou Mihail Panormiti Μονή Ταξιάρχου Μιχαήλ Πανορμίτη

An often winding but good sealed road leads you across the island, through scented pine forests, before dipping in spectacular zigzag fashion to the expansive but protected Panormitis Bay. This is the site of Symi's principal attraction – the large **Moni Taxiarchou Mihail Panormiti** (Monastery of Archangel Michael of Panormitis; ☒ dawn-sunset; admission free). The large monastery complex, with its ornate Italianate campanile, occupies most of the foreshore of the bay.

A monastery was first built here in the 5th or 6th century, but the present building dates from the 18th century. The principal church contains an intricately carved wooden iconostasis, frescoes, and an icon of St Michael that supposedly appeared miraculously where the monastery now stands. St Michael is the patron saint of Symi, and protector of sailors.

The monastery is also a magnet for hordes of day-trippers who commonly arrive at around 10.30am on excursion boats; it's a good idea to visit early or after they have left.

The monastery complex comprises a **Byzantine museum** and **folkloric museum** (admission for both €1.50), a bakery with excellent bread and apple pies, and a basic restaurant-café to the north side.

Accommodation is available at the fairly basic **guest house** (☎ 22460 72414; s/d €20/32), where bookings in July and August are mandatory. Some ferries call in to the monastery and there is a minibus from Gialos.

TILOS ΤΗΛΟΣ

pop 533

Basking in relative obscurity and often quietly ignored by the major transport companies, Tilos (*tee-loss*) is a small island that tends to be overshadowed by its more illustrious neighbours. Known in earlier years for its agricultural prowess rather than for its maritime eminence, Tilos today confounds common

commercial logic. It can be messy getting to the island, yet the effort is worth the reward. Lone among the Dodecanese, the island has embraced 'green' tourism with a vengeance. Walkers love the place, as will bird-watchers and conservationists once an ambitious ecological programme is fully in place. The island is blessed with just the right balance of hills, mountains, valleys, vistas, meadows and, of course, beaches to make a stay a gratifying experience. It's small enough to get around in a day, and the sleeping and eating options are excellent and getting better. Lost yachties take anchor here, as do travellers who have lost their compass; and that's not including a community of world-weary Brits who've swapped motorways for sanity. It's that kind of place.

History

Mastodon bones – midget elephants that became extinct around 4600 BC – were found in a cave on the island in 1974. The **Harkadio** cave (closed indefinitely) is signposted from the Livadia–Megalo Horio road and is brilliantly illuminated at night. Erinna, one of the least known of ancient Greece's female poets, lived on Tilos in the 4th century BC.

Elephants and poetry aside, Tilos' history shares the same catalogue of invasions and occupations as the rest of the archipelago.

Getting There & Away CATAMARAN

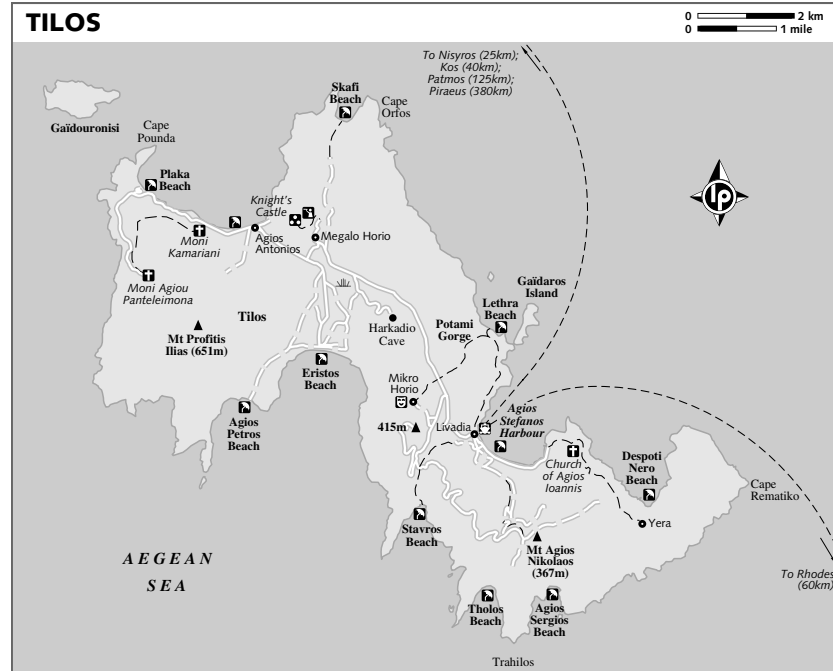
The Tilos-owned **Sea Star** (☎ 22460 44000; fax 22460 44044) connects Tilos with Rhodes (€18.50). The timetable fluctuates wildly from year to year, but there is usually at least one connection a day with Rhodes. Departures from Rhodes are usually around 9am.

EXCURSION BOAT

There are a number of excursions advertised around Livadia. The **Duo Adelfia** (☎ 69391 06527) is a small caïque offering an all-inclusive beach barbecue excursion for €29 (food and wine included); another option is a multibeach island tour for a similar price. Look for posters around Livadia for details.

FERRY

Tilos is erratically served by mainline ferries. Blue Star Ferries provides one service a week to/from Piraeus (€42, 15 hours) and Rhodes (€12, 3½ hours), while **ANES** (☎ 22460 71444; www.anes.gr) ferries of Symi provides four connections



a week north and south, including an onward connection to Kastellorizo. There are also services to Nisyros (€6.50, 1¼ hours) and Kos (€19, three hours). Tickets are sold at **Stefanakis Travel** (☎ 22460 44310; tilos11@otenet.gr) in Livadia.

Getting Around

Tilos' public transport consists of a bus that ploughs up and down the island's main road on a fairly regular basis. The timetable is posted at the bus stop in Livadia. The fares are €1 to Megalo Horio and €1.20 to Eristos Beach. On Sunday there is a special excursion bus to Moni Agiou Panteleimona (€4 return), which leaves Livadia at 11am and allows one hour at the monastery. Tilos currently has only two **taxis** Nikos (☎ 6944981727); Anna (☎ 6945200436).

LIVADIA ΛΙΒΑΔΕΙΑ

pop 470

Livadia is the main village and port, though not the principal village (capital): that honour belongs to Megalo Horio, situated 8km northwest of the port. Livadia is a sleepy, pleasant enough place, though it can get hot. In the vil-

lage you will find most services and shops, as well as most of the island's accommodation.

Orientation & Information

All arrivals are at Livadia. The small port is 300m southeast of the village centre. Tilos has no official tourist bureau. The Bank of the Dodecanese has a branch and an ATM in Livadia. The post office is on the central square.

Kosmos (☎ 22460 44074; www.tilos-kosmos.com; per hr €5; ☒ 9.30am-1pm & 7-11.30pm) This gift shop has internet access. Its website is a useful source of information on Tilos. There is also a book exchange and new books for sale.

Police (☎ 22460 44222) In the white Italianate building at the quay.

Port police (☎ 22460 44350) On the harbour.

Sea Star (☎ 22460 44000; sea-star@otenet.gr) Sells tickets for the Sea Star catamaran.

Stefanakis Travel (☎ 22460 44310; stefanakis@rho.forthnet.gr) Between the port and Livadia village; sells ferry tickets.

Tilos Park Association (☎ 22460 70880; www.tilos-park.org) An umbrella group promoting ecological conservation on Tilos (see boxed text, p554).

Tilos Travel (☎ 22460 44294; www.tilostravel.co.uk) At the port; has helpful staff. Credit card withdrawals and

ROB OGDEN & ANNIE BROWN – MOTORWAY MIGRANTS

It's not everyone that ups and aways from their home, especially from the comfort zone of the UK, yet a growing number of Brits are doing just that. They're leaving the grey and drizzle of Blighty for a better life in the sun. Ex-Mancunians Rob and Annie smiled when asked why they emigrated to Greece. 'It was the motorways', said Rob, 'we were sick and tired racing up and down, wasting time doing the same old thing day in, day out. We knew there had to be something better. We'd much prefer driving to work with the view of Eristos Bay than have the worry of traffic lights and traffic that we had in England.'

Arriving in April 2007 to start a new life in Greece, Rob and Annie settled for Tilos as their home. When questioned why this anonymous island in the backblocks of the Dodecanese group, Annie explained, 'we always wanted to live out here, we wanted a change of lifestyle and some fresh air'. Rob rejoined enthusiastically, 'We had good jobs, but it was just getting too hectic. We decided we wanted a different way of life.'

When asked what practical difficulties they had in setting up home on Tilos, Annie and Rob sighed wistfully and admitted, 'You've got to get used to the idea that you have to take a boat ride to Rhodes if you want to get something essential done, like visit the dentist or shop for something specific. As long as you are patient and organise yourself, it will all work out', they confidently advised.

It's hard to imagine life in Greece without speaking Greek. How did this enterprising yet hitherto monolingual couple manage with the linguistic intricacies of modern Greek? 'Well, I studied Greek back home for six years', countered Annie, 'we have books and tapes and other material and we study a lot. I even did my GCSE in Greek!'

So what about the viability of living on a small rocky island? 'Ask us in two years!' laughed Rob, 'we might not get materially rich here and as long as we can pay the bills we'll be all right. But culturally and spiritually we'll do just fine. Those are our riches.'

You have to take your hat off to this bold couple. It's not everyone that can do it. But if it's a choice between motorways and meadows and life in the sun, there's hardly a contest.

currency exchange are available, as well as car, motorbike and mountain-bike rental.

Sights & Activities

WALKS

There are a number of popular walks that can easily be made from Livadia. The most popular is to **Lethra Beach**, an undeveloped pebble and sand cove with limited shade, 3km north of Livadia. The trail starts at the far north side of the port and is fairly easy. Return via the very picturesque, oleander-strewn and goat-inhabited **Potami Gorge**, which will bring you to the main island highway.

A second walk is a longer return track to the small abandoned settlement of **Yera** and its accompanying beach at **Despoti Nero**. From Livadia follow the road south, around Agios Stefanos Bay and past the Church of Agios Ioannis, on the east side of the bay, and keep walking. Allow half a day for this hike.

Iain and Lyn Fulton of **Tilos Trails** (☎ 69460 54593; fulton@otenet.gr) are licensed guides and run a number of walks (per person

€20) around the island, graded from easy to challenging.

Sleeping

Accommodation on the island is generally of a high standard, though it may get booked by low-key foreign tour operators.

Kosmos Studios (☎ 22460 44164; www.tilos-kosmos.com; d €45) These four cosy, self-catering units with private patios and fan are at the western end of the bay. A free supermarket delivery service with Giannis and Maria's Supermarket is available. Call into Kosmos to find the owners, Paul and Helen.

Irini Hotel (☎ 22460 44293; www.tilosholidays.gr; s/d incl breakfast €45/60; ♿) Catering mainly to package-tour travellers, the neat Irini also welcomes independents. The hotel is set back a little from the waterfront, in a citrus garden, and the rooms are very well appointed.

our pick **Olympus Apartments** (☎ 22460 44324; www.tilosland.com; d/t €50/60; ♿) Recently renovated, these sparkling, stylishly designed and furnished apartments make for a very com-

fortable and pleasing stay. They have modern kitchenettes and screened windows.

Eleni Beach Hotel (☎ 22460 44062; www.eleni-hoteltilos.gr; s/d incl breakfast €50/60) This airy blue-and white-painted hotel, 400m south along the beach road, has beautiful, tastefully equipped double rooms with refrigerator and telephone.

Livadia Beach Apartments (☎ 22460 44397; www.tilosland.com; apt €70-85; ♿) Right on the seafront on the bay side of Livadia these 16 apartments spread over their blue-and white-painted blocks are large and spacious and fully equipped for self-catering.

Eating

Restaurant Irina (☎ 22460 44206; mains €4-5) With its relaxing waterside location, Irina does great home-made food, including excellent *mousakas* and *papoutsaki* (stuffed baby eggplant), and a rich, beef *stifadho*.

Taverna Blue Sky (☎ 22460 44259; mezedhes €3-5.50) Blue Sky, on the harbour, is good for grilled fish and vegetarian mezedhes. Run by Italians, their culinary heritage is reflected in the food, with pasta featuring prominently on the menu.

Sofia's Taverna (☎ 22460 44340; mains €3-6) This family-run taverna, 100m along the beach road, serves wholesome, home-cooked food, as well as a good selection of entrées. Look for the daily oven-cooked specials.

Armenon (☎ 22460 44134; mains €3.50-7) For food with a somewhat international twist head for this warm, woody taverna with patterned slate floors and blue-painted rafters. Among the more original dishes are lamb and mixed vegetables in filo pastry, or turkey in orange sauce with almonds.

our pick **Croma Cafe Bar** (☎ 22460 44182; snacks €6.50-10) This café-bar is a popular breakfast, brunch and evening hang-out, serving excellent herb tea and vegetarian snacks such as baked potato and chilli, which go down satisfyingly well with an iced Irish Magners cider. Wi-fi is available.

Entertainment

Mikro Horio Music Bar (🎷 midnight-5am Jul & Aug) Determined clubbers head for the abandoned village of Mikro Horio, 3km from Livadia, where this place belts out music most of the night. A minibus ferries revellers to and from the port.

There are a few summer bars on Livadia's waterfront, such as Ino and Bozi.

MEGALO HORIO ΜΕΓΑΛΟ ΧΩΡΙΟ

pop 50

Megalo Horio, the island's capital, is a serene whitewashed village. Its alleyways are fun to explore, and the village makes a great alternative base if you are looking for a taste of rural life. There are places to sleep and at least one reliable restaurant to keep visitors suitably fed. From here you can visit the **Knight's Castle**, a taxing 40-minute upwards walk along a track starting at the north end of the village. Along the way you will pass the **ancient settlement** of Tilos, which in its time stood precariously on rocky ledges overlooking Megalo Horio. The remains of stone houses can be clearly seen here.

The little **museum** (admission free; 🕒 8.30am-2.30pm) on the main street houses mastodon bones from Harkadio Cave. It's locked, but if you ask at the town hall on the 1st floor someone will show you around.

When it comes to longer-term accommodation you might consider renting a secluded private villa with a swimming pool. **Eden Villas** (☎ 22460 44094, 6947065423; villa per week €1240; 📺) accommodates up to eight people and is on the right (east) side of Megalo Horio. It's an ideal place to chill out with books and a wi-fi computer for a week or so. See Rob or Annie at Croma café for details.

In Megalo Horio itself are the cosy studios of **Miliou Rooms & Apartments** (☎ 22460 44204; d €40), sequestered in a tree-shaded garden that boasts a couple of banana palms.

To Kastro (☎ 22460 44232; mains €5-6.50), on the village's south side overlooking the Eristos plain below, is the best place to eat. The fare features charcoal-grilled meats, including organic goat and locally raised pork, as well as fresh fish and a range of daily oven-cooked specials.

AROUND MEGALO HORIO

Just before Megalo Horio, a turn-off to the left leads 2.5km to the pleasant, tamarisk-shaded **Eristos Beach**, a mixture of gritty sand and shingle. A signposted turn-off to the right from the junction leads to the quiet settlement of **Agios Antonios**, where the small Elpida Restaurant is the only reliable source of food and drink. The undeveloped **Plaka Beach**, 3km further west, is backed by shady trees and is clean and uncluttered.

The 18th-century **Moni Agiou Panteleimona** is 5km beyond here, along a scenic road. It is

THE TILOS PARK

There's a royal battle a-raging on Tilos between relatively newcomer conservationists and long-time local agriculturalists over a swath of land that is home to a few endangered birds. At stake is the welfare of the Eleonara's Falcon (*Falco eleonarae*), the Mediterranean Shag (*Phalacrocorax aristotelis desmarestii*) and the Bonelli's Eagle (*Hieraetus fasciatus*), all of which make Tilos their nesting home. At stake also is any animal that moves and could be considered fair game by Tilos' would-be hunters and less conservation-minded residents.

Agriculturalists interested in making a fast euro or two want to open up their land to development, which would in turn threaten the equilibrium of the fauna and flora of the island. In response, the EU-sponsored Tilos Park Association has declared a Special Protected Area on the island that essentially stymies unfettered expansion and development. Tempers have been running hot and muttered threats have been made, so for now there is a resentful stand-off.

The admirable aims of the association are to be lauded and the frustrations of the locals are understandable, but the current winners are the animals and plants of Tilos that are enjoying a welcome breather in a cultural environment that has not always been so well disposed to conservation.

uninhabited but well maintained, with fine frescoes. The island's minibus driver takes groups of visitors here on Sunday. A well-attended and lively three-day annual **festi- val** takes place at the monastery, beginning on 25 July.

You can camp unofficially on Eristos Beach, but facilities are basic to nonexistent. The best place to stay is at the expansive plant-festooned grounds and studios of **Eristos Beach Hotel** (☎/fax 22460 44024; d €32; 📺) abutting the northern end of the beach. Here you'll find excellent, airy studios for up to four people with fridge and kitchenette. There is also an on-site restaurant and bar.

An alternative eating option is **Tropicana Taverna** (☎ 22460 44020; mains €3.60-5.50) on the Eristos road, where the owner serves locally produced meat and vegetables and scrumptious *revithokeftedes* (chickpea rissoles).

NISYROS ΝΙΣΥΡΟΣ

pop 948

There are not many islands in the Aegean that sport their own dormant volcano. Nisyros (*ni-see-ross*) has one, though it's less active now than it was in its eruptive past. This almost round island of pumice, rock and lush vegetation is a bit of an anomaly because of its inherited geology. Other than that it's a thoroughly pleasant destination for individuals who want a quiet vacation on an island that still looks and feels totally Greek.

The beaches are not so hot – that's a fact – but you can visit the hissing floor of the volcano crater, which from high above on the rim looks like a nuclear bomb blast site. Hiking is good, too, with a number of route options usually involving the volcano rim and crater. Mandraki, the island's main port, is pretty and pleasing and lends to lingering sunset ouzoes on ice.

Getting There & Away

Nisyros is linked by regular ferries to Rhodes (€12, three to five hours), Kos (€9, 1½ hours) and Piraeus (€44, 17 hours). The *Dodekanisos Pride* catamaran calls in on Saturday and Sunday with connections to Kalymnos (€34, 1½ hours) and Rhodes (€43, 2¼ hours).

The small local ferry *Agios Konstantinos* links Mandraki with Kardamena on Kos (€7, two hours, 7am daily), while the larger *Panagia Spyliani* link Nisyros with Kos Town (€10, daily).

Getting Around

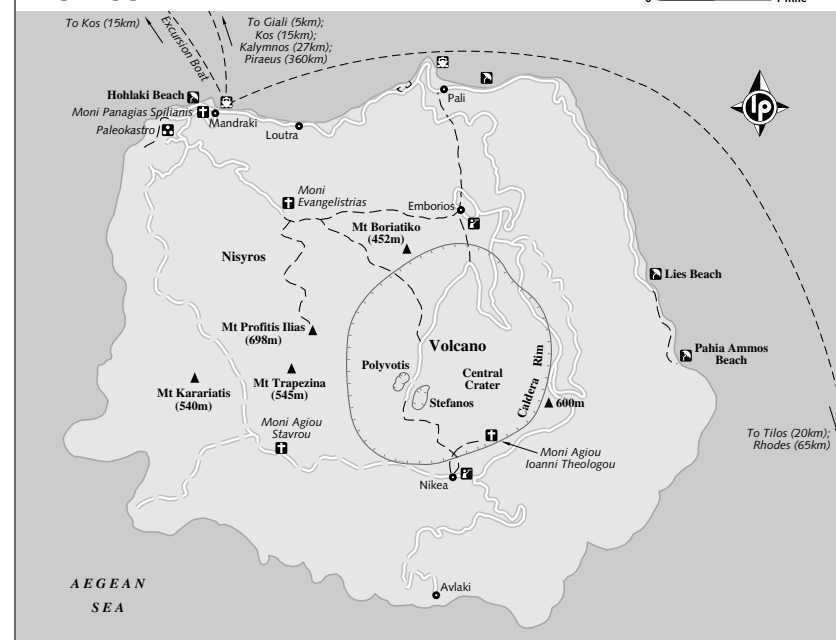
BUS

Bus companies run up to 10 excursion buses daily between 9.30am and 3pm to the volcano (€7.50 return), with around 40 minutes allowed to visit the volcano. These are in addition to the three daily buses that travel to Nikea (€2) via Pali. The bus stop is located at the port.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

There are three motorcycle-rental outlets on Mandraki's main street. **Manos Rentals** (☎ 22420 31029) right on the quay is the most handy. Budget for €20 to €40 a day for a car.

NISYROS



EXCURSION BOAT

In July and August there are excursion boats (return €10) to the pumice-stone islet of Giali, where there is a relaxing sandy beach.

TAXI

There are two taxis on Nisyros: **Babis Taxi** (☎ 69456 39723) and **Irene's Taxi** (☎ 69733 71281). A taxi from Mandraki to the volcano costs €20 return, to Nikea €11 and to Pali €5.

MANDRAKI ΜΑΝΔΡΑΚΙ

pop 661

Mandraki is the sleepy port and main village of Nisyros and it has just the right amount of somnolence to make the place perfect for a spot of aimless wandering. Two-storey houses sport brightly painted wooden balconies – predominantly ochre and turquoise – while others are whitewashed. The streets meander in an almost maze-like manner and it's easy to get lost. Ultimately you will end up in one of the two squares or back on the waterfront. Mandraki is the kind of settlement that feels right and cosy the moment you set foot upon it.

Orientation & Information

The port is 500m northeast of the centre of Mandraki. Take the road right from the port and you will hit the town centre. A shoreline road and an inner street both lead eventually to the tree-shaded Plateia Ilikiomenis, Mandraki's focal point.

The Co-Operative Bank of the Dodecanese has an ATM at the harbour and a branch in Mandraki.

Diakomihalis (☎ 22420 31015; diakomihalis@kos.forthnet.gr) In Mandraki. Sells ferry tickets.

Enetikon Travel (☎ 22420 31180; agiosnis@otenet.gr) Provides tourist information; 100m from the quay towards Mandraki.

Police (☎ 22420 31201) Opposite the quay.

Port police (☎ 22420 31222) Opposite the quay.

Post office (☎ 22420 31249) Opposite the quay.

Proveza Internet Cafe (☎ 22420 31618; www.proveza.net) For wi-fi and freshly ground coffee.

Sights

Mandraki's main tourist attraction is the cliff-top 14th-century **Moni Panagias Spyliani** (Virgin of the Cave; ☎ 22420 31125; admission by donation; 🕒 10.30am-3pm), which is crammed with

ecclesiastical paraphernalia. Turn right at the end of the main street to reach the signposted steps up to the monastery.

The impressive Mycenaean-era acropolis, **Paleokastro** (Old Kastro) above Mandraki has well-preserved Cyclopean walls built from massive blocks of volcanic rock. Follow the route signposted 'kastro', near the monastery steps. This eventually becomes a path. At the road, turn right and the *kastro* is on the left.

Hohlaki is a black-stone beach and can usually be relied upon for swimming unless the wind is up, when the water can get rough. It's on the western side of Moni Panagias Spilianis and is reached by a paved path. The small sandy **Mandraki beach** halfway between the port and the village centre is popular and perfectly OK for swimming.

Sleeping

Mandraki has a fairly limited amount of accommodation and owners do not meet incoming ferries. Book ahead to be assured of a bed in July and August.

Iliovasilima Rooms (☎ 22420 31159; d €25) Occupying one of the few central Mandraki spots, the most economical option are these fairly basic, but conveniently located rooms on the Mandraki waterfront near the old windmill.

Three Brothers Hotel (☎ 22420 31344; iiiiibrother@kos.forthnet.gr; s/d €36/36; 📶) Handy for the port and overlooking the harbour, rooms are presentable, though rather small, and come with TV and fridge.

Hotel Porfyris (☎ 22420 31376; diethnes@otenet.gr; s/d €35/40; 📶) Set at the back end of Mandraki, this hotel, with its now rather tired-looking early-1990s (solid, dull, rather chunky) décor is nonetheless a cool oasis. There is a large reception area, while the rooms, with fridge, TV and phone, tend to be on the cramped side.

Haritos Hotel (☎ 22420 31322; www.haritoshotel.gr; d/tr €40/50; 📶 🚰) A better choice, the Haritos is located 200m along the Pali road. The rooms are well appointed and have fridge, TV and telephone, and there's a welcome swimming pool fed by seawater.

our pick Ta Liotridia (☎ 22420 31580; ste €150; 📶) For a classy and romantic place to sleep in Mandraki, book one of the two suites above two converted oil presses. Decorated in classic Nisyriot style, with raised beds, solid furnishings, TV and a little stove top, the suites are not cheap but they're worth it for the sea views alone.

Eating

Ask for the island speciality, *pitties* (chickpea and onion patties), and wash them down with a refreshing *soumada*, a nonalcoholic local beverage made from almond extract.

Taverna Panorama (☎ 22420 31185; grills €3-5) Just off Plateia Ilikiomenis, heading towards Hotel Porfyris, this is a commendable option. Try suckling pig or goat, or even the *seftelies* (Cypriot-style herb-laced sausages).

our pick Tony's Tavern (☎ 22420 31460; mains €3.50-5) On the waterfront, ex-Melbournian butcher Tony does great breakfasts and excellent meat and fish dishes, as well as a wide range of vegetarian choices. His *gyros* (meat slivers cooked on a vertical rotisserie) is reputedly the best on Nisyros.

Kleanthes Taverna (☎ 22420 31484; mezedhes €3.50-5) Perfect for a relaxed evening meal of well-prepared mezedhes and ouzo. Further east along the waterfront from Tony's, Kleanthes is a perennial favourite among locals and visitors alike.

Taverna Nisyros (☎ 22420 31460; grills €4-5; 📶 dinner) This taverna, just off the main street, is a cheap and cheerful little place serving enticing charcoal grills and *souvlakia*.

Restaurant Irini (☎ 22420 31365; Plateia Ilikiomenis; mains €3-5.50) Irini, on the leafy and shady central square, is recommended for its low-priced, no-nonsense and very good quality home cooking. Go inside and select your meal.

AROUND NISYROS

The Volcano Το Ηφαίστειο

Nisyros is on a volcanic line that passes through the islands of Aegina, Paros, Milos, Santorini, Nisyros, Giali and Kos. The island originally culminated in a mountain of 850m, but the centre collapsed 30,000 to 40,000 years ago after three violent eruptions. Their legacy are the white-and-orange pumice stones that can still be seen on the northern, eastern and southern flanks of the island, and the large lava flow that covers the whole southwest, around Nikea village. The first eruption partially blew off the top of the ancestral cone, but the majority of the sinking of the central part of the island came about as a result of the removal of magma from within the reservoir underground.

Another violent eruption occurred in 1422 on the western side of the caldera depression (called Lakki); this, like all others since, emitted steam, gases and mud, but no lava.

The islanders call the volcano Polyvotis because, during the Great War between the gods and the Titans, the Titan Polyvotis annoyed Poseidon so much that the god tore off a chunk of Kos and threw it at him. This rock pinned Polyvotis under it and became the island of Nisyros. The hapless Polyvotis from that day forth has been groaning and sighing while trying to escape – hence the volcano's name.

There are five craters in the **caldera** (admission €2.50; 🕒 9am-8pm). A not-so-obvious and unignited path descends into the largest one, **Stefanos**, where you can examine the multicoloured fumaroles, listen to their hissing and smell their sulphurous vapours. The surface is soft and hot, making sturdy footwear essential. Be careful you don't step into a fumarole, as the steam can cause severe burns. Another unignited but more obvious track leads you in six to seven minutes to **Polyvotis**, which is smaller and wilder looking, but doesn't allow access to the caldera itself.

The easiest way to visit the volcano is by tourist bus, but you will share your experience with hordes of day-trippers. Better still, scooter in from Mandraki or walk down from Nikia. Get there before 11am and you may have the volcano entirely to yourself.

Emborios & Nikea Εμπορείος & Νίκαια

Emborios and Nikea perch on the volcano's rim. From each, there are stunning views down into the caldera. Only a handful of inhabitants linger on in Emborios. You may encounter a few elderly women sitting on their doorsteps crocheting, and their husbands at the *kafeneio* (coffee house). But generally, the winding, stepped streets are empty, the silence broken only by the occasional braying of a donkey or the grunting of pigs. There's just one place to eat, the seasonal **To Balkoni tou Emboriou** (☎ 22420 31607; mains €3-5), where you can enjoy the view of the crater over a relaxed lunch.

In contrast to Emborios, picturesque Nikea, with 35 inhabitants, buzzes with life. It has dazzling white houses with vibrant gardens and a central square with a lovely pebble mosaic. The bus terminates on Plateia Nikolaou Hartofyli. Nikea's main street links the two squares.

The steep path down to the volcano begins from Plateia Nikolaou Hartofyli. It takes about 40 minutes to walk it one way. Near the begin-

ning you can detour to the signposted **Moni Agiou Ioanni Theologou**, where there is an annual **feast** on 25 to 26 September.

Pali Πάλιοι

Pali is a small yacht anchorage with limited accommodation, yet a number of places to eat. The island's better beaches start here. Pali's own narrow beach is shaded by tamarisk trees and the water is shallow and suitable for children. Further along at **Lies**, 5.5km around the coast, is another unshaded beach, but you are better off walking an extra kilometre along an occasionally precarious coastal track to **Pahia Ammos**, a broad expanse of gravelly, volcanic sand. Bring your own shade.

If you decide to stick around Pali, head for one of the 12 comfy, self-contained studios at **Mammis' Apartments** (☎ 22420 31453; www.mammis.com; d €50), on the last bend before you enter Pali proper. Thousands of butterflies may swarm here in June.

The most reputable of Pali's eating options is the **Captain's House** (☎ 22420 31016; grills €5-7), where you have a choice of home cooking or fish and meat grills, and where you can sit at lunch and watch the fishermen unravel their nets next to your table.

KOS ΚΩΣ

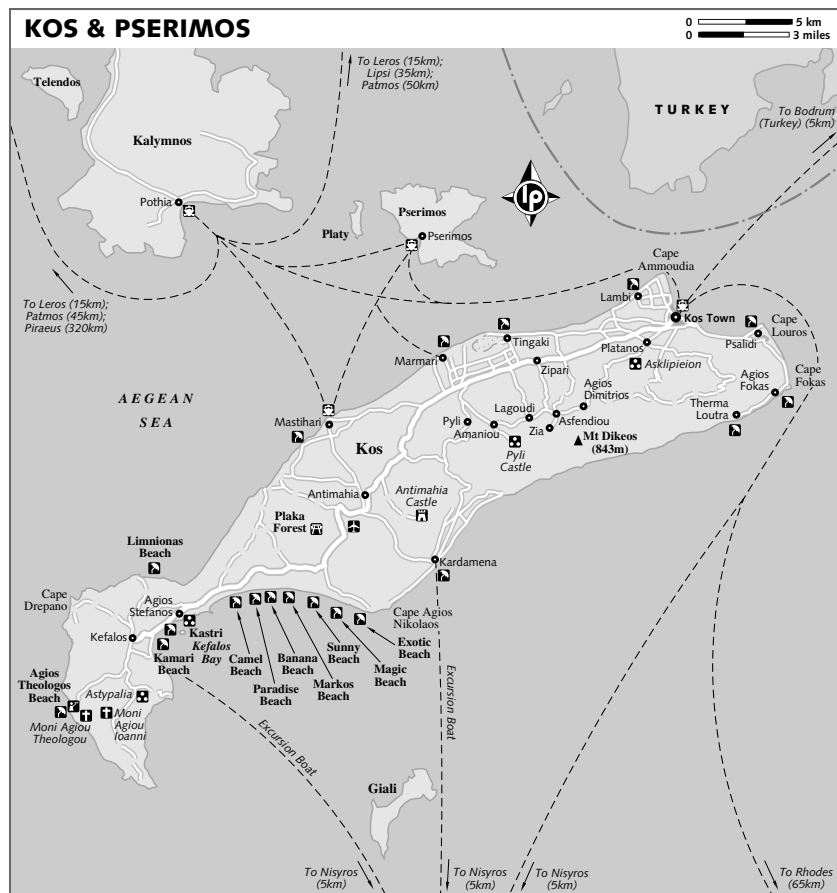
pop 17,890

Second only to Rhodes in popularity and population, Kos (*koss*) is a mellowed-down version of its big sister to the south. Beyond the resort hotels that welcome arrivals, Kos offers another less commercial face once you let the island get under your skin. Elongated and running almost west to east, Kos offers a spread of things to see and do – from beaches and bars to cycling and cars with which to tour verdant hills, remote coves, and high-energy beach resorts.

Archaeology buffs will find their niche in the home of western medicine. Hippocrates, the father of medicine, lived and practised here. The island has a good balance of amenities and attractions, and oodles of room to spread out. Kos certainly grows on you, but it needs a little more time than you might at first believe.

History

Kos' fertile land attracted settlers from the earliest days. So many people lived here by



Mycenaean times that it sent 30 ships to the Trojan War. During the 7th and 6th centuries BC Kos prospered as an ally of the powerful Rhodian cities of Ialysos, Kamiros and Lindos. In 477 BC, after suffering an earthquake and subjugation to the Persians, it joined the Delian League and again flourished.

Hippocrates (460–377 BC), the ancient-Greek physician known as the founder of medicine, was born and lived on the island. After Hippocrates' death, the Sanctuary of Asclepius and a medical school were built, which perpetuated his teachings and made Kos famous throughout the Greek world.

Ptolemy II of Egypt was born on Kos, thus securing it the protection of Egypt, under

which it became a prosperous trading centre. In 130 BC Kos came under Roman domination, and in the 1st century AD it was administered by Rhodes, with which it came to share the same vicissitudes, right up to the tourist deluge of the present day.

Getting There & Away

AIR

There are three flights daily to Athens (€75, 55 minutes), and three flights a week to Rhodes (€45, 20 minutes), Leros (€45, 15 minutes) and Astypalea (€51, one hour). **Olympic Airlines** (☎ 22420 28330; www.olympicairlines.com; Vasileos Pavlou 22) is in Kos Town. The **airport** (☎ 22420 51229) is 24km from Kos Town near the village of Antimachia.

AirSea Lines (☎ 801 11 800 600; www.airsealines.com) also offers flights to Kalymnos (€30, 15 minutes), Mykonos (€92, 1½ hours) and Lavrio (€132, three hours), on the mainland. Flights leave from Kos airport.

FERRY

Domestic

Kos is well connected to Piraeus (€42 to €45, 10 to 15 hours) and with all the islands in the Dodecanese, such as Rhodes (€14.20, 3½ hours) and Patmos (€11.50, four hours), as well as additional connections to the Cyclades. In summer there is a weekly ferry service from Kos Town to Samos and Thessaloniki. Services are offered by three ferry companies: **Blue Star Ferries** (☎ 22420 28914), **G&A Ferries** (☎ 22420 28545) and the **ANE Kalymnou** (☎ 22420 29900).

Local car ferries run to Pothia on Kalymnos from Mastihari (€3.50, one hour, four daily). In addition there are faster, passenger-only small ferries run by ANE Kalymnou, namely the *Kalymnos Star* and *Kalymnos Dolphin* from Mastihari to Pothia running up to five times daily.

International

There are daily excursion boats in summer travelling from Kos Town to Bodrum in Turkey (€34 return, one hour). Boats leave at 8.30am and return at 4.30pm.

HYDROFOIL & CATAMARAN

Kos is served by Aegean Hydrofoils and the *Dodekanisos Express* and *Dodekanisos Pride* catamarans. In high season there are daily services to and from Rhodes (€28, two hours), with good connections to all the major islands in the group, as well as Samos (€25, four hours) in the Northeastern Aegean.

Information and tickets are available from the many travel agents in Kos Town, though in addition to **Exas Travel** (☎ 22420 28545; www.exas.gr), **Hermes Shipping Agency** (☎ 22420 26607; hermes@kos.forthnet.gr) is another reliable agency.

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

An Aegean Airlines bus (€4) leaves the airline's office two hours before the Athens departure flights. The airport is 24km southwest of Kos Town. Kefalos buses stop at the big roundabout near the airport entrance. A taxi to/from the airport from Kos Town will cost around €22.

BUS

The **bus station** (☎ 22420 22922; Kleopatras 7) is just west of the Olympic Airlines office. Buses regularly serve all parts of the island, as well as the all-important beaches on the south side of Kos. A bus to the beaches will cost around €3.60.

Urban buses have two ticket prices: zone A (€0.80) and zone B (€1). An automatic ticket vending machine is in front of the Blue Star Ferries office on the harbour.

CAR, MOTORCYCLE & BICYCLE

There are numerous car, motorcycle and moped-rental outlets. You'll be tripping over bicycles to rent; prices range from €5 for a bone shaker to €10 for a half-decent mountain bike. Cycling is very popular in Kos, so make the best of the opportunity.

EXCURSION BOAT

From Kos Town there are many boat excursions around the island and to other islands. Examples of return fares: Kalymnos €10; Pserrimos, Kalymnos and Platy €20; and Nisyros €20. There is also a daily excursion boat from Kardamena to Nisyros (€14 return) and from Mastihari to Pserrimos and Kalymnos. In Kos Town these boats line the southern arm of Akti Koundourioti.

TAXIS

Taxis congregate at a stand on the south side of the port.

TOURIST TRAIN

You can take a guided tour of Kos in the city's (vehicular) Tourist Train (€4, 20 minutes), which runs from 10am to 2pm and 6pm to 10pm starting from the **Municipality Building** (Vasileos Georgiou 1). Or take a train to the Asklepion and back (return €4), departing on the hour from 10am to 5pm Tuesday to Sunday, from the Municipal Tourist Office (p560).

KOS TOWN

pop 14,750

Kos Town, on the northeast coast, is the island's capital and main port. The New Town, although modern, is picturesque and lush, with an abundance of palms, pines, oleander and hibiscus. The Castle of the Knights dominates the port, and Hellenistic and Roman ruins are strewn everywhere. It's a pleasant

enough place and can easily be covered on foot in half a day. The Old Town was destroyed by an earthquake in 1933 and only part of it exists intact today.

Orientation

The ferry quay is north of the castle. The central square of Plateia Eleftherias is south of the harbour-side street, Akti Koundourioti, along Vasileos Pavlou. What's left of Kos' Old Town is a smallish area bounded by Akti Koundourioti, Kolokotroni, Eleftheriou Venizelou and Vasileos Pavlou. It's now full of souvenir shops, jewellers and boutiques.

Southeast of the castle, the waterfront is called Akti Miaouli. It continues as Vasileos Georgiou and then Georgiou Papatreou, which leads to the beaches of Psalidi, Agios Fokas and Therma Loutra.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

News Stand (☎ 22420 30110; Riga Fereou 2) Sells foreign-language newspapers and publications.

EMERGENCY

Police (☎ 22420 22222) Shares the Municipality Building with the tourist police.

Port police (cnr Akti Koundourioti & Megalou Alexandrou)

Tourist police (☎ 22420 22444)

INTERNET ACCESS

Cafe Del Mare (☎ 22420 24244; www.cybercafe.gr; Megalou Alexandrou 4; per hr €2; ☎ 9am-1am) A regular café, too.

INTERNET RESOURCES

www.travel-to-kos.com Comprehensive guide to most of Kos' attractions.

LAUNDRY

Laundromat Center (Alikarnassou 124; wash & dry €7)

MEDICAL SERVICES

Hospital (☎ 22420 22300; Ippokratous 32) In the centre of town.

MONEY

Alpha Bank (Akti Koundourioti) Has a 24-hour automatic exchange machine and an ATM. There is another branch at El Venizelou, also with an ATM.

National Bank of Greece (Riga Fereou) With ATM.

POST

Post office (El Venizelou)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Municipal Tourist Office (☎ 22420 24460; www.kos.info.gr; Vasileos Georgiou 1; ☎ 8am-2.30pm & 3-10pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat May-Oct) Has general information on Kos Town.

Sights

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM

There's a fine 3rd-century-AD mosaic in the vestibule of the **archaeological museum** (☎ 22420 28326; Plateia Eleftherias; adult/student €3/2; ☎ 8am-2.30pm Tue-Sun). The most renowned statue is that of Hippocrates.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

The **ancient agora** (admission free) is an open site south of the castle. A massive 3rd-century-BC stoa, with some reconstructed columns, stands on its western side. On the north side are the ruins of a **Shrine of Aphrodite**, **Temple of Hercules** and a 5th-century **Christian basilica**.

North of the agora is the lovely cobblestone Plateia Platanou, where you can pay your respects to the **Hippocrates Plane Tree**, under which Hippocrates is said to have taught his pupils. Plane trees don't usually live for more than 200 years, though in all fairness this is certainly one of Europe's oldest. This once-magnificent tree is held up with scaffolding, and looks to be in its death throes. Beneath it is an old sarcophagus converted by the Turks into a fountain. Opposite the tree is the well-preserved 18th-century **Mosque of Gazi Hassan Pasha**, its ground-floor loggia now converted into souvenir shops.

From Plateia Platanou a bridge leads across Finikon (called the Ave of Palms) to the **Castle of the Knights** (☎ 22420 27927; Leoforos Finikon; admission €4; ☎ 8am-2.30pm Tue-Sun). Along with the castles of Rhodes Town and Bodrum, this impregnable fortress was the knights' most stalwart defence against the encroaching Ottomans. The castle, which had massive outer walls and an inner keep, was built in the 14th century. Damaged by an earthquake in 1495, it was restored by the Grand Masters d'Aubuisson and d'Amboise (each a master of a 'tongue' of knights – see p521 for details) in the 16th century. The keep was originally separated from the town by a moat (now Finikon).

On the west of the town, facing Grigoriou, turn right to reach the **western excavation site**. Two wooden shelters at the back of the site protect the 3rd-century mosaics of the **House of Europa**. The best-preserved mosaic depicts



Europa's abduction by Zeus in the guise of a bull. In front of here is an exposed section of the **Decumanus Maximus** (the Roman city's main thoroughfare), which runs parallel to the modern road then turns right towards the **nymphaeum**, which consisted of once-lavish latrines, and the **xysto**, a large Hellenistic gymnasium with restored columns. On the opposite side of Grigoriou is the restored 3rd-century **odeion**. The **Temple of Dionysos** consists of a few scant ruins and is located a short distance from the main site.

Sleeping

Pension Alexis (☎ 22420 28798; fax 22420 25797; Irodotou 9; s/d €25/30; ☎) This convivial travellers' pension has long been a budget favourite with

visitors to the island. It has very clean rooms, a communal kitchen, and a large relaxing veranda and garden.

Hotel Kamelia (☎ 22420 28983; www.camelia-hotel.com; Artemisias; s/d €25/45; ☎ Jun-Oct; ☎) On a quiet tree-lined street, the Kamelia is a pleasant C-class hotel with simple but comfortable rooms with satellite TV and video.

our pick Hotel Afendoulis (☎ 22420 25321; www.afendoulis-hotel.com; Evripilou 1; s/d €35/50; ☎ ☎) The ebullient, English-speaking Alexis Zikas runs this very relaxed, traveller-friendly family-style establishment. The rooms are tastefully decorated and wi-fi is available in the hotel. Breakfast is optional and is offered until late.

Kos Aktis Hotel (☎ 22420 47200; www.kos.aktis.gr; Vasileos Georgiou 7; s/d €120/150; ☎ ☎) Kos' newest

boutique 'art' hotel is as close to the town centre as you can get. All rooms are slick, with a minimalist design, and equally suited to business travellers and those in need of a pamper. Right on the beach, this neat hotel sports a fine outdoor restaurant and café, and wi-fi access.

Eating

The restaurants lining the central waterfront are generally expensive and offer poor value; avoid them and head for the back streets or even further afield.

Olympiada Restaurant (☎ 22420 23031; Kleopatras 2; mains €3.50-4) For reliable, predictable and simple food, the unpretentious Olympiada serves a wide range of lunch and dinner meals, among which are a variety of stuffed dishes, such as tomatoes, aubergines, zucchini and vine leaves.

Barbas (☎ 22400 27856; Evripilou 6; mains €3-5) Right opposite Hotel Afendoulis is this busy little grill with street-side tables and fetching décor. The grilled meats are the speciality and the chicken *souvlaki* or fillet is to die for. The chef also serves a range of equally delicious oven-cooked dishes.

Pote tin Kyriaki (☎ 22420 27872; Pisandrou 9; mezedhes €3.50-5; ☺ dinner Mon-Sat) You can't get more untouristy than this quirky *ouzerie* with its idiosyncratic owner and menus written by hand in school exercise books. Try the *garides saganaki* (skillet-fried prawns in cheese) or *kolokythoanthi* (stuffed and battered courgette flowers).

Arap Taverna (☎ 22420 28442; Memis, Platani; mains €4-7) It's worth the slight detour to reach this Turkish-influenced restaurant on the main square in Platani, 3km southwest from Kos town. Check out the yogurt-flavoured dishes like *yiaourtoglou* (fried aubergines and courgette slices in yogurt), or *kavourma* (pork cubes with hot green chillies in a tomato sauce).

our pick Ambavris (☎ 22420 25696; mains €4-8) For sheer ambience as well as excellent food, walk 15 minutes south out of town to this relaxed and totally nontouristy taverna. Unassuming, quality dishes are all served with a smile and friendly attitude. Try the *strapatsada* (vegetarian egg and tomato mix).

H2O (☎ 22420 47200; Vasileos Georgiou 7; mains €6-12) Part of the Kos Aktis Hotel complex, this cool, suave diner on the beach is almost totally overlooked by foreign travellers. It enjoys an almost exclusively discerning Greek clientele.

Food is Greek-European, well prepared and artfully served. It's good, too, for a predinner aperitif on the beach-side wooden patio.

Drinking & Entertainment

Kos' nightlife is centred on a short stretch of paved street on the south side of the harbour and in the waterfront streets on the north side of the harbour. There are lots of pickings, though the following should make for good starters.

Hamam (Akti Koundourioti 1) Most bars belt out techno, but this plays Greek music.

Fashion Club (☎ 22420 22592; Kanari 2) One of Kos Town's more popular and longer-standing clubs, with three bars for you to wet your whistle.

Kalua (☎ 22420 24938; Akti Zouroudi 3) Further round the north side of the harbour, Kalua serves a mixed menu of music, including R&B. It's an outdoor venue and also has a swimming pool.

Orfeus (☎ 22420 25036; Fenaretis 3; adult €6; ☺ summer) This outdoor cinema screens a wide range of movies.

AROUND KOS TOWN

Asklipieion Ασκληπιείον

The island's most important ancient site is the **Asklipieion** (☎ 22420 28763; Platani; adult/student €4/3; ☺ 8.30am-6pm Tue-Sun), built on a pine-covered hill 3km southwest of Kos Town. From the top there is a wonderful view of Kos Town and Turkey. The Asklipieion consisted of a religious sanctuary to Asclepius (the god of healing), a healing centre and a school of medicine, where the training followed the teachings of Hippocrates.

Hippocrates was the first-known doctor to have a rational approach to diagnosing and treating illnesses. Until AD 554, when an earthquake destroyed the Asklipieion, people came from far and wide to be treated here, as well as for medical training.

The ruins occupy three levels. The **propylaea** (approach to the main gate), Roman-era public **baths** and remains of guest rooms are on the first level. On the second level is a 4th-century-BC **altar of Kyparissios Apollo**. West of this is the **first Temple of Asclepius**, built in the 4th century BC. To the east is the 1st-century-BC **Temple to Apollo**; seven of its columns have been re-erected. On the third level are the remains of the once-magnificent 2nd-century-BC **Temple of Asclepius**.

Frequent buses and the Tourist Train (p559) go to the site, but it is pleasant to cycle or walk there.

AROUND KOS

Kos' main road runs southwest from Kos Town, with turn-offs for the mountain villages and the resorts of Tingaki and Marmari. Between the main road and the coast is a quiet road, ideal for cycling, which winds through flat agricultural land as far as Marmari.

The nearest decent beach to Kos Town is the crowded **Lambi Beach**, 4km to the northwest. Further round the coast, **Tingaki**, 10km from Kos Town, has an excellent, long pale-sand beach. **Marmari Beach**, 4km west of Tingaki, is slightly less crowded. You can easily ride your bike to these beaches via the quiet coastal road. Windsurfing is popular at all three beaches. In summer there are boats from Marmari to the island of Pserimos.

Vasileos Georgiou (later G Papandreou) in Kos Town leads to the three busy beaches of **Psalidi**, 3km from Kos Town, **Agios Fokas** (8km) and **Therma Loutra** (12km). The latter has hot mineral springs that warm the sea.

Mastihari Μαστιχάρι

Escapist travellers who seek to avoid the crowds of Kos Town head to Mastihari, 30km away. It's a resort destination of sorts, but also an arrival/departure point for ferries to Pothia on Kalymnos. It's better equipped to cater for independent travellers, with a wide range of rooms and studios to rent. The beach is wide and sandy, though it does get the summer winds, and it's an open, relaxed village that feels just a little more Greek than its neighbours. Excursion boats run from here to the island of Pserimos, where you can escape for a day to its protected sandy beach and convenient tavernas.

The back streets and seafront of Mastihari are full of rental options. Among these are **Athina Studios** (☎ 22420 59030; www.athinas-studios.gr; s/d €30-40), a block of bougainvillea-strewn apartments decorated in vivid blue and white, one street from the beach. Spacious and clean, they have full kitchen facilities. On the same street, **To Kyma** (☎ 22420 59045; kyma@kosweb.com; s/d €30/35) is a pleasant, small, family-run hotel with smallish but presentable rooms that enjoy a good sea breeze. There is a clean and homey communal kitchen for guests' use. Overlooking the west beach, **Rooms Panorama**

(☎/fax 22420 59145; studios €35; ☺) has tidy, fully equipped studios, most with a kitchenette.

Right on the harbour, the busy **Kali Kardia Restaurant** (☎ 22420 59289; fish €7-11) is commendable – the fish is particularly good. Ignore the kitsch name and sign, the **Tasty Palace** (☎ 22420 59019; mains €4-6.50) is right on the beach. Look for the daily specials board featuring 'mum's fish soup' (rabbit in red wine sauce or chicken in lemon sauce). It also serves as an internet access point.

For drinks, the **Saloon Bar** (☎ 22420 59318) at the beginning of the beach boardwalk serves ice-cold beer, ouzo and mezedhes and is a great spot to watch the sun go down. Come here for breakfast, too.

Mountain Villages

Several attractive villages are scattered on the northern slopes of the green and wooded alpine-like Dikeos mountain range. At **Zipari**, 10km from the capital, a road to the southeast leads to **Asfendiou**. Along the way, 3km past Zipari, you will pass **Taverna Panorama** (☎ 22420 69367; mezedhes €3-5; ☺ lunch and dinner), which enjoys a splendid night-time view with barely a tourist in sight, as most head for Zia. Enjoy good mezedhes and excellent service in the company of a primarily Greek clientele.

From Asfendiou, a turn-off to the left leads to the pristine hamlet of **Agios Dimitrios**. The road straight ahead leads to the village of **Zia**, which pulls in coachloads of tourists, but is still worth a visit for the surrounding countryside, honey, herbs and spices, and some spectacular sunsets.

For eating choices in Zia, **Kefalovrysi** (☎ 22420 69605; mains €5-8), a six-minute walk from the square to the upper end of the village, takes top marks for its well-priced, high-quality dishes. Among the more original choices are tomato balls, *salamoura* (pork cubes with onions) and Florina peppers stuffed with cheese. Back along the main drag in Zia, **Taverna Olympia** (☎ 22420 69121; mains €5-8) is a less obvious choice – as it doesn't have the views down to the plains – but it earns its good reputation based on solid, reliable local cuisine and its repeat clientele.

Lagoudi is a small, unspoilt village to the northwest of Zia. From here you can continue to **Amaniou** (just before modern Pyli), where there is a left turn to the ruins of the medieval village of **Pyli**, overlooked by an interesting ruined **castle**. The village of Pyli has a pleasant

eating venue, **Palia Pygi** (☎ 22420 41510; mains €5-7.50), a little taverna overlooking a lion-headed fountain just off the central square. It serves sizzling grills and filling home-cooked dishes from the oven.

Kamari & Kefalos Bay Καμάρη & Κέφαλος From Antimachia the main road continues southwest to the huge Kefalos Bay, fringed by a 12km stretch of sand, which is divided into roughly seven 'name' beaches, forming the soft sandy, underbelly of Kos. Each is signposted from the main road. The most popular is **Paradise Beach**, while the most undeveloped is **Exotic Beach**; **Banana Beach** (also known as Langada Beach) is a good compromise.

Agios Stefanos Beach at the far western end is dominated by a vast Club Med complex. The beach, reached along a short turn-off from the main road, is still worth a visit to see the island of **Agios Stefanos** (named after its church), which is within swimming distance, and the ruins of two 5th-century basilicas to the left of the beach as you face the sea.

Kefalos, 43km southwest of Kos Town, is a sprawling village perched high above **Kamari Beach**. It's an animated village with few concessions to tourism. The central square, where the bus terminates, is at the top of the 2km road from the coast. There is a post office and a bank with an ATM here.

Kamari Beach, on the other hand, is an elongated holiday resort strip, some 2km from tip to toe and packed with restaurants, accommodation, shops and tourist facilities, including a handy ATM on the main road at the southern end. Water sports are big business here. Despite the clutter, the bay is quite alluring and the best overall stretch is at the southern end, where the beach is more easily accessible. Excursion boats leave from here for Nisyros (€16) two or three times weekly.

There is a good choice of sleeping options, mostly consisting of studios and rooms. About 150m south of the Kamari seafront bus stop you'll find **Anthoula Studios** (☎ 22420 71904; studios €40), a spotless set of airy and roomy studios surrounded by a flourishing vegetable garden. Also nearby, **Rooms to Let Katerina** (☎ 22420 71397; studios €40) is a similar choice, although studios are a bit smaller. For eating, **Stamatia** (☎ 22420 71245; mains €4-7.50) has a good range of well-prepared fish and meat dishes, plus some imaginative

vegetarian choices like onion balls, garlic mushrooms or fried zucchini.

The southern peninsula has the island's most wild and rugged scenery. **Agios Theologos Beach** is on the east coast, 7km from Kefalos at the end of a winding sealed road. The beach is often surf-battered and the waters tempestuous. The only place to eat is **Restaurant Agios Theologos** (☎ 69727 45691; mains €6.70-12.50), which enjoys the best sunsets in Kos, as well as serving up tasty fish dishes, such as white snapper, plus home-made goat's cheese and crusty home-baked bread.

ASTYPALEA ΑΣΤΥΠΑΛΛΙΑ

pop 1238

If ever there was an island looking for an identity, it is Astypalea (ah-stih-pah-lya). Looking to all intents and purposes like an archetypically Cycladic island with its mandatory and picture-pretty hill-top *hora* (main town), yet belonging administratively to the Dodecanese, this butterfly-shaped gem of an island is a stunner and offers instant appeal. People come to Astypalea and never leave. It has that pull. Outside of the bustling port and cubist *hora*, the land is bare and eroded with nary a tree in sight. Its beaches are scattered, but most are excellent. Adventurers can seek off-road thrills in some rough and empty terrain, while gastronomes will dine well on fresh fish and lobster. Mass foreign tourism is never seen here, yet in July and August Athenians descend in force and generate controlled chaos. If you want that alternative holiday experience, look no further.

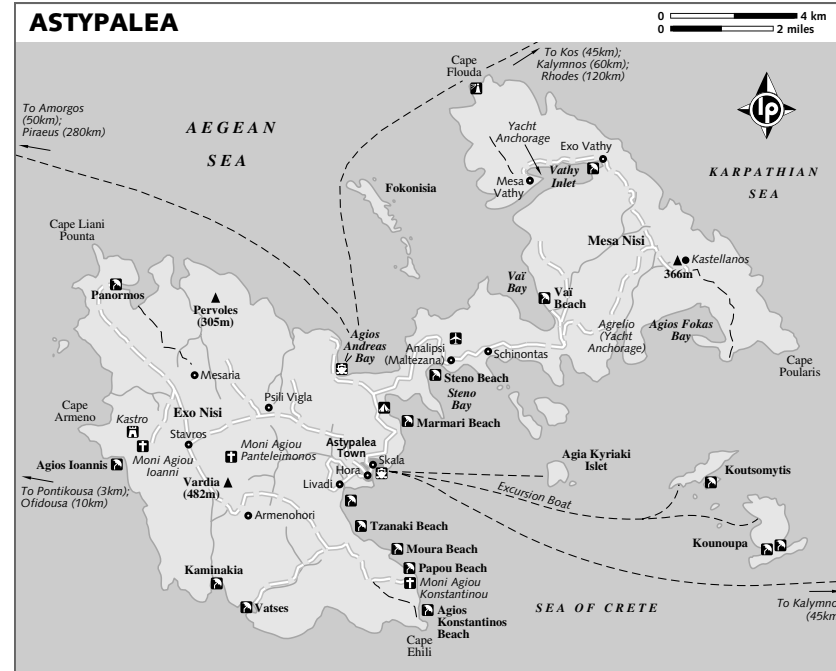
Getting There & Away

AIR

There are five flights weekly from Astypalea to Athens (€58, 50 minutes), plus three flights weekly to Leros (€45, 20 minutes), Kos (€51, one hour) and Rhodes (€51, 1½ hours). **Astypalea Tours** (☎ 22430 61571), in Skala, is the agent for Olympic Airlines.

FERRY

Astypalea has up to five services a week in summer to Piraeus (€33.50, 10 to 12 hours) via Naxos (€23, 3¾ hours) and Paros (€28.50, 4¾ hours), and two a week to Rhodes (€28,



seven to nine hours) via Kalymnos and Kos. The Kalymnos-based ferry *F/B Nissos Kalymnos* calls in three times weekly, linking the island with Kalymnos and islands further north in the Dodecanese. Ferry tickets are available from **Paradisos Ferries Agency** (☎ 22430 61224; fax 22430 61450) or from **Astypalea Tours** (☎ 22430 61571), both in Skala.

Getting Around

From Skala a bus travels every 30 minutes in July and August (four times daily other months) to Hora and Livadi (€1), and from Hora and Skala hourly in July and August (three times daily other months) to Analipsi (Maltezana; €1.50) via Marmari Beach. The 12pm departure terminates at the airport to connect with the Athens and Rhodes flights. There are only three taxis on the island. There are at least three car- and scooter-rental agencies on the island. **Vergoulis** (☎ 22430 61351) in Skala is a reputable agency.

EXCURSION BOAT

From June right through the summer to August there is a daily excursion boat, **Thalas-**

sopouli (☎ 6974436338), that owner Yiannis takes to the more remote western beaches of Agios Ioannis, Kaminakia and Vatses, or to the islets of Koutsomytis or Kounoupa. When the weather is good, he runs longer round-island excursions. Tickets (€10 to €15) can be bought on the boat.

SKALA & HORA ΣΚΑΛΑ & ΧΩΡΑ

The main settlement of Astypalea consists of the port of Skala (known officially as Pera Yialos) and the picturesque hill-top village of Hora, crowned by an imposing 15th-century castle. Skala can get hot and noisy in July and August, but offers a fairly popular and handy sand and pebble beach for a cooling dip. Most visitors head uphill to the usually much cooler Hora, where you can catch a hill-top breeze and enjoy a stunning view of the port and surrounds. The main square in Hora is backed by several restored windmills and is the main focal point of activity. Leading upwards from here to the castle is a series of narrow streets with dazzling-white cubic houses sporting brightly painted balconies, doors and banisters.

Orientation & Information

Mainline ferries dock at the rather isolated small port of Agios Andreas, 6.5km north of Skala. A bus is scheduled to meet all arriving ferries, but it's best not to bank on it. The local *F/B Nissos Kalymnos* still docks at Skala. Look for one of the three taxis or better still, prearrange a pickup. The airport is 8km east of Skala. Flights from Athens and Rhodes are met by the local bus, though a pick-up is always a better option.

Astypalea Tours (☎ 22430 61571) In Skala. For air tickets.

Commercial Bank (☎ 22430 61402) Has an ATM; on the Skala waterfront.

Municipal Tourist Office (☎ 22430 61412; 🕒 10am-12pm & 6-9pm) In a restored windmill in Hora.

Police (☎ 22430 61207) In a prominent Italianate building on the waterfront.

Port police (☎ 22430 61208) Shares the same building with the police.

Post office (☎ 22430 61223) At the top of the Skala-Hora road.

www.astypalaia.com Gives a good rundown on the island's facilities and sights.

Sights

CASTLE

Astypalea was occupied by the Venetian Quirini family, one of whom, Giovanni, built the imposing **castle** (admission free; 🕒 dawn to dusk) starting in 1413. In the Middle Ages the population lived within its walls in order to escape the depredations of piracy that was rife in the Aegean Sea, but gradually the settlement outgrew them. The last inhabitants left in 1953, following a devastating earthquake, as a result of which the stone houses collapsed. Above the tunnel-like entrance is the **Church of The Virgin of the Castle** and within the walls is the **Church of Agios Giorgios**. The castle is currently undergoing a prolonged restorative facelift.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM

Skala is home to a small **archaeological museum** (☎ 22430 61206; admission free; 🕒 11am-1pm Tue-Sun). The whole island of Astypalea is, in fact, a rich trove of archaeological treasure, and many of the finds are on display here. The collection runs from the prehistoric Mycenaean period through to the Middle Ages. Look out for a fine selection of grave offerings from two Mycenaean chamber tombs excavated at Armenohori, and the little bronze Roman statue of Aphrodite found at Trito Marmari. The

museum is at the beginning of the Skala-Hora road.

Sleeping

There's a range of good sleeping options on the island, usually consisting of rooms, studios and apartments. Reservations are pretty well essential in July and August.

Hotel Australia (☎ 22430 61275; d/tr €45/50; 🕒) This long-popular hotel has well-kept rooms with fridge and phone, and a friendly Greek Australian owner. There's an excellent in-house restaurant, too. You'll find it tucked away on the north side of Skala harbour.

Akra Studios (☎ 22430 61363; d €50; 🕒) For location you can't beat these five fully self-contained and spacious studios right on Skala beach. From the two front ground-floor studios, with their own shaded balconies, you are literally 5m from the beach.

Hotel Paradissos (☎ 22430 61224; www.astypalea-paradissos.com; s/d €45/55; 🕒) This ageing but well-maintained hotel overlooks Skala harbour, with comfortable fridge and TV-equipped rooms. Its main advantage is that it's open year-round.

Akti Rooms (☎ 22430 61114; www.aktirooms.gr; d/tr €65/70; 🕒) On the northeast side of the harbour, this block of rooms, all with fridge, phone and TV, enjoys some superb harbour views from its balconies. Restaurant Akti, a popular restaurant-café, is handily located here, too.

our pick Thalassa Hotel (☎ 22430 59840; www.stampalia.gr; d/t incl breakfast €100/120; 🕒 📺) The newest and unquestionably most enticing place to stay on the island is this relaxing hotel apartment complex in Skala. Rooms are spacious and airy and come with all facilities, including a bar fridge equipped with French champagne. Breakfast is made from organic local products.

Eating

There are not a lot of eating options in Astypalea, though the food tends to be of good quality. *Astakomakaronadha* (lobster in pasta) is the island's traditional (though pricey) dish.

Agoni Grammi (☎ 22430 61730; snacks €3-6) Australians take note: sit under a gum tree with ouzo on the rocks at sunset and a small platter of mezedhes and you'll almost feel at home. On the main square in Hora, this cosy café-cum-snack bar is a neat place to chill out at the end of a long day.

Jolly Café (☎ 22430 22430; breakfast €5-6) The best place to grab some breakfast is slap-bang on the Skala waterfront under the shade of a tamarisk tree. Grab some waffles and coffee early and later in the day a cold Corona and snack.

Maïstrali (☎ 22430 61691; mains €5-8) Tucked away in the little street behind the harbour is this yachtie-popular eatery that has a predictably fish-based menu, but occasional oven-baked specials such as succulent lemon goat. Service is brisk and friendly, and dining is alfresco on the shaded, stepped balcony.

Restaurant Akti (☎ 22430 61114; mains €5-8.50) For the best harbour-side dining in Astypalea give Akti a whirl. Perched high up on a cliff on the north side of Skala, the few tables overlooking the harbour are enormously popular. So, too, is the food, which includes fisherman's pasta or *poungia* (cheese foldovers).

our pick To Akrogiali (☎ 22430 61863; mains €5.50-9.50) Dine on the beach, literally, or on a pleasant slate-paved patio punctuated by a huge tamarisk tree. The smell of freshly cooked food from the busy kitchen complements the friendly service and good-quality mezedhes at this cosy taverna. Try the *tigania* (pork cubes) or soft local cheeses, such as *hlori* or *ladotyri*.

LIVADI ΛΕΙΒΑΔΙ

The little resort of Livadi lies in the heart of a fertile valley 2km from Hora. Its wide pebble and fine-gravel beach is one of the best on the island, but can get fairly crowded in summer. There are at least a couple of recommendable sleeping options. First up are the smallish but well-equipped **Venetos Studios** (☎ 22430 61490; fax 22430 61423; studios €50-60; 🕒), set around a shady orange-tree grove. On the seafont itself are the neat studios of **Manganas** (☎ 22430 61468; astyroom@otenet.gr; studios €50-60; 🕒), some 20m from the beach and each with kitchenette and fridge.

There are a handful places to eat at Livadi – all strung out along the tree-shaded waterfront. **Trapezakis Exo** (☎ 22430 61083; mains €4-6.50) is a neat little snack-bar-cum-restaurant at the western end of the beach strip. Snap up a fast sandwich, enjoy the cuttlefish speciality or check out the daily specials menu – **Astropelos** (☎ 22430 61473; mains €6-9) serves a small but imaginative range of dishes. There is the pricey pasta with lobster or grilled giant prawns and a cheaper fried calamari option. It's worth it

for its shaded beach-front patio as much as for its cuisine.

WEST OF SKALA

Heading west of Skala you hit the big Astypalea outback. Here is a land of gnarled, bare and rolling hills with scarcely a sealed road to speak of. It's all driveable (just), but you'll need a solid 4WD or off-road motorcycle. An access road peels upwards northwesterly from Skala and follows the hill ridges past Psili Vigla to a road junction at Stavros after 6km. Head north and follow the sign to the so-called **Kastro** (Castle) near the **Moni Agiou Ioanni**, which is reached via a detour after another 2km. The strictly fit may venture downwards from here on foot to **Agios Ioannis beach**. If you keep driving or biking, you'll struggle up and down along an abominably rough road with nevertheless stunning views of the uninhabited islets of **Pontikousa** and **Ofidousa** off-shore to the lonely, yet very swimmable, **Panormos Beach**. Chances are that the beach will be yours alone as few people venture up here.

From the Stavros junction another rough track winds upwards to the shepherd's hut on the mountain spine and then an *extremely* rough track (take care) winds downwards to **Kaminakia beach**, where there is a good seasonal restaurant, **Sti Linda** (☎ 6932610050; mains €4-7; 🕒 Jul-Sep), which rustles up hearty fish soups, oven-baked goat and home-made bread. The road back to **Livadi** is still unsealed but appreciably better. Detour, if time or energy allows, to the pretty, tree-shaded **Agios Konstantinos beach** on the south side of Livadi Bay.

EAST OF SKALA

To the east of Skala is the easterly wing of the 'butterfly' – the waist being marked by a narrow isthmus that barely joins the two halves of the island. **Marmari**, 2km northeast of Skala, has three bays with pebble and sand beaches and is home to Astypalea's **Camping Astypalea** (☎ 22430 61900; camp sites per adult/tent €6/4). Though it only operates from June to September, this tamarisk tree-shaded and bamboo-protected camping ground is right next to the beach and has a café and a minimarket. **Steno Beach**, 2km further along, is one of the better but least frequented beaches on the island. It's sandy, has shade and is well protected. This is the point where the island is just 105m wide.

Analipsi (also known as Maltezana) is 7km beyond Marmari in a fertile valley on the

isthmus. A former Maltese pirates' lair, it's a scattered, pleasantly laid-back settlement with a long sand and pebble beach, shaded by more ever-welcoming tamarisk trees. The water is clean and shallow. There are the remains of the **Tallaras Roman baths** with mosaics on the settlement's outskirts.

Accommodation is concentrated in Maltezana. **Maltezana Rooms** (☎ 22430 61446; fax 22430 61370; d €35) is a pretty reasonable option, just east of the quay set back 50m from the beach. **Villa Varvara** (☎ /fax 22430 61448; studios €45/54; 🍷) has 12 blue-and-white painted studios overlooking a vegetable garden and is just 100m from the beach; all have TV and fridge. The most expensive accommodation here, and on the island overall, is **Hotel Maltezana Beach** (☎ 22430 61558; www.maltezanabeach.gr; s/d €75/110; 🍷) on the middle section of the foreshore. The cubed, white studios are all spacious and tastefully furnished, though feel a little lonely in their isolation.

Eating choices in Maltezana are strictly limited. **Astakos** (☎ 22430 61865; mains €3-5), just over the headland at Schinontas, is perhaps the best choice of very few options. Try the *strapatsada* (wild-greens mélange mixed with egg yolk) or the *bourloto* (spicy oven-baked cheese).

Drive or ride an additional 11km as far as **Mesa Vathy** if curiosity gets the better of you. Perhaps detour to the unsheltered **Vai beach** if you want to swim, or duck down to the small yacht haven at **Agrelidi**. Remote Mesa Vathy hamlet is an indolent yacht harbour in a sheltered bay. The swimming is mediocre at best, but you can fish for your lunch or dine at the laid-back **Galini Café** (☎ 22430 61201; mains €3-5; 🍷 Jun-Oct), which offers meat and fish grills and the odd oven-baked special.

KALYMNOS ΚΑΛΥΜΝΟΣ

pop 16,441

Kalymnos (*kah-lim-nos*) was once renowned as the 'sponge-fishing island', whose islanders travelled far and wide in search of this strange marine animal to equip our bathrooms. Today sponge fishing is all but gone and the island is working hard to reinvent itself as a tourist destination. It has a challenging task ahead of it, but it's making progress. Kalymnos is a largish, arid island, dotted with fertile valleys and punctuated by rocky mountains. It's

to the perpendicular cliffs of some of these mountains that climbers flock to test their mettle, as rock-climbing is big on Kalymnos. Its resorts cater mainly to individuals, and walkers will find a network of ready-to-walk trails and paths that criss-cross the landscape. While the main town can be busy and brash, and the islanders may seem a little preoccupied with business, Kalymnos offers a holiday lifestyle that will suit many.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Kalymnos is linked by a daily Olympic Airways flight to and from Athens (€75, 20 minutes). Olympic Airlines is represented by **Kapellas Travel** (☎ 22430 29265; kapellatravel@gallileo.gr; Patriarhou Maximou 12) in Pothia. The airport is some 3.5km northwest of Pothia, perched high up on a mountain top.

The island is also linked to Kos (€30, 15 minutes), Mykonos (€80, 45 minutes) and Lavrio (€120, two hours) on the Attica mainland via a seaplane run by **AirSea Lines** (☎ 801 11 800 600; www.airsealines.com). The seaplane terminal is 1.5km east of Pothia.

FERRY

Kalymnos is linked to Rhodes (€18, five hours) and Piraeus (€42, nine to 11 hours) and islands in between, including useful links to Astypalea (€11, three hours) and Alexandroupoli (€38.50, 23¼ hours). Services are provided by **Blue Star Ferries** (☎ 22430 26000), **G&A Ferries** (☎ 22430 23700) and **ANE Kalymnou** (☎ 22430 29612). In high season there is usually at least one ferry daily.

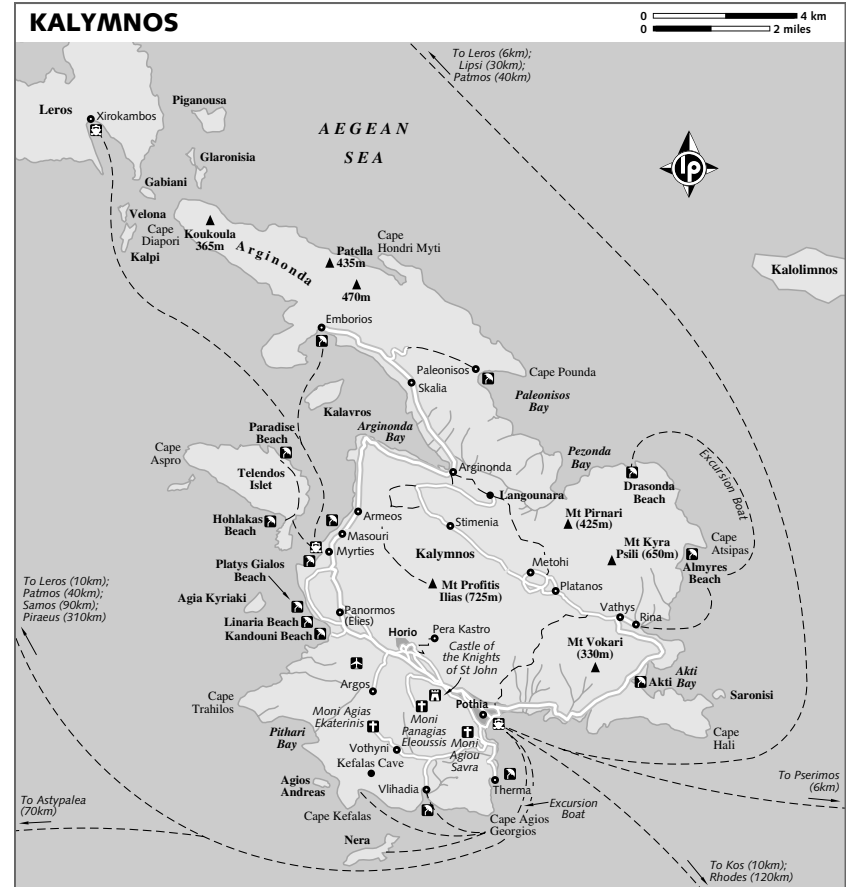
Car and passenger ferries leave four times daily between 7am and 8pm from Kalymnos' main town Pothia to Mastihari on Kos (€3, 50 minutes). ANE Kalymnou also runs two high-speed, passenger-only vessels, the *Kalymnos Star* and the smaller *Kalymnos Dolphin*, between Pothia and Mastihari. On Friday and weekends it also includes Pserimos on the route.

The high-speed, passenger-only Lipsi-based **Anna Express** (☎ 22470 41215) links Pothia with Leros and Lipsi five times weekly. Tickets can be bought on board.

There is a daily caique (€7) from Myrties to Xirokambos on Leros at 1pm and half-hourly services to Telendos Islet.

HYDROFOIL & CATAMARAN

One daily hydrofoil links Kalymnos with islands to the north such as Patmos (€20, 1½



hours), and Samos (€26, 2½ hours) and Kos (€12.50, one hour) to the south. Tickets can be bought from **Magos Travel** (☎ 22430 28777; magos@klm.forthnet.gr) in Pothia.

The *Dodekanisos Express* and *Dodekanisos Pride* catamarans call in four times daily during summer on their runs up and down the Dodecanese chain. Fares are similar to those of the hydrofoil. Tickets are issued by **G&A Ferries** (☎ 22430 23700).

Getting Around

BUS

In summer there is a bus departing hourly from opposite the cathedral to Masouri (€1.50) via Myrties, Emborios (€2) and Vathys (€2), four times daily. Buy tickets from the

Municipality of Kalymnos ticket office by the bus stop in Pothia.

EXCURSION BOAT

From Myrties there is a daily excursion boat to Emborios (€8), leaving at 10am and returning at 4pm. Day trips to the Kefalas Cave (€20), impressive for its stalactites and stalagmites, run from both Pothia and Myrties.

TAXI

Shared taxi services cost a little more than buses and run from the Pothia **taxi stand** (☎ 22430 50300; Plateia Kyprou) to Masouri. The taxis can also be flagged down en route. A regular taxi to Myrties costs €10 and to Vathys it costs €15.

POTHIA ΠΟΘΙΑ

pop 10,500

Pothia (*poth-ya*), the port and capital of Kalymnos, is a fairly large town by Dodecanese standards. It is built amphitheatrically around the slopes of the surrounding valley, and its visually arresting melange of colourful mansions and houses draped over the hills makes for a particularly photogenic sight when you first arrive. However, Pothia is a brash and overly busy town and its nightly parade of preening motorcyclists can make for some nerve-rattling noise pollution, while dining out or relaxing over a port-side drink can be testing at the best of times. It is nonetheless the island's social focal point and – love it or leave it – you'll be passing through Pothia at some point.

Orientation & Information

Pothia's quay is located at the southern side of the port. Most activity, however, is centred on the main square, Plateia Eleftherias, abutting the waterfront. The main commercial centre is on Venizelou, along which are most of the shops.

The Commercial and Ionian Banks, with ATMs, are close to the waterfront.

Kapellas Travel (☎ 22430 29265; fax 22430 51800; Patriarhou Maximou 12) For air tickets.

Magos Travel (☎ 22430 28777; magos@klm.forthnet.gr) Hydrofoil and catamaran tickets.

Neon Internet Cafe (☎ 22430 48318; per hr €3; ☎ 9.30am-midnight) Modern large internet and gaming café.

Police (☎ 22430 29301; Venizelou) Before the post office.

Port police (☎ 22430 29304; 25 Martiou)

Post office A 10-minute walk northwest of Plateia Eleftherias. There is a more convenient agency south of Plateia Ethnikis Andistasis

Tourist Information (☎ 22430 59056; 25 Martiou)

www.kalymnos-isl.gr An informative website hosted by the Municipality of Kalymnos.

Sights

North of Plateia Kyprou, housed in a neoclassical mansion that once belonged to a wealthy sponge merchant, is the **Archaeological Museum** (☎ 22430 23113; adult/student €2/1; ☎ 8.30am-2pm Tue-Sun). In one room there are some Neolithic and Bronze-Age objects. Other rooms are reconstructed as they were when the Vouvalis family lived here.

In the centre of the waterfront is the **Nautical & Folklore Museum** (☎ 22430 51361; adult/student €2/1;

☎ 8am-1.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-12.30pm Sat & Sun). Its collection is of traditional regional dress, plus a section on the history of sponge diving.

Sleeping

While there is a fair selection of sleeping options in Pothia, most travellers head for Myrties and Masouri. Pothia is really only handy if you need to take an early ferry.

Pension Greek House (☎ 22430 23752; s/d/studios €25/35/40) Inland from the port, this is a pleasant budget option with four cosy wood-panelled rooms with kitchen facilities. More expensive and better-equipped studios are also available.

Hotel Panorama (☎ 22430 23138; smiks2003@yahoo.gr; s/d incl breakfast €25/45; ☎) This small hotel is situated high up and enjoys one of the best views in Pothia. It's clean and breezy, rooms have TV and fridge, and it has a pleasant breakfast area.

ourpick Villa Melina (☎ 22430 22682; antonio.santonoglu@yahoo.de; s/d €50/60; ☎) Pothia's most appealing accommodation is equally suitable for romantic couples seeking a hideaway, or for travellers in search of old-world peace and quiet. This stately villa (which was recently renovated) harks from another age, featuring palm trees, a lush garden and a swimming pool.

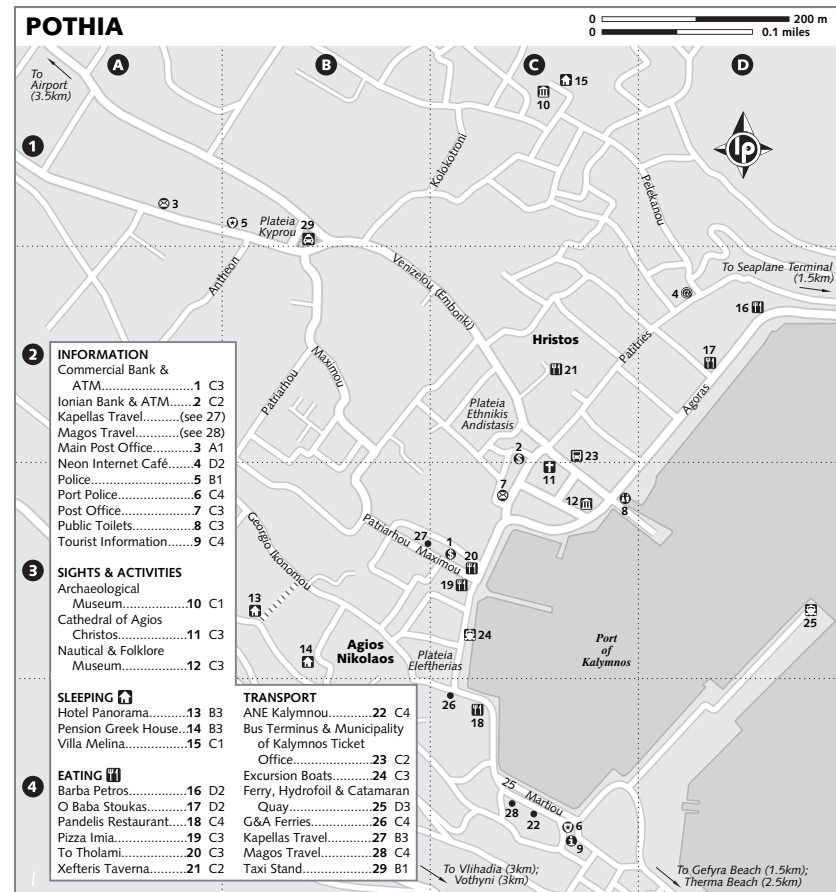
Eating

To Tholami (☎ 22430 51900; mains €3.50-5) Another well-established eatery, tucked away on a corner in Plateia Eleftherias, that is popular with locals and visitors alike. Recommended dishes are octopus patties and grilled tuna steaks.

Xeferis Taverna (☎ 22430 28642; mains €3-5.50) This long-standing (founded 1915) yet recently spruced up and expanded taverna serves solid quality food, confirming its good reputation. The meal-sized dolmadhes and the beef *stifadho* are recommended.

Pandelis Restaurant (☎ 22430 51508; mains €4.50-6) The specialities at this homey eatery favoured by locals are goat in red-wine sauce and home-made dolmadhes. Worth a mention also are the prawns in pasta and the charcoal-grilled meat cuts. Good wine selection and family atmosphere.

O Barba Stoukas (☎ 22430 24546; mains €6-8) Of the handful of waterside *ouzeries*, this one is about the closest you can get to the sea. Dishes are solid and well cooked, and the service is friendly. The Kalymnian, crouton-



loaded salad *mermizeli* features here, as does a rich skillet-cooked prawn and tomato sauce worth sampling.

Pizza Imia (☎ 22430 24809; pizza €7-12) If you don't mind the waterfront motorcycle racket, the imaginatively constructed and filling pizzas from the wood-fired oven make a great change from stock Greek fare. The wine list is impressive and the service brisk and cheery.

AROUND POTHIA

Running northwards from the port is a busy, densely populated valley with a series of almost contiguous settlements. The ruined **Castle of the Knights of St John** (Kastro Hrysoherias) looms to the left of the Pothia-Horio road. There is a small church inside the battlements.

On the east side of the valley **Pera Kastro** was a pirate-proof village inhabited until the 18th century. Within the crumbling walls are the ruins of stone houses and six tiny, well-kept churches. Steps lead up to Pera Kastro from **Horio**; it's a strenuous climb but the splendid views make it worthwhile.

A tree-lined road continues from Horio to **Panormos** (also called Elies), a pretty village 5km from Pothia. Its prewar name of Elies (olive trees) derived from its abundant olive groves, which were destroyed in WWII. An enterprising postwar mayor planted many trees and flowers to create beautiful panoramas wherever one looked – hence its present name, meaning 'panorama'. The sandy beaches of **Kandouni**, **Linaria** and **Platys Gialos**

are all within walking distance of Panormos, while a cliff-diving competition is held annually at Kandouni (see below).

Outdoor Activities

In recent years Kalymnos has become something of a mecca for **rock climbers**. Some spectacular limestone walls backing the resorts now attract legions of climbers looking for seriously challenging extreme sport. There are about 21 documented climbs awaiting the adventurous, pulling in visitors from as early as March onwards. The **Municipal Athletics Organisation** (☎/fax 22430 29612; mao@klm.forthnet.gr) is a good place to start for the full low-down; see also the Municipality's website (www.kalymnos-isl.gr).

The annual **Diving Festival** held in mid-August offers participants the chance to compete at underwater target shooting, cliff diving, scuba-diving through wrecks and caverns or even hunting for lost treasure. See the Municipality's website (www.kalymnos-isl.gr) for further details.

Hiking has become enthusiastically organised on Kalymnos. There are some 10 established hiking routes scattered all over the island. All are listed in detail on the excellent 1:25,000 *Kalymnos Hiking Map* published by **Anavasi** (☎ 21032 18104; www.mountains.gr; Stoa Arsiakiou 6a, Athens). Perhaps the most convenient hike is the Vathys–Pothia B1 4.25km 'Italian Rd' walk along a stone pathway built by the Italians at the beginning of the 20th century; the more adventurous might opt for an arduous 9km circuit of the Patella Castle loop (C3 and C4) along the mountain ridge backing Emborios in the north of the island.

MYRTIES, MASOURI & ARMEOS ΜΥΡΤΙΕΣ, ΜΑΣΟΥΡΙ & ΑΡΜΕΟΣ

From Panormos the road continues to the west coast, with stunning views of Telendos Islet, until it winds down into **Myrties** (myr-tyez), **Masouri** (mah-soo-ri) and **Armeos** (ar-me-os). These contiguous and busy resort centres host the lion's share of Kalymnos' modest resort industry. The three centres are essentially one long street, packed head to tail with restaurants, bars, souvenir shops and minimarkets. Towards land, apartments and studios fill the hillside, while on the sea side an extinct volcano plug separates the dark sand beach into two distinct sections – Myrties beach, with Melitsahas harbour, and the marginally better Masouri and Armeos beaches to the north.

There are currency-exchange bureaux, a Dodecanet ATM, car- and motorcycle-rental outlets and one internet café. **Aviss Rental** (☎ 22430 47430; Myrties) is a professional rental outfit.

Most accommodation in Masouri and Myrties is a combination of simpler rooms and more expansive and self-contained studios and apartments. There are plenty of choices.

On the Myrties side of the resort strip are the exceptionally comfy, airy and spacious studios/apartments of **Villa Myrtia** (☎ 22430 47046, 6937942404; www.villamyrtia.gr; d/t €35/60; ☎), boasting large shaded verandas and right on the beach. Next door and also occupying a similar beach-side location, **Acroyali** (☎ 22430 47521; acroyali@klm.forthnet.gr; d/t €35/45; ☎) is a set of impressive self-contained studios decked out in a more traditional style. Each studio has a wide private balcony.

There's no shortage of places to eat. A top choice is **I Drosia** (☎ 22430 48745; seafood mezedhes €5-12) overlooking Melitsahas harbour. Among the excellent mezehdes on offer are *kalognomones* (Kalymnian mussels), *ahini* (sea urchins) and a real treat – whole squid stuffed with creamy feta cheese.

In Masouri, **Kelly's** (☎ 22430 48390; mains €3-6) serves breakfast, lunch and dinner, with staples like *mousakas* and beef in red wine sauce and a smattering of French-influenced dishes. In Myrties, **Babis Bar** (☎ 22430 47864) is a mix of café, internet joint, bar and general hang-out, favoured by expats and travellers alike. It's a hearty spot for a full English breakfast (€6) to start your day.

From Myrties there's a daily caïque at 12.30pm to Xirokambos on Leros (€7), and Emborios (€7) in the north of Kalymnos, as well as half-hourly boats to Telendos Islet (€1.50).

TELENDOS ISLET ΝΗΣΟΣ ΤΕΛΕΝΔΟΣ

The low-key, tranquil and (almost) traffic-free islet of Telendos, with a little quayside hamlet, was part of Kalymnos until separated by an earthquake in AD 554. It's now a super escape from the busy resort strip opposite.

Turn right from Telendos' quay and you will pass the ruins of the early Christian **basilica** of Agios Vasilios. Further on, there are several pebble and sand beaches, including a locally acceptable nudist beach. To reach the far superior, 100m-long and fine-pebbled **Hohlakas**

Beach, turn left from the quay and then right at the sign to the beach. Follow the paved path up and over the hill for 10 minutes. **Paradise Beach** on the northern side of Telendos is the beach for the unclads. Walk for five minutes past On the Rocks Cafe Rooms.

Telendos accommodation consists of a number of rooms and one hotel. Opposite the quay is **George's** (☎ 22430 47502; d €30), while adjoining the café of the same name is **On the Rocks Cafe Rooms** (☎ 22430 48260; www.otr.telendos.com; studios €45; ☎) offering four studios equipped with every convenience imaginable, including fridge, satellite TV, double glazing and mosquito nets. Guests can also access the internet and will be picked up for free at Melitsahas harbour on Kalymnos or even in Pothia.

Telendos' only hotel as such is **Hotel Porto Potha** (☎ 22430 47321; portopotha@klm.forthnet.gr; s/d €30/35; ☎), 100m beyond On the Rocks Cafe. Rooms are airy and bright, and there's a large lobby where guests come to relax and watch TV over a drink.

The best place to eat 'n' schmooze is **On the Rocks Cafe** (☎ 22430 48260; mains €5-8), where Greek Australian owner Georgos serves well-prepared meat and fish dishes as well as vegetarian *mousakas*, and baked or grilled tuna and swordfish. It turns into a lively music bar at night – with over 300 cocktails to choose from – and on two evenings a week it hosts lively 'Greek Nights'.

Up on the hill overlooking Hohlakas Beach is the **Sunset Restaurant** (☎ 6972792482; mains €5-6), which is a great spot to watch the sunset (naturally), as well as sample an international, yet Dutch-influenced, menu of mains and snacks.

Caïques for Telendos depart half-hourly from the Myrties quay between 8am and 1am (one way €1.50).

EMBORIOS ΕΜΠΟΡΕΙΟΣ

The scenic west-coast road winds a further 11.5km from Masouri to Emborios, where there's a pleasant, shaded sand and pebble beach, as well as a minimarket and **Artistic Café** (☎ 22430 40115) for evening entertainment, sometimes featuring live guitar renditions.

One of the best places to stay on Kalymnos for a full relax-out experience is **Harry's Apartments** (☎ 22430 40062; www.harrys-paradise.gr; d/tr €27/33; ☎). Stressed-out executives from

Milano, lovers from London and poets from Poznań all find a piece of paradise in this quiet, relaxing corner of Kalymnos. The capacious rooms are tastefully decorated – each one coloured and decorated individually – and enjoy sea-view balconies. Choose the Kalymnian Traditional House (€45 to €55), with a raised bed for a spot of extra space and style.

A stay here is made all the more attractive by the lush flower garden and adjoining **Paradise Restaurant** (☎ 22430 40062; mains €4.50-7), run by the charming Evdokia. She rustles up a good line in vegetarian dishes, such as *revithokeftedes* (chickpea rissoles) and filo-pastry turnovers with fillings such as aubergine, vegetables and onion. Stuffed mushrooms or zucchini flowers is another one of her specialities.

VATHYS & RINA ΒΑΘΥΣ & ΠΙΝΑ

Vathys, 13km northeast of Pothia, and its long fertile valley are one of the most beautiful and peaceful parts of the island. Vathys means 'deep' in Greek and refers to the slender fjord that cuts through high cliffs into the fertile valley, where narrow roads wind between citrus orchards. You can hardly miss the high stone walls called *koumoula* that ribbon along the narrow access roads. These mark the property extents of the landowners.

There is no beach at Vathys' harbour, Rina, but you can swim off the jetty at the south side of the harbour. **Water taxis** (☎ 22430 31316) take tourists to quiet coves, such as **Almyres** and **Drasonda** bays, nearby. An annual cliff-diving competition takes place at Vathys as part of the international Diving Festival (see opposite).

While there are at least a couple of accommodation and eating options, there is little incentive to stay as the proprietors do little to convince visitors to linger. It has all become a bit tired recently and after dark things can be a little too quiet. It's still worth the excursion out here, if only for a swim and a cold beer.

Visitors can now cut across the island from Vathys on a partially sealed road to Arginonda and then back to Masouri. By the time of writing the road was sealed as far as the ridge-top spur at Langounara (8.5km from Vathys). When finally complete by this book's publication, the road will be a much quicker way to get to the north of the island from Vathys.

LEROS ΛΕΡΟΣ

pop 8207

Almost completely overlooked by foreign travellers, languid Leros (*leh-ros*) lies lightly between Kalymnos and Lipsi, self-reliant, introspective and almost content to let mainstream tourism pass it by. But Leros has plenty on offer – an attractive mix of sun, sea, rest and recreation, a stunning medieval castle and some excellent dining. A popular Greek song wistfully remembers its hills, but there are the bays and beaches, the laid-back lifestyle and the pervading sense that this island has not yet given up its Greekness. Leros is popular with domestic travellers and always enjoys a busy summer season. The Italians loved Leros, too, having left their legacy in a set of prewar Art Deco buildings that are incongruous in their Aegean island setting. It is hard to pigeonhole Leros. Travellers need to savour the island themselves.

Getting There & Away

AIR

There is a flight daily to Athens (€54, one hour), as well as three flights a week to Rhodes (€45, two hours 10 minutes) via Kos (€38, 20 minutes). There are also three flights a week to Astypalea (€45, 15 minutes). **Olympic Airlines** (☎ 22470 22844; www.olympicairlines.com) is in Platanos, before the turn-off for Pandeli. The **airport** (☎ 22470 22777) is near Partheni in the north. There is no airport bus and the local bus does not accommodate arriving or departing flights. A taxi from the airport to Alinda will cost €8.

EXCURSION BOAT

The caique *Katerina* leaves Xirokambos at 7.30am daily for Myrties on Kalymnos (one way €7) and returns at 1.30pm.

FERRY

Leros is on the main north–south route for ferries between Rhodes and Piraeus. There are daily departures from Lakki to Piraeus (€32 to €36, 11 hours), Kos (€11, 3¼ hours) and Rhodes (€23, 7¼ hours). Buy tickets at **Leros Travel** (☎ in Lakki 22470 24000, in Agia Marina 22470 22154).

The Lipsi-based **Anna Express** (☎ 22470 41215) links Leros with Kalymnos and Lipsi five times weekly, while once a week it detours to Arki,

Marathi and Agathonisi. It departs from and arrives at the port of Agia Marina.

HYDROFOIL & CATAMARAN

In summer a hydrofoil and two catamarans depart daily from both Agia Marina and Lakki to Patmos (€16.50, 45 minutes), Lipsi (€11.50, 20 minutes), Samos (€20, two hours), Kos (€16.50, one hour) and Rhodes (€38, 3¼ hours).

Getting Around

The hub for Leros' buses is Platanos. There are three buses daily to Partheni via Alinda and four buses to Xirokambos via Lakki (€1 flat fare).

Car-, motorcycle- and bicycle-rental outlets tend to be centered on the Alinda tourist strip. **Motoland** (☎ 22470 24584) offers newer bikes and scooters as well as *gourounes* (four-wheeled bikes), which are hot fun to drive. Taxis can be hailed on (☎ 22470 23340, 22470 23070 or 22470 22550).

LAKKI ΛΑΚΚΙ

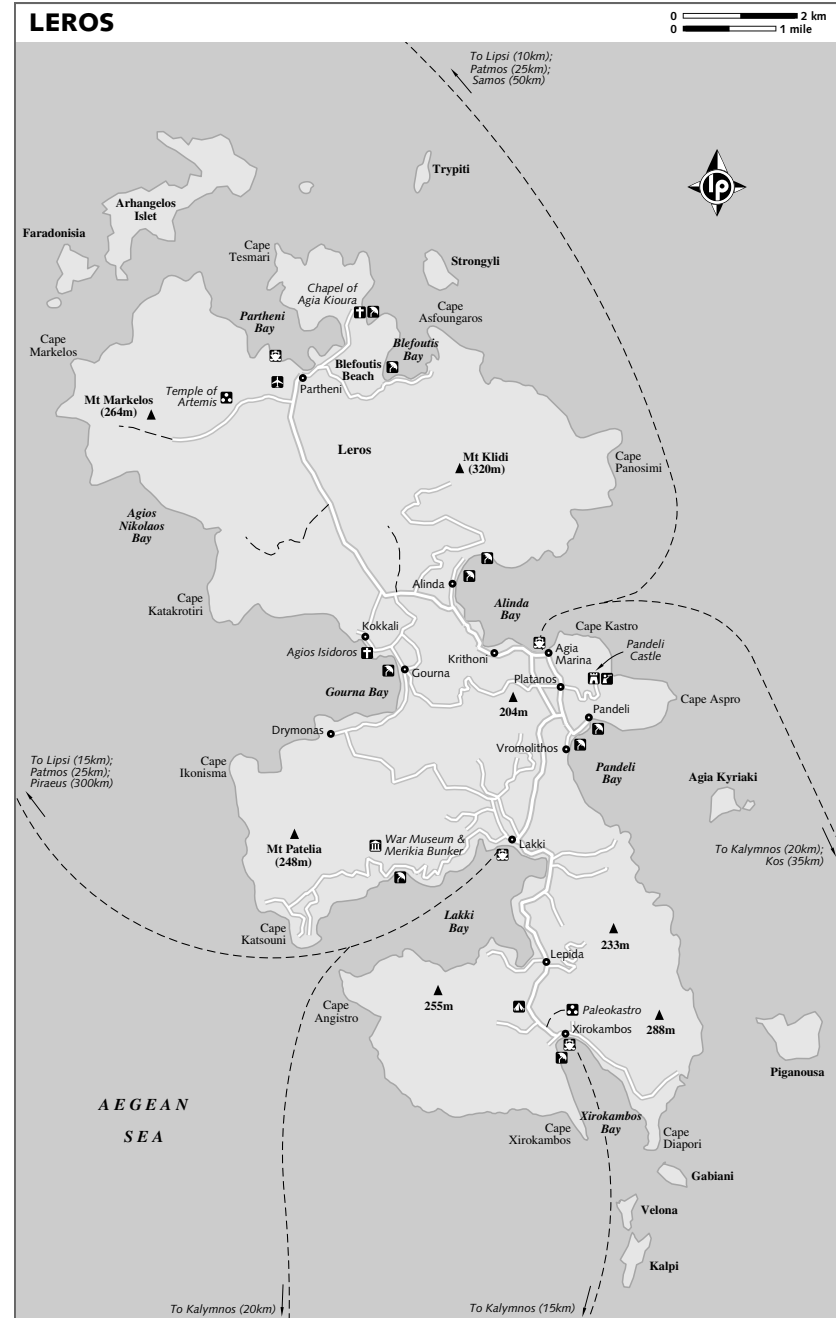
pop 2366

Arriving at Lakki (*lah-kee*) by boat is akin to stepping into a long-abandoned Federico Fellini film set. The grandiose buildings and wide tree-lined boulevards dotted around the Dodecanese are best (or worst) shown here, for Lakki was built as a Fascist showpiece during the Italian occupation. Few linger in Lakki, though it has decent accommodation and restaurants, and there are some secluded swimming opportunities on the road past the port. The port has internet access at the quayside Kinezos Café.

Worth detouring to is the historically relevant **War Museum & Merikia Bunker** (☎ 22470 22244; admission €3; ☎ 9.30am–1.30pm), a short drive west beyond the Lakki Port to Merikia. Here you can escape the stifling Leros heat to seek cool solace in the hill-puncturing bunkers of former provisions and armament warehouses built by the Italians during WWII. They are now home to an eclectic and widely varied collection of memorabilia dating from the time of the Battle of Leros when the Germans captured Leros from the Italians and the British from September to November 1943.

XIROKAMBOS ΞΗΡΟΚΑΜΠΙΟΣ

Xirokambos Bay, on the south of the island, is a low-key resort with a gravel and sand



beach and some good spots for snorkelling. Just before the camping ground, on the opposite side, a signposted path leads up to the ruined fortress of **Paleokastro**.

Xirokambos is home to Leros' only camping ground. **Camping Leros** (☎ 22470 23372; camp sites adult/tent €6.50/4) has tent sites that are interwoven into a shady olive grove. Look for it on the right 3km from Lakki. There is a small restaurant and bar on site, and you'll also find **Panos Diving Club** (☎ 22470 23372; www.lerosdiving.com; 📄) here, offering a series of wreck dives and training courses.

For a spot of self-contained comfort, **Villa Alexandros** (☎ 22470 22202; d €55; 🍷) is a classy option. The self-contained studios each have kitchenette, fridge and fly screens on the windows, and look out onto a pleasant flower garden. You'll find it 150m back from the beach.

For eating, a good bet is the well-shaded and modern fish taverna **To Aloni** (☎ 22470 26048; mains €4-8), abutting the beach. Fish dominates the menu but there is also an extensive array of mezedhes on offer.

PLATANOS & AGIA MARINA ΠΑΤΑΝΟΣ & ΑΓΙΑ ΜΑΡΙΝΑ

pop 3500

Platanos (*plah-ta-nos*), the capital of Leros, is 3km north of Lakki. It's a bustling and picturesque village spilling over a narrow hill and pouring down to **Pandeli** to the south and the port of **Agia Marina** (*ay-i-a ma-ri-na*) to the north. The busy port has more of a social and nightlife scene than the neighbouring **Alinda** resort a little further to the north, though there is no swimming to speak of. Platanos is the commercial centre of the island and is also the starting point for the path up to the **Pandeli Castle** (☎ 22470 23211; admission castle €2, castle & museum €3; 🕒 8am-12.30pm & 4-8pm), from where there are stunning views in all directions around Leros; the museum is also worth a visit.

Orientation & Information

The focal point of Platanos is the lively central square, Plateia N Roussou. From this square Harami leads to Agia Marina. The bus station and taxi rank are both about 50m along the Platanos-Lakki road.

The National Bank of Greece is on the central square. There are two ATMs at Agia Marina, including a handy one at the port itself. **Enallaktiko Café** (☎ 22470 23500; per hr €4; 🕒 10am-midnight) Wi-fi access; in Agia Marina.

Laskarina Tours (☎ 22470 24550; fax 22470 24551) In Platanos; very helpful and also organises trips around the island.

Police (☎ 22470 22222) In Agia Marina.

Post Office (☎ 22470 22929) On Harami in Platanos.

Tourist Information Kiosk (☎ 22470 22224) In Agia Marina.

Sleeping & Eating

Tassos II Apartments (☎/fax 22470 23769; Agia Marina; d €45; 🍷) These fully equipped studios with kitchen, ironing facilities, satellite TV, coffee maker, money safe and hairdryer are excellent value. They are on the left along the main road leading to Alinda.

Crithoni's Paradise Hotel (☎ 22470 25120; c.para dise@12net.gr; s/d €90/140; 🍷 📄 📺) Resembling a neoclassical Italian mansion from the turn of the century and complete with palm trees, bars, restaurant and relaxing lounges for afternoon cocktails, this sprawling A-class hotel is a good top-end choice.

Ouzeri-Taverna Neromylos (☎ 22470 24894; Agia Marina; mains €5-7.50) The most atmospheric of the tavernas at Agia Marina, this one is next to a former watermill. Night-time dining is best when lights illuminate the watermill. Fish and grills predominate but there is a good selection of mezedhes.

Entertainment

Agia Marina is the heart of the island's nightlife, with several late-night music bars. Possibly the most lively hang-out is Enallaktiko Cafe, where you can shoot pool, play video games or sip an ouzo on ice while chilling out at sunset.

PANDELI & VROMOLITHOS ΠΑΝΤΕΛΙ & ΒΡΩΜΟΛΙΘΟΣ

Head south from Platanos and you'll soon hit **Pandeli**, a little fishing village-cum-resort with a sand and shingle beach. Keep on going around the headland via the footpath and you'll stumble on **Vromolithos**, where you'll find an even better, narrow shingly beach with some tree shade in the middle section. A scattering of sleeping and eating choices serve both settlements.

At a pinch Pandeli wins in the sleeping stakes and there's a bit more concentrated daytime activity and nightlife to pull in the evening punters. Easy to spot for its striking blue-and-white columned façade on Pandeli port, **Rooms to Rent Kavos** (☎ 22470 23247; d €35)

is a sensible choice. Rooms are largish, sport balconies and have fan and fridge. Grab a front room if you want a harbour view. Up on the hill is the always popular **Pension Rodon** (☎ 22470 22075; d €30; 🍷 year-round), a reliable and welcoming choice with comfortable rooms.

For an innovative culinary experience like you will find on few other islands, head on up to the aerie-like establishment of **Dimitris o Karrafas** (Dimitris the Bald; ☎ 22470 25626; mezedhes €3-7), with stunning views overlooking Vromolithos beach. Owner Dimitris combines fresh food elements in tantalising ways to make dining a refreshing change. His hallmark chicken in retsina, or pork in wine sauce, satisfy solidly, while his mezedhes options include *batiris* (a kind of dip), or *pita kaisarias*, a savoury pie featuring *pastourmas* (spicy cured beef).

At Pandeli, **Psaropoula** (☎ 22470 25200; mains €5-8) is right on the beach and is as good as any of the several tavernas plying their trade here. Psaropoula has a wide-ranging menu featuring fish; the prawn *souvlaki* with bacon is recommended.

KRITHONI & ALINDA ΚΡΙΘΩΝΙ & ΑΛΙΝΤΑ

Krithoni and Alinda are contiguous resorts on the wide Alinda Bay, running about 3km northwest from Agia Marina. Most of the action is concentrated at the Alinda end, where the only real danger is from the parades of kamikaze motorcyclists who roar indiscriminately up and down the narrow beachside road. The beach is pebbled and the water is very clean. Further to the north around the bay are some quieter coves and beaches.

On Krithoni's waterfront there is a poignant, well-kept **war cemetery**. After the Italian surrender in WWII, Leros saw fierce fighting between German and British forces; the cemetery contains the graves of 179 British, two Canadian and two South African soldiers.

Not surprisingly for the island's main resort area there are plenty of sleeping choices.

Hotel Alinda (☎ 22470 23266; fax 22470 23383; s/d €30/40; 🍷) is an older-style but spick-and-span hotel, with 41 small, comfortable rooms offering good value. The highly regarded in-house restaurant does a fine line in home-made cooking.

Hotel Gianna (☎/fax 22470 24135; s/d €35/45) is just behind the war cemetery and far enough away from the 'strip' to be quiet. All rooms are pleasantly furnished.

For comfortable self-catering, **Tassos Studios I** (☎ 22470 22769; fax 22470 23769; studios €42; 🍷) has beautiful, fully equipped mini-apartments close to Krithoni beach, run by the same owners as Tassos II in Agia Marina.

Set amid a lush garden of flowers, shrubs and shady trees and backed by a small vineyard, the old-style mansion **To Arhontiko tou Angelou** (☎ 22470 22749; www.hotel-angelou-leros.com; s/d incl breakfast €90/155; 🍷) is an ideal retreat for a few days. The capacious rooms are high ceiled, have wooden floors and the wrought-iron beds are so comfortable: for once you can sleep in Greece on pillows that allow interrupted dreaming.

Lambros (☎ 22470 2154; mains €4-6.50) offers you tables no more than 2m from the lapping waters of Alinda Bay. Flavour-ridden home cooking characterises this friendly lunch or dinner taverna. The rich *mousakas* is worthy of an honourable mention.

Right next door and also on the beach, **Fanari** (☎ 22470 2169; mains €4-7) serves enticing mezedhes such as *bekri mezes* (meat chunks in a piquant sauce), or *spanakopitakia* (mini spinach turnovers).

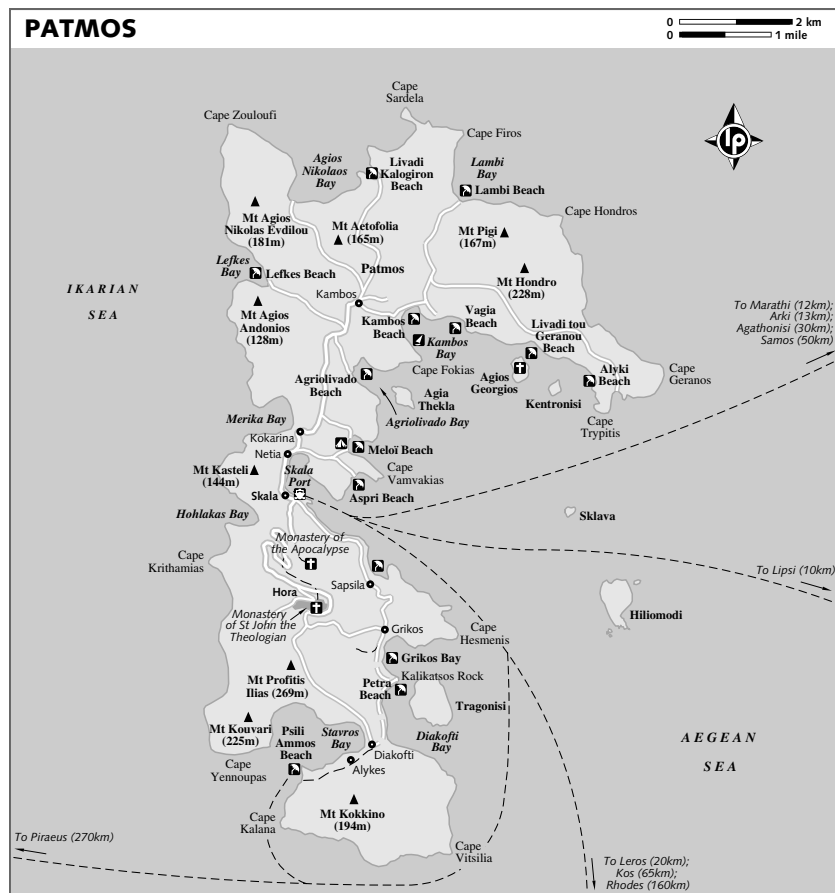
PATMOS ΠΑΤΜΟΣ

pop 3044

If ever the sense of 'spirit of place' was a tangible entity, it's certainly true of Patmos (*paht-moss*). When you step off the ferry on Patmos (the northernmost Dodecanese island) you sense its appeal. The island has that quality like no other. Could it be that it was for that same reason that John the Divine ensconced himself in a cave and wrote the Apocalypse here? Patmos is a place of pilgrimage for both Orthodox and Western Christians and is, without doubt, the best place to come and experience Orthodox Easter. Spirituality aside, the beaches are many and magnificent; accommodation is top quality and in abundance (you can even get married in one hotel's church), and dining is a recommendable activity. The transience of the light is remarkable and the landscape gives an inescapable sense of harmony and balance.

History

In AD 95 St John the Divine was banished to Patmos from Ephesus by the pagan Roman Emperor Domitian. While residing in a cave on the island, St John wrote the Book of



Revelations. In 1088 the Blessed Christodoulos, an abbot who came from Asia Minor to Patmos, obtained permission from the Byzantine Emperor Alexis I Komninos to build a monastery to commemorate St John. Pirate raids necessitated powerful fortifications, so the monastery looks like a mighty castle.

Under the Duke of Naxos, Patmos became a semi-autonomous monastic state, and achieved such wealth and influence that it was able to resist Turkish oppression. In the early 18th century a school of theology and philosophy was founded by Makarios and it flourished until the 19th century.

Gradually the island's wealth became polarised into secular and monastic entities. The secular wealth was acquired through ship-

building, an industry that diminished with the arrival of the steam ship.

Getting There & Away

EXCURSION BOAT

The local **Patmos Star** (☎ 6977601633) leaves Patmos daily for Lipsi and Leros at 10am (return €8) and returns from Lipsi at 3.30pm.

The **Delfini** (☎ 22470 31995) goes to Marathi daily at 10.10am in high season and Monday and Thursday at other times (return €15). Twice a week it also calls in at Arki. From Marathi a local caique will take you across to Arki (1¼ hours).

The **Lambi II** goes to Arki, Marathi and Lipsi on Wednesday and Saturday at 9am and returns at 2pm

FERRY

Patmos is connected with between four and five ferry services weekly to/from Piraeus (€32.50, seven to eight hours), Rhodes (€28.50, six to 7½ hours) and a number of islands in between. Mainline services are provided by the faster and sleeker Blue Star Ferries and the slower and less glamorous G&A Ferries.

The slow F/B **Nissos Kalymnos** provides additional links to Arki, Agathonisi and Samos, as well as to Leros and Kalymnos. Tickets are sold by **Apollon Travel** (☎ 22470 31324; apollontravel@stratas.gr) in Skala. Additionally the Lipsi-based and very fast **Anna Express** connects Patmos with Lipsi, Leros and Kalymnos. Tickets are bought onboard.

HYDROFOIL & CATAMARAN

There is a daily hydrofoil to Kos (€43, three hours) and destinations in between. This same hydrofoil also links Patmos with neighbouring Samos (€14.50, one hour).

The **Dodekanisos Express** and **Dodekanisos Pride** catamarans link Patmos twice daily during summer with islands to the south. Tickets can be bought at **Apollon Travel** (☎ 22470 31324; apollontravel@stratas.gr) in Skala.

Getting Around

BUS

From Skala there are 11 buses daily in July and August to Hora, eight to Grikos and four to Kambos. The frequency drops off during the rest of the year. Fares all cost a standard €1.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

There are a number of car- and motorcycle-rental outlets in Skala. Competition is fierce, so shop around. **Moto Rent Express** (☎ 22470 32088) in the street behind the post office is a reliable outfit for car and scooter rentals.

EXCURSION BOAT

Boats go to Psili Ammos Beach from Skala, departing about 10.15am and returning about 4pm.

TAXI

You can catch a **taxi** (☎ 22470 31225) from Skala's taxi rank. Fares include Meloi Beach €3.50, Hora €4.50, Grikos €4.55 and Lambi €7.

SKALA ΣΚΑΛΑ

Patmos' port town is Skala (*ska-la*), a bright and glitzy place, draped around a curving

bay and only visible from arriving ships once the protective headland has been rounded. The port bustles and large cruise ships are often anchored offshore, while smaller ones heave to at Skala's harbour. Once the cruise ships and ferries depart, Skala reverts to being a fairly normal, liveable port town. It has a wide range of excellent accommodation and restaurants, and all the island's major facilities are located here.

Orientation & Information

All transport arrives at the centre of the long quay, smack bang in the middle of Skala. To the right the road leads to the yacht port at Netia and on to the north of the island. To the left the road leads to the south side of the island. From near the ferry terminal a road leads inland and up to Hora. The bus terminal and taxi rank are at the quay. All main services are within 100m of the ferry quay.

There are two ATM-equipped banks in Skala: the National Bank of Greece and the Commercial Bank.

AB Food Market (☎ 22470 34023) There's a well-stocked AB (Vasilopoulos) Food Market 100m along the Hora road in Skala.

Apollon Travel (☎ 22470 31324; apollontravel@stratas.gr) Ticketing for flights, Blue Star Ferries, and hydrofoil and catamaran services.

Blue Bay Internet Café (☎ 22470 31165; per hr €4; ☎ 9am-2pm & 4-8pm) At the Blue Bay Hotel; offers wi-fi.

Dodoni Gelateria (☎ 22470 32202; per hr €4; ☎ 9am-9pm) Connect to the internet and eat ice-cream at the same time.

Hospital (☎ 22470 31211) Two kilometres along the road to Hora.

Laundry (☎ 22470 33170) On the bend between Skala and Netia. Dry cleaning and laundry services.

Municipal Tourist Office (☎ 22470 31666; ☎ summer) Shares the same building as the post office and police station.

Police (☎ 22470 31303) On the main waterfront.

Port police (☎ 22470 31231) Behind the quay's passenger-transit building.

www.patmos-island.com A useful website with information on Patmos.

Sleeping

BUDGET

Hotel and studio owners usually meet all arrivals at the port, but it's best to call ahead and arrange a pick-up, as mainline ferries often arrive at unsocial hours.

Pension Maria Pascalidis (☎ 22470 32152; s/d €20/30) One of the better budget options is this long-standing traveller-friendly place, on the road leading to Hora. The simple but quite presentable rooms are set amid a leafy citrus-tree garden.

Domatia Katina (☎ /fax 22470 31327; s/d €35/50; ♿) These four tidy rooms are out on the northern edge of Skala, each with good views, fridge, kitchenette, TV and four-poster bed. The ever-hospitable and smiling Katina will pick you up from the port if you call ahead.

Pension Avgerinos (☎ /fax 22470 32118; d €50) In a slightly quieter, elevated part of Netia, affording good views over the bay, this homey choice is run by a welcoming Greek Australian couple. All rooms are cosy and comfortable and have fridge and fan.

our pick **Yvonn Studios** (☎ 22470 33066; www.12net.gr/yvonn; s/d €30/55; ♿) These four exceptionally well-appointed, clean and pleasant studios are on the hillside in a verdant garden in Hohlakas Bay. Each is fully self-contained and has a balcony that faces the Monastery of St John in Hora. Call into Yvonn's gift shop in Skala and ask for Theologos.

MIDRANGE

our pick **Doriza Bay Hotel** (☎ 22470 33123; www.dorizabay.com; d/maisonettes €40/70; ♿) High above the south side of Hohlakas Bay is this newer room and apartment complex. Opt for a spacious two-storey maisonette with internal spiral staircase, or a very comfortable double room.

Captain's House (☎ 22470 31793; www.captains-house.gr; s/d incl breakfast €55/75; ♿ ♿) A cool, open, split-level interior welcomes guests upon arrival. Each comfortable, stucco-walled room has TV, fridge and phone. The front rooms have the best views, but can get the noise from the sometimes rowdy nightlife nearby.

Blue Bay Hotel (☎ 22470 31165; www.bluebaypatmos.gr; s/d incl breakfast €70/100; ♿ ♿) This Australian-Greek-owned waterfront hotel has very clean, pleasantly furnished rooms and is at the quieter far southern end of Skala, just round the last bend. The wi-fi is handy for laptop-equipped travellers.

Eating

Pandelis Taverna (☎ 22470 31230; mains €4-6.50) One of the more picturesque diners, this busy little taverna has been in business for over 50 years.

Lunch in the street over a newspaper and a beer can't be beaten. The service is efficient and the dining at night is very atmospheric. The best bets are the daily home-cooked specials.

Tzivaeri (☎ 22470 31170; mains €4-7) Solid, unsurprising menu choices but excellent quality – especially the squid – either stuffed or fried. The service is fast and courteous. Dine upstairs on the covered balcony and observe the active street life below. The owner Yiannis may bring out his lute for a round of island or Cretan music if the mood takes him.

Hiliomodis Ouzeri (☎ 22470 34080; mezedhes platter €10.50; ♿ year-round) For the freshest fish on the island head to this *ouzerie* for its excellent seafood dishes and very reasonably priced seafood-based mezedhes. The Hiliomodis is patronised as much by locals as by visitors.

our pick **Vegghera** (☎ 22470 32988; mains €8-14) Yachties and high-society diners head for this swish, air-conditioned establishment opposite the yacht marina. The cuisine is a mélange of French and Greek. Worth sampling is the calamari with pesto, or maybe *linguini* in a tangy tomato, orange and ginger sauce.

Entertainment

Skala's musical nightlife revolves around a scattering of bars and the odd club or two.

Arion (☎ 22470 31595) Café life and street gossip reach their zenith at this busy little meeting place, café, breakfast joint and general social hotspot at all times of the day.

Anemos (☎ 22470 33008; ♿ 9pm-late Thu-Sun) Just outside Skala and within walking distance on the hill heading up to Kambos is this trendy beer house and music bar in an old stone house.

Aman (☎ 22470 32323) On the south side of Skala, Aman predisposes people to sitting outside on its tree-shaded patio and listening to music to the feel of a cold beer or inventive cocktail.

HORA ΧΩΡΑ

Huddled around the Monastery of St John are the immaculate whitewashed houses of Hora. These houses are a legacy of the island's great wealth in the 17th and 18th centuries. Some of them have been bought and renovated by wealthy Greeks and foreigners. A stroll through the maze-like, whitewashed streets is an experience in itself. Walk randomly around the monastery and lose yourself in a timeless atmosphere.

The immense **Monastery of St John the Theologian** (☎ 22470 31398; admission free; ♿ 8am-1.30pm daily, 4-6pm Tue, Thu & Sun), with its buttressed grey walls, crowns the island of Patmos. A 4km vehicular road winds up from Skala, but many people prefer to walk up the Byzantine path, which starts from a signposted spot along the Skala-Hora road.

Some 200m along, a dirt path to the left leads through pine trees to the **Monastery of the Apocalypse** (☎ 22470 31234; admission free; treasury €6; ♿ 8am-1.30pm daily, 4-6pm Tue, Thu & Sun), built around the cave where St John received his divine revelation. In the cave you can see the rock that the saint used as a pillow, and the triple fissure in the roof, from where the voice of God issued and which is said to symbolise the Holy Trinity.

The finest frescoes of this monastery are those in the outer narthex. The priceless contents in the monastery's **treasury**, billing itself as 'the Grandest Museum in the Aegean', include icons, ecclesiastical ornaments, embroideries and pendants made of precious stones.

Dine al fresco in the square or in the secluded garden at **Vangelis Taverna** (☎ 22470 31967; mains €5.50-8) and enjoy its cosy, intimate ambience. Good menu choices include *bekri mezes* and the similar *spetsofai* – rich and spicy cubed-meat concoctions. **Loza** (☎ 22470 32405) on the northwest corner of Hora is the best spot for a sunset drink and snack with

stunning views over Skala, while the **Stoa Cafe** (☎ 22470 32226) opposite Vangelis Taverna is an internet wi-fi hotspot.

NORTH OF SKALA

The relaxing, tree-shaded **Meloi Beach** is just 2km northeast of Skala. It's home to **Stefanos Camping** (☎ 22470 31821; camp sites per person/tent €7/2), the island's only camping ground. It offers bamboo-shaded sites, a minimarket, café-bar and motorcycle-rental facilities. Between Skala and Meloi, and set back alone abutting a verdant vegetable plot, is **Stefanos Studios** (☎ 22470 32415; stefstud@12net.gr; studios €25-35 ♿). Tastefully furnished in pine they are airy, spacious and have full kitchenette facilities. Feel free to help yourself to the fresh vegetables in the garden. **To Meloi** (☎ 22470 31888; grills €4-6), at pretty Meloi Beach, is a well-regarded and inexpensive fish taverna with a predictable menu mix of home-cooked dishes, fish and grills.

Heading north, just out of Skala on the hill enjoying stunning views, is the plush **Porto Scoutari Hotel** (☎ 22470 33123; www.portoscoutari.com; d/tr incl breakfast €70-160; ♿ ♿ ♿ ♿). This is the classiest and most romantic place to sleep on Patmos. Each self-contained and individually named studio is impeccably decorated, and comes with a large personal balcony. There's even an on-site church, should you wish to get married and honeymoon in the same location.

ST JOHN THE DIVINE & THE APOCALYPSE

The island of Patmos is home to the Cave of the Apocalypse where St John the Divine was allegedly visited by God and instructed to write the tell-all Book of Revelations, more commonly known as the Book of the Apocalypse. He is often believed to be John the Apostle of Jesus or John the Evangelist, though many would dispute this. His AD 95 exile to Patmos by the pagan Roman Emperor Domitian would tend to rule out the first two options. In the Book of Revelations John wrote to the seven Christian churches of Asia about two apocalyptic visions he had received. Those churches were Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. The first vision (1:11-3:22), relates 'one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle', speaking with 'a great voice, as of a trumpet'. The second vision comprises the remainder of the book (4-22) and begins with 'a door...opened in the sky'. It goes on to describe the end of the world – involving the final rebellion by Satan at Armageddon, God's final defeat of Satan, and the restoration of peace to the world. 'Revelation' is considered to be open to interpretation at best and is not afforded the serious scholarly study that it would seem to merit – perhaps because of the obscure and essentially hard-to-interpret symbolism of the work. Some critics have even suggested that it was the work of a deranged man. Notwithstanding, what is clear is that a certain John did write an important spiritual work – perhaps divinely inspired – and most likely in the very cave close to the monastery that now bears his name.

A turn-off right from the main road leads to the relatively quiet and shaded **Agriolivado Beach**. Further along you'll quickly reach the inland village of **Kambos**, from where the road descends to the shaded and shingle **Kambos Beach**, perhaps the most popular and easily accessible beach on the island. Dining choices include **To Agnanti** (☎ 22470 32733; mezehdes €3.50-7), a neat little *ouzerie* with a range of reasonably priced mezehdes. At the northern end of the beach is the cool **George's Place** (☎ 22470 31881; snacks €3-5), where you can play backgammon to laid-back music, graze on a light lunch-time snack and knock back ice-cold beers or colas.

The main road soon forks left to **Lambi**, 9km from Skala, where you wind down to an impressive beach of multicoloured pebbles. High up above the beach on the approach road, the locally revered **Psistaria Leonidas** (☎ 22470 31490; mains €4.50-8) rustles up a wide range of home-made, home-cooked specials, various fish-of-the-day plates and highly recommended *saganaki* dishes.

Under the protected lee of the north arm of the island are several more beaches, including the shaded **Livadi tou Geranou Beach**, with a small church-crowned island opposite replete with the minichapel of **Agios Georgios**. For lunch, you can do no better than the excellent **Livadi Geranou Taverna** (☎ 22470 32046; mains €3-5) overlooking the sea and pulling in the main share of the local beach drifters. The food is home style, honest and relatively inexpensive.

SOUTH OF SKALA

A quiet little corner 3km south of Skala, **Sapsila** is ideal for book lovers who want space, peace and quiet, and a couple of under-used beaches to read on.

The best down-time spot for a week or more with a stack of novels is the immaculate, self-contained **Mathios Studios** (☎/fax 22470 32583; www.mathiosapartments.gr; d/tr studios €40/50; ☎ ☎). These eight fully equipped and tastefully decorated studios are set in a quiet, leafy garden 200m from Sapsila Beach. The upstairs units are the best as they catch the breeze and enjoy the finest views. Owners Giakoumina and Theologos make all guests feel very welcome.

For eating locally don't miss **Benetos** (☎ 22470 33089; Sapsila; mains €7-14; ☎ dinner Tue-Sun), perhaps the most enticing place to dine on Patmos. It's a working boutique farm-

house and specialises in Mediterranean fusion dishes with an occasional Japanese kick. Entrées could include sea urchin roe with a mayonnaise sauce – a fine match for ouzo on the rocks. Suggested mains might mean the hallmark zucchini blossoms stuffed with mushrooms and cheese, or the herb-crusted, pan-seared tuna served rare with a Mediterranean sashimi twist. Finish up with a fresh, vodka-laced *sgroppino*, a lemon sorbet, frozen dessert drink.

Grikos, 1km further along over the hill, is a relaxed low-key resort with a narrow sandy beach and shallow, clean water. Dining is best enjoyed at a couple of tavernas on the southwest side of Grikos Bay. **Flivos Restaurant** (☎ 22470 31764; mains €4-7) is a well-shaded, modern establishment dishing up filling grills and *mayirefta* with particularly good oven-baked *revithia* (chickpeas), while 100m further along is **Ktima Petra** (☎ 22470 33207; mains €4-7), emphasising organic and home-grown produce. The stuffed and wood-oven baked goat just melts in your mouth and the organic cheese and vegetables simply ooze flavour. The menu selection is small, but there's a good wine list representative of Greece's best vines.

Diakofti, the last settlement in the south, is reached by a round-about sealed road, or a rougher and shorter coastal track passing the startling **Kalikatsos Rock**, abutting pebbly **Petra Beach**. The long, sandy, tree-shaded **Psili Ammos Beach** can be reached by excursion boat or walking track; here you'll find a popular, seasonal beach taverna.

LIPSI ΛΕΙΨΟΙ

pop 698

Blink on the deck of your ferry or catamaran and you might miss Lipsi (*lip-see*). Almost unheard of outside a slowly growing circle of island cognoscenti, Lipsi lives out a somewhat isolated yet palpably quality existence among a scattering of lesser-known northern Dodecanese islands. Long discovered by Italians and latterly by French travellers who jealously guard their discovery to themselves, this dry, rocky island boasts no major attractions. Its drawback is its relative anonymity, its fine beaches, its undemanding treatment of visitors – no clubs or pubs to speak of – and a sense that you have the island to yourself, apart from two or three days in August when

pilgrims and revellers descend upon Lipsi for its main religious festival.

Getting There & Away

FERRY

Connections with Lipsi are tenuous at best. There is currently only one long-haul G&A ferry per week linking the island directly with Piraeus (€40, 12 hours). Lipsi is better connected with its neighbouring islands. ANE Kalymnou's F/B *Nissos Kalymnos* calls eight times weekly in summer, linking Lipsi with Samos, Agathonisi, Leros and Kalymnos. The small local, but very fast ferry **Anna Express** (☎ 22479 41215) links Lipsi five times weekly with Kalymnos and Leros, competing in speed at least with the hydrofoil and catamarans. At other times it serves Patmos, Arki, Marathi and Agathonisi. The larger *Patmos Star* arrives from Patmos three days a week and links Lipsi with Leros and Patmos.

HYDROFOIL & CATAMARAN

In summer one Samos-based hydrofoil calls at Lipsi twice daily on its route between Samos and Kos and return. The *Dodekanisos Express*

and *Dodekanisos Pride* catamarans call in up to six times weekly in summer on their route between Patmos (€9.50, 30 minutes) and Rhodes (€42, 4½ hours) and islands in between.

Getting Around

Lipsi has a minibus departing hourly to the beaches of Platys Gialos, Katsadia and Hohlakoura (each €1) between 10.30am and 6pm. Two **taxis** (☎ 6942409677, 6942409679) also operate on the island. There are one or two motorcycle-rental outlets.

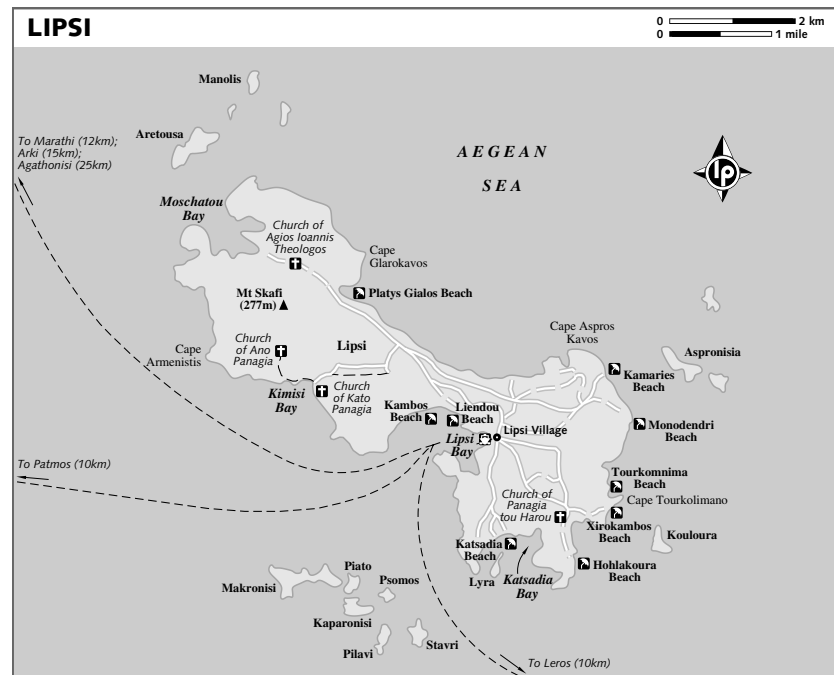
LIPSI VILLAGE

pop 600

Hugging the deep harbour, Lipsi village is a cosy community of white-painted and blue-shuttered homes that have an immediately good feel to them.

Orientation & Information

All boats dock at Lipsi Port, where there are two quays. The ferries, hydrofoil and catamarans all dock at the larger, outer jetty, while excursion boats dock at a smaller jetty nearer the centre of Lipsi village. The *Anna Express*



docks close to the large main church in the inner port. It's a 500m walk from the outer jetty to the church.

The post office is on the upper, central square (that is a little quieter than the lower, and busier, harbourside square).

The Cooperative bank of the Dodecanese on the port changes money and has an ATM.

Café Kavos (☎ 22470 44328) Towards the outer jetty; offers internet access which costs per hour €4.

Lipsos Travel (☎ 22470 44125) In Lipsi village; issues tickets for the *Anna Express* and organises excursions.

Police (☎ 22470 41222) In the port.

Port police (☎ 22470 41133) In the port.

Tourist office (☎ 22470 41250; ☎ 30min prior to ferry, hydrofoil & catamaran departures) This small office is at the outer jetty and issues ferry, hydrofoil and catamaran tickets.

www.lipsi-island.gr A fairly useful but limited resource about the island

Sights & Activities

Of macabre political interest is the **pink villa**, once occupied by the leader of the ultrasecutive November 17 terrorist group, who lived for a number of years under a pseudonym among the unsuspecting islanders. The solitary-standing villa is visible high on the bluff to the north side of the small boat harbour. While it's not open to visitors, the outer gate of the compound can be reached via a cement track on the north side of the bluff.

Lipsi's **museum** (admission free; ☎ 11am-1pm) is hardly earth shattering, but contains a small collection of odd items such as pebbles and bottles of holy water from various locations around the world. It's on the village's central square, opposite the large church.

Rena and Margarita do 'Five Island' **boat trips** to Lipsi's offshore islands for €18; these are a popular diversion for a sail, picnic and swim. Both excursion boats can be found at Lipsi's smaller jetty and depart at around 10am daily.

Festivals & Events

The annual religious festival of **Panagia tou Harou** takes place around 24 August when the island fills up with visitors from all over the Dodecanese. After a religious festival and procession through the island's narrow roads with an icon of the Virgin Mary, all-night revelry takes place in the lower village square with live music, food and wine.

An annual **wine festival** takes place for three days during August yearly. There's dancing,

free wine and festive fun. Check locally for the exact dates as they are not fixed.

Sleeping

O Glaros (☎ 22470 41360; d €30) Set back high up on the hill, about 100m from the village's small boat harbour, these smallish but airy and comfortable rooms have a wide communal balcony and a well-equipped shared kitchen.

our pick **Rizos Studios** (☎ 69762 44125; fax 22470 44225; d/tr €44/50) These exceptionally well-presented studios are crafted onto the hillside inland from Liendou Bay. With immaculately decorated, cool, stone-paved floors and cushion-strewn rooms plus every kitchen utensil imaginable, they would have to be the best retreat on Lipsi for a self-contained getaway. Canadian-born but Nottingham-raised hostess Anna welcomes guests with an inimitable flashing smile.

Michalis Studios (☎ 22470 41266; mkram vousanos@yahoo.gr; d €50; ☎) Spacious open-plan studios sleeping two to three people, with fridge, TV and kitchenette. These are a good choice for a longer stay on the island.

Panorama (☎ 22470 41235; d/tr €50/55; ☎) High up over the outer harbour, these rooms enjoy a fine vista of sea and port and have little balconies to relax on. They are simple and unpretentious, and very handy for ferries.

Rooms Galini (☎ 22470 41212; matsouri@yahoo.gr; d €55) An unassuming simple option, Galini is high up, overlooking the harbour. Rooms are comfortable enough yet simple, well lit and sport refrigerator, cooking ring and balcony.

Eating

The harbour has most of the eating options, but there are a couple of cafés in and around the quieter upper square.

Rock (☎ 22470 41180; mezedhes €3-5) This coffee bar and *ouzerie* offers some unusual mezedhes such as sea urchins, while the succulent grilled octopus is a standard mezes – best taken at sunset over a small glass of ouzo with ice.

Yiannis Restaurant (☎ 22470 45395; grills €5-7) The long-standing and ever-popular *psistaria* (restaurant serving grilled food) near the outer jetty features mostly grills, though you will find the odd *mayirefta* and one or two mezes-style dishes for vegetarians.

Pefko (☎ 22470 41404; mains €4.50-8) The newest of the harbour tavernas, Pefko has perhaps the most imaginative menu selection. Try the *ambelourgou* (lamb in yogurt wrapped in vine

leaves), or the Pefkos special – oven-baked beef with eggplant.

Theologos (☎ 22470 41248; price upon request) Dine on the freshest fish on the island while seated on a pebble-covered ledge overlooking the harbour. Theologos specialises in fish, which is caught by the owner's boat moored right next to its tables. Non-fish dishes are also available.

our pick **Tholari** (☎ 22470 41060; mains €4.50-8) Run by a Tasmanian-Greek family, this low-key but tidy taverna in the middle of the harbour rustles up popular dishes like prawn *saganaki* or a rich rabbit stew. Check the daily specials board for hearty *mayirefta*.

Karnagio (☎ 22470 41422; mains €8-13) One of the more innovative eating options is at this rather imposing restaurant at the far side of the harbour. Fish and pasta dishes dominate the menu but there is a wide selection of meat and *mayirefta* dishes.

AROUND THE ISLAND

Lipsi has quite a few beaches, all within walking distance of Lipsi village. Some are shaded, some are not; some are sandy, others gravely and at least one is for nudists. Getting to them makes for pleasant walks through countryside dotted with smallholdings, olive groves and cypress trees. The minibuses services the main ones.

Liendou Beach is the most accessible and naturally the most popular beach. The water is very shallow and calm; the best beach for children. It's 500m from Lipsi village, just north of the ferry port over a small headland.

Next along is sandy **Kambos Beach**, a 1km walk along the same road that leads to Platys Gialos. Take the dirt road off to the left. There is some shade available.

Beyond Kambos Beach the road takes you after a further 2.5km to **Platys Gialos**, a lovely but narrow sandy beach. The water here is turquoise-coloured Caribbean, shallow and perfect for children. Nearby is the decent **Kostas Restaurant** (☎ 6944963303; grills €4.50-6.50; ☎ 8am-6pm Jul-Aug, later on Wed & Sat), which dishes up excellent fish and grill dishes, as well as a smattering of daily *mayirefta*.

South, 2km from Lipsi village, is the sand-and-pebble **Katsadia Beach**, shaded with tamarisk trees and easily reached on foot, or by the hourly minibus.

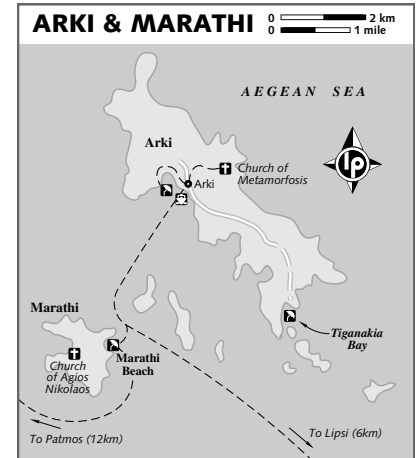
There is one distinguished place to eat, the **Dilaila Cafe Restaurant** (☎ 22470 41041; mains

€5-8), which is right on the beach. The shady restaurant-cum-bar is caressed by an eclectic range of musical selections during the day and evening. Make sure to ask for 'mad feta', a spicy, baked feta cheese melange or the fried-rice specials. Accommodation can be found at the airy and tastefully furnished **Katsadia Studios** (☎ 22470 41317; d €55), which overlooks the beach.

The pebble **Hohlakoura Beach**, to the east of Katsadia, offers neither shade nor facilities. Further north, **Monodendri** is the island's unofficial nudist beach. It stands on a rocky peninsula, and there are no facilities. It's a 3km walk to get there, though it is reachable by motorcycle.

ARKI & MARATHI APKOI & MAPAOI

These two satellite islands flung to the near east of Patmos may look down at heel upon first glance, but the yachts in the harbours belie the fact that they have been 'discovered' by voyageurs of the floating kind. Serious solace seekers chill out here: often for a week or more. Media personalities and computer geeks mingle with yachties, artists, politicians and the occasional backpacker on the courtyard-sized harbour front. There are neither cars nor motorbikes. Just pack your bathers, books and iPod and forget the world exists for a while.



Getting There & Away

The F/B *Nissos Kalymnos* calls in up to four times weekly as it shuttles between Patmos and Samos on its vital milk run. In summer the Lipsi-based excursion boats visit Arki and Marathi, and a number of Patmos-based caïques do frequent day trips (return €15).

ARKI APKOI

pop 50

Tiny Arki, 5km north of Lipsi, is hilly, with shrubs but few trees. Its only settlement, the little west-coast port, is also called Arki. Islanders make a living from fishing and tourism.

There is no post office or police on the island, but there is one cardphone. Away from its little settlement, the island seems almost mystical in its peace and stillness.

The **Church of Metamorfosis** stands on a hill behind the settlement. From its terrace are superb views of Arki and its surrounding islets. The cement road between Taverna Trypas and Taverna Nikolaos leads to the path up to the church. The church is locked, but ask a local if it's possible to look inside.

Several secluded **sandy coves** can be reached along a path skirting the right side of the bay. To reach the path, walk around the last house at the far right of the bay, go through a little wooden gate in the stone wall, just near the sea, and continue ahead.

Tiganakia Bay on the southeast coast has a good sandy beach. To walk there from Arki village, take the cement road that skirts the north side of the bay. Tiganakia Bay is reached by a network of goat tracks and lies at the far side of the headland. You'll recognise it by the incredibly bright turquoise water and the offshore islets.

Arki has three tavernas, two of which have quite comfortable rooms; bookings are necessary in July and August. First up, **O Trypas Taverna & Rooms** (☎ 22470 32230; tripas@12net.gr; d €35) is to the right of the quay, as you face inland, and has 16 rooms available. Suggested dishes (mains €5 to €7) at the taverna are *fasolia mavromatika* (black-eyed beans) and *pastos tou Trypa* (salted fish). Nearby **Taverna Nikolaos Rooms** (☎ 22470 32477; d €35) is the second option. The food (mains €5 to €7.50) is not much different here; try the potatoes au gratin or stuffed peppers with cheese, or the local goat cheese called *sфина*, which is like a milder form of feta.

MARATHI MAPAΘI

Marathi is the largest of Arki's satellite islets. Before WWII it had a dozen or so inhabitants, but now has only one family. The old settlement, with an immaculate little church, stands on a hill above the harbour. The island has a superb sandy beach. There are two tavernas on the island, both of which rent rooms and are owned by the island's only permanent inhabitants, who speak English. **Taverna Mihalis** (☎ 22470 31580; mains €4-6) is the more laid-back and cheaper of the two places to eat and sleep (doubles €30), while **Taverna Pandelis** (☎ 22470 32609; mains €4-6) at the top end of the beach is a tad more upmarket (doubles €40) and not as traveller oriented as the former.

AGATHONISI ΑΓΑΘΟΝΗΣΙ

pop 158

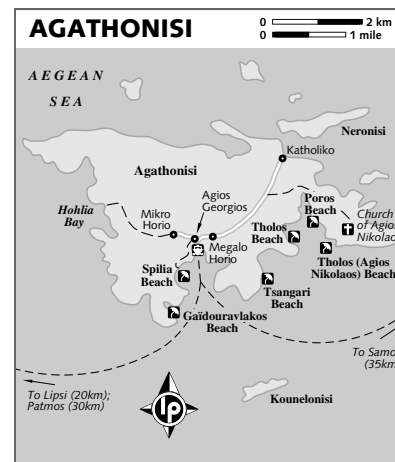
You could be forgiven for not knowing the existence of Agathonisi (agh-atho-ni-see). It barely shows up on any traveller's radar. Yet it's a smugly reserved and quiet little getaway isle, where latter-day Robinson Crusoes, serious island hoppers or north-south transients might just turn up. Agathonisi is predictably rocky and dry, has minimal settlements and little organised entertainment, yet pulls in a determined procession of travellers who really do want that left-of-centre holiday time out. Accommodation is fine yet simple, food is unfussy yet good quality, and there's little to do other than reflect, read and get ready for that next swim.

Getting There & Away

Agathonisi is linked to Samos (€5, one hour) and Patmos (€7, two hours) about four days a week by the F/B *Nissos Kalymnos*. A hydrofoil also links the island with Samos and destinations further south on the other three days. Ferry agent **Savvas Kamitsis** (☎ 22470 29003) sells tickets at the harbour prior to departures.

Getting Around

There is no local transport, and it's a steep and sweaty 1.5km uphill walk from Agios Giorgios to the main settlement of Megalo Horio; somewhat less to Mikro Horio. From



Megalo Horio the island's eastern beach coves are all within a 2km to 3km walk.

AGIOS GIORGIOS ΑΓΙΟΣ ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΣ

The village of Agios Giorgios (*agh-ios ye-or-yi-os*) is a languid settlement at the end of a protected fjord-like bay. It has a 100m-long curved, pebbled beach, where you can comfortably swim, but **Spilia Beach**, 900m southwest around the headland, is quieter; a track around the far side of the bay will take you there. A further 1km walk will bring you to **Gaidouravlakos**, a small bay and beach where water from one of the island's few springs meets the sea.

Orientation & Information

Boats dock at Agios Giorgios, from where roads ascend right to Megalo Horio and left to Mikro Horio. There is no tourist information, post office, bank, ATM or internet access.

The police are in a prominently marked white building at the beginning of the Megalo Horio road.

Sleeping & Eating

Pension Maria Kamitsi (☎ 22470 29003; fax 22470 29004; d €35) In the middle of the waterfront, the 13 comfortable rooms of Maria Kamitsi are the easiest to find and more likely to have vacancies in high season. There is a communal fridge for every three rooms.

Domatia Giannis (☎ 22470 29062; d/tr €40/50; ☎ ☎) Above and just behind Glaros Restaurant, these five airy rooms offer the best accommodation on the island. Most have harbour views, are well constructed and enjoy modern furnishings.

Glaros Restaurant (☎ 22470 29062; mains €4.50-7) Of the few harbour-side eateries, Glaros is probably the best place to dine. Owners Voula and Giannis are very engaging and serve *markakia* (feta cheese fingers in vine leaves with a special sauce), among other standard oven-cooked meals, grills and fish dishes, all made from predominantly organic produce.

George's Taverna (☎ 22470 29101; fish €7-15) Closer to the ferry quay is the taverna of the affable George and his German staff. Food is predictably reasonable, though limited to meat and fish grills and the occasional goat in lemon sauce.

AROUND AGATHONISI

Megalo Horio is the only village of any size on the island. Somnolent and unhurried for most of the time, it comes to life yearly with religious festivals **Agίου Panteleimonos** (26 July), **Sotiros** (6 August) and **Panagias** (22 August), when, after church services, the village celebrates with abundant food, music and dancing.

There are a series of accessible beaches to the east of Megalo Horio: pebbled **Tsangari Beach**, pebbled **Tholos Beach**, sandy **Poros Beach** and pebbled **Tholos (Agios Nikolaos) Beach**, close to the eponymous church. All are within easy walking distance.

Further out at the end of the line is the small fishing harbour of **Katholiko**, with the uninhabited and inaccessible islet of **Neronisi** just offshore.

If you prefer an even quieter stay than at the port, **Studios Ageliki** (☎ 22470 29085; s/d €30/35) in Megalo Horio will serve you very well. The four basic but quite comfortable studios all have stunning views over a small vineyard and down to the port, and come equipped with kitchenette, fridge and bathroom. Eating in the village is unfortunately limited to the reliable **Restaurant I Irini** (☎ 22470 29054; mains €5-6) on the central square, or the **Kafenio Ta 13 Adelfia** (mains €3-4) on the south side of the central square, serving budget snacks and meals.

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