

## Currency

Cash is king in Greece! The currency is the Euro so you may want to convert a fair amount of dollars before departing the States (or from your previous destination). You might get a better exchange rate upon arrival at the airport. Sometimes your hotel will convert dollars to euro but usually at a higher exchange rate.

Another option is to use a Visa debit card at local banks that usually post the currency exchange rate for the day. Hotels, medium to high end shops/restaurants should all take credit cards, Visa is most widely accepted. American Express acceptance is limited, as are traveler's checks.

## Notes about Athens

This city is a mashup of ancient and modern. There is a ton to do here. However, you should try to be as strategic as possible given the limited time and possibly high heat that can be debilitating mid to late afternoon.

Consider staying near Plaka or Monastiraki (avoid Omonia). This area is safe, lively, and offers a ton of options including shops, eateries, and views of ancient ruins like the Acropolis. Parking is a challenge and you can walk nearly everywhere necessary from this area, so you should either take a cab from the airport, or if you plan to travel light and have few bags, take the metro which is easy plus has some archeological finds displayed at various stops (it's also a fraction of the price and will get you to your destination faster without traffic on the streets).

For the [Acropolis](#), you want to be among the first to get in, be there by 7:45am so you don't get scorched! It may be worth booking a guide because they have the inside track on how to skip lines, will show you more than the Parthenon, and should have in-depth knowledge of the sites. I would try to find a shaded spot to eat lunch mid-day. In case you are arriving to Athens later in the day, you may want to do the Acropolis late afternoon to avoid some of the heat.

For the [Acropolis Museum](#), a guide is overkill. Getting headphones that pair with the exhibits is adequate. The museum is a spectacle from before you enter the door, an archeological dig is literally beneath your feet which can be viewed through the walkway. The museum is close enough to walk to from the bottom of the Acropolis.




If staying near Plaka, [Psarras Taverna](#) is a good spot. Even though it is in a touristy area, plenty of locals frequent this restaurant that has been around for >120 years. There are a lot of good places to eat in Athens, your hotel can give you additional suggestions.

*Ferry from Pireaus to Koufonisia:* be sure to arrive early. You will need to get in queue and it can get chaotic so allow a time buffer.



Select your one-way trip Athens / Piraeus - Koufonisia / Ano Koufonisi

<< < Jun 17, 2023 > >>

	<b>Champion Jet 1</b> ⓘ High Speed	Athens / Piraeus 08:45 - Jun 17, 2023	○----- 5H 20M ----->	Koufonisia / Ano Koufonisi 14:05 - Jun 17, 2023
	<b>Seajet 2</b> ⓘ High Speed	Athens / Piraeus 09:00 - Jun 17, 2023	○----- 6H 55M ----->	Koufonisia / Ano Koufonisi 15:55 - Jun 17, 2023
	<b>Highspeed 4</b> ⓘ High Speed	Athens / Piraeus 09:00 - Jun 17, 2023	○----- 5H 0M -----> <b>Fastest</b>	Koufonisia / Ano Koufonisi 14:00 - Jun 17, 2023

## Koufonisia

Based on your preferences, [Koufonisi](#), is a perfect fit! Specifically, Pano (or Ano) Koufonissi because you can explore the entire island by bike and enjoy 7 different [beaches](#). It is serene and with a population of only 400, it is a nice break from large groups of tourists. Because your stay is limited to 2 days, this is also a great choice.

You can take a short boat taxi to Kato Koufonissi island but some of the beaches are nude, plus you are limited on eateries and such.

Koufonisi is part of 3 remote islands called Koufonisia. Until recently, this hidden gem was mostly known to Greeks who were usually the only visitors with an occasional Italian sprinkled in. Pano (Ano) Koufonisi is the only inhabited island of the three.

**Lodging** on Koufonisi (Limited rooms so book fast...):

[Ionathan](#) – centrally located in the only populated town yet still in a quiet area, eateries are easily accessible.

[Teal Blue](#) – a newer hotel that only has 6 rooms. Also close to the main village.

[Myrto](#) – close to the port and main village.

There are several other lodging options at budget prices that are clean and comfortable, minus the aesthetics inside. Regardless, be sure that they are on Pano Koufonissi or near Hora village, and not on Naxos (large island nearby). These rooms book fast so they should be reserved without delay.

In addition to the beaches, consider exploring the [Ksylompatis Caves](#), [Devil's eye](#) (Tripa tou Diabolou), [natural pool](#) (Pisina), Inventuras Bay, Impossible beach, Angel's eye, and the windmills; all great spots for photos.



## Greece 2023 Koufonisia + Santorini + Crete

**Eateries.** Near Pori beach is a highly recommended restaurant called Kalofeggo. Giorgoula bakery for breakfast or mid-day snacks (if near Ammos Beach or Hora). For quick bites on the go try Mikres Cyclades and Souvlaki sti Strofi. If you want to cool off, go to Fystiki ice cream (gelato) shop.

The ferry from the island to Santorini is easy



Step 1  
Available Journeys

Step 2  
Accommodation Options

Step 3  
Availability & Prices

Step  
Pas

Select your one-way trip Koufonisia / Ano Koufonisi - Santorini (Thira)

<< < Jun 19, 2023 > >>

Superjet  
High Speed

Koufonisia / Ano Koufonisi  
12:50 - Jun 19, 2023

1H 55M  
Fastest

Santorini (Thira)  
14:45 - Jun 19, 2023

Transfer to hotel

It will be a bit chaotic when you arrive because everyone will be looking for transportation and there are few taxis. If you end up renting a car, you will have the challenge of finding parking (limited) and navigating narrow roads. Consider booking a [private transfer](#) or have your hotel do it for you.

### Santorini Hotels

Imerovigli is the ideal place to stay because you get more for the money (versus Fira), it is in the island center making it accessible for any destination. And the 180-degree views are unparalleled IMHO. I don't think you can go wrong staying at any lodging option here.

[Katikies Chromata](#) – Having stayed in hundreds of hotels all over the world, this is a favorite! Based on our experience and others that we know that stayed here, the staff went above & beyond, they source top quality ingredients for breakfast, the rooms are original and comfy, the views are spectacular. Once in a lifetime experience.

[San Antonio](#), and [Gizis Exclusive](#), come highly recommended. If you don't mind staying off the caldera away from the views where it is more affordable yet still in a great location, consider [Anessis](#), [Costa Marina Villas](#), or [Melina](#).

### Food

There is a bakery in Imerovigli that is worth the drop in, Ilios Bakery.

The most popular coffee on Santorini is the Frappe. It is served cold with your desired sweetness. Very common to see people drinking a frothy frappe while admiring the views. The most trendy coffee in

Greece is called Fredo (usually served warm); a tasty high octane drink that also comes in your choice of sweetness. If you drink coffee, you will probably like both.

Foods of note that are distinct to Santorini are capers, Fava beans, and tomatoes. Fun fact, Santorini tomatoes are as close to the original tomatoes brought over from the new world. Anything that grows on the arid volcanic soil imparts a distinct flavor with high minerality. Santorini capers are painstakingly handpicked from the sea cliffs, and fava beans are unique to Santorini. You can order a fava puree (kind of like humus) and Tomatokeftedes (tomato balls) as appetizers at most restaurants on the island. Unlike other parts of Greece, capers are usually included on village salads (Horiatiki Salata). BTW, whether Satorini or Crete, Horiatiki salad is always a great go-to because its simplicity requires only the freshest ingredients.

Regarding wine, there are two things that set them apart; they are cultivated to endure the harsh environment that is said to bring out extreme flavor as a result. The vines are among the few in the world that have been used going back over 4,000 years. Assyrtiko is the best known varietal of Santorini.

### Restaurants

Quick note. People line the entire caldera facing east to view the sunset for hours. Any cafes or restaurants with sunset views book up early. It is a good idea to reserve your spot a day in advance if you plan to have sunset dinners.

[Panaroma](#) – Fresh seafood caught daily away from crowds. Good for sunset dining or even lunch (near Akrotiri).

[Amoudi Fish Tavern](#) – near Amoudi beach. Nice spot for a relaxing lunch after spending time in the water. It is below Oia so great vantage point for a sunset or a short trek to Oia to get in a good sunset observation spot after having (early) dinner.

[Argo](#) – located on the caldera in Fira, this restaurant has better food than restaurants around it that may have better views.

[Ouzeri](#) – tapas style menu with delicious offerings at reasonable prices. Many people pass it up because the sign outside is not that appealing. Also in the heart of Fira.

[Athenian House](#) – Fine dining with breathtaking views. This one is located in Imerovigli and will need to be booked well in advance. It probably has the best view of the sunset and the food is top notch. It does come at a price as their menu is the most expensive on the island.

[The Dolphins](#) – near Akrotiri. They have poured cement into the sea to put tables there. It is common to see fish jumping out of the water (don't go when it is dark). Good food at a reasonable price with ambiance.

[Metaxi Mas](#) – This place is a favorite among locals. It is a great break from the crowds on the caldera. It has a Greek fusion menu, delish!

Sunset cafes

[To Briki](#) – cool spot to take a load off and enjoy some coffee and views.

[To Aktaion](#) – this place is an institution, been owned and operated by generations of the same family for over 100 years. Unassuming yet they offer a full menu as well as coffee.

#### To Do

After sunset, walk Fira and enjoy the various shops.

Tango & Franco are near each other and typically play mellow music during sunset progressively increasing in intensity as the night comes on. These may be good choices for all of you to have some drinks and relax.

There are several wineries to explore. [Gaia](#) offers Assyitiko (white grapes grown in Santorini) and Agiorgitiko (red grapes grown in Nemea) wines from endemic vines going back millennia. [Santo](#) is the largest and most famous winery on Santorini.

[Akrotiri](#) – some believe this is part of the ancient city of Atlantis. Because there is a beach nearby plus good restaurants, it is worth visiting when in the area.

[Cable car](#), you can then visit the old port.

[Sunset cruise](#), includes drinks and dining. You can combine a trip to Vlychada beach since it launches from there.

[Tomato Industrial Museum](#) – pretty interesting to learn how the Santorini tomatoes were cultivated into a major export over the years and still retain their authenticity. Near Vlychada beach area.

[Hike & cook](#) (lunch) – learn how locals cook and enjoy a nice hike.

Beaches; [Amoudi Bay](#), [Perissa](#), [Columbo](#) (semi-secluded black sand beach), [Red Beach](#).

If you don't mind ride sharing, the easiest most cost effective option is to take the bus from Fira. It goes to all these beaches which are near some of the above restaurants and activity locations. Taxi is another option. You can rent scooters daily in Fira, the best way to get around the island! If you don't feel comfortable with kids on the back of your scooter, bikes and e-bikes are also a good option.

Departure from Santorini

Your hotel can book private transport to the ferry port.



## Greece 2023 Koufonisia + Santorini + Crete

Select your one-way trip Santorini (Thira) - Crete / Heraklio

Jun 23, 2023		
 Powerjet ⓘ High Speed	Santorini (Thira) 16:00 - Jun 23, 2023	1H 45M Fastest Crete / Heraklio 17:45 - Jun 23, 2023
 Thunder ⓘ High Speed	Santorini (Thira) 16:15 - Jun 23, 2023	2H 5M Crete / Heraklio 18:20 - Jun 23, 2023
 Naxos Jet ⓘ High Speed	Santorini (Thira) 16:40 - Jun 23, 2023	1H 45M Fastest Crete / Heraklio 18:25 - Jun 23, 2023
 Santa Irini ⓘ High Speed	Santorini (Thira) 17:30 - Jun 23, 2023	1H 55M Crete / Heraklio 19:25 - Jun 23, 2023

Your ferry landing is in Heraklion because it is the only destination with daily ferry service from Santorini to Crete and is near the airport where you will be departing back home so car renting is much easier.

The roads in Crete are well maintained and similar to ours here in the US. The island is huge and unless you plan on staying in one area only, it makes the most sense to rent a car to save you time and expense.

The two best areas to stay on Crete are Chania or Rethymno. Chania is better if you plan to stay nearby the town on that side of the island. According to locals on Crete, Chania is the popular destination for foreign tourists while Greeks much rather prefer Rethymno. Given your interests and limited time, Rethymno seems like a better fit. This is a charming, walkable medieval town with a lot of character. Great for families with older children. More importantly, it is a better jump off point for day trips.

### Hotels

A note about hotels in Greece, most are not air conditioned, particularly on the islands because there is usually a sea breeze coming off the Mediterranean. Those that do have AC use Mini split systems which are much more efficient than the central systems we are accustomed to in the States, so they cool the room much faster. High temperatures for Rethymno in June are typically in the 80s, lows typically drop no more than 15 degrees.

[Avli](#) – centrally located. Known for their service and knowledgeable staff.

[Rimondi](#) – great location near the port and near popular sites in old town. This one comes highly recommended.

[Aquila Porto](#) – Beach resort. 5 Minute walk to old town.

Plenty of lodging options in the vicinity of these hotels, should you prefer alternatives.

A note about AirBnB and VRBO, location and amenities are usually exaggerated. Based on personal experience, they may state they are 100' from the beach when in reality they are over a mile away, plus they don't have amenities listed. There is no enforcement mechanism to ensure claims are verified other than reviews, so you would need to be very careful if you decide to book this route.

Sightseeing: walking distance to old town monuments such as the [Rimondi Fountain](#), [Fortezza Castle](#), the [Loggia](#), and [St. Francesco Church](#) - great backdrops for family photos.

### Activities

Relax and have fun at a beach club, [Baja Beach](#). About 3 miles from your hotel in old town.

Hike [Gorge Prassano](#); there is a moderate out & back hike (3 – 4 hours) and a harder round trip hike. It is close to Rethymno but you will need transportation to get there from your hotel. If you have had your fill of beaches and prefer more hiking, about 90 minutes away from Rethymno is the most famous hike, [Samaria Gorge](#). Nearby towns before/after the hike are Loutro and Agia Roumeli, both are worth visiting when in the area.

[Gramvousa Island](#) full day tour including boat trip is a must do for beach lovers!

Explore beaches; [Kalypso](#) (less than an hour from Rethymno), [Preveli](#) (also less than an hour from Rethymno) has a challenging hike which discourage many from going). Both of these require transportation. There are beaches near your hotel to explore. If you want to explore the other side of the island (over 2 hour drive) including past Chania, consider [Pink Sand/Elafonisi beach](#). This is a very popular destination so be prepared for it to be crowded. [Ammoudi](#) beach (nestled in a nice town that can be explored as well) is about an hour 15 minutes away from Rethymno.

Wine tasting. Wineries in Crete are located in the center of the island, about an hour away from Rethymno. Some to consider are [Douloufakis](#), [Idaia](#), and [Amagiotakis](#). A word of caution, stay away from Retsina which is an ancient style of wine with pine resin in it, a preservation technique that taints the flavor of the wine.

A world famous archeological site is [Knossos](#). It represents the golden age of Minoan civilization and a bucket list item for history buffs. It is near Heraklion airport.

### Food

Crete has a naturally rich and fertile landscape and a distinctive regional cuisine. The Cretan diet is natural, 100% seasonal and it incorporates a lot of vegetables like wild greens, fruit and olive oil. In fact, some of the world's best olive oil comes from Crete! Aside from fresh seafood, here are some things you should consider trying:

Dakos (bread with tomato spread), Cretan cheeses, sauteed snails, Kaltsounia (Cretan cheese pies), Askourdoulakos (mountain greens), lamb with stamnagathi, sfakia pies (savory with various fillings), Gamopilafo (translates to wedding pilaf, a sort of risotto), Raki or Tsikoudia (strong Cretan brandy made from grape pomace/marc). Local honey is also amazing.

Rethymno restaurants; Alla kai Alla, Erganos Traditional Taverna, Othonas Taverna, Vatania (small plates/tapas style), and Nostos, all in old town within walking distance of your hotel. About a mile or so from old town on the water is Yialos Wine Restaurant, great food and ambiance outside of old town. Quick bites also nearby include Kirko (famous for their custard pie called bougatsa and cheese pies), Krasas (gyros & such), Hagiati (small plates).

**Know before you go**

According to the US Embassy in Greece, US citizen tourists with stays less than six months can drive in Greece with their US license – no need for an international driver's license.

There are several options for using your cell phone in Greece. Depending on your carrier, you can pick up a local SIM card or activate global roaming before leaving home. Many people use WhatsApp, talk & text is free as long as you have a WiFi connection.

Emergency medical care is provided for free in public hospitals in Greece, but only basic needs are met. You should check with your health plan provider to see if it provides appropriate coverage. For good measure, you can buy travel medical insurance. Be sure to bring your insurance ID card with you when you travel. If you need emergency medical assistance during your trip, dial 112 or 166 and ask for an ambulance. To speak with a doctor 24 hours a day, call 1016. You can make an appointment with a specialist doctor if needed through this line.

For less urgent medical circumstances, pharmacies in Greece are a great option. Pharmacists are universally used in Greece for diagnoses of minor medical care and have more latitude to provide medications than in the US. It is common to go to pharmacies in Greece for rashes, upset stomach, heat stroke symptoms, digestive issues, and severe sunburn. You can also pick up toiletries there should the need arise. Look for the green cross, they are all over the place.

It is a good idea to have the contact information for the US Embassy in Greece on hand (take a picture of this section). They provide support if you or a family member have become lost, you've lost a passport, have been arrested/detained, or are a victim of a crime.



For after-hour emergencies, please call [\(+30\) 210-721-2951](tel:+302107212951).

### Citizen Services – Passport and Consular Report of Birth Abroad (CRBA)

- Passport Services are available by appointment only: [Passport Appointment System](#)
- Passport pick up 12:00 pm until 1:00 pm on Tuesdays
- Phone: [\(+30\) 210-721-2951](tel:+302107212951)
- Fax: [\(+30\) 210-729-2613](tel:+302107292613)
- Email: [athensamericanpassports@state.gov](mailto:athensamericanpassports@state.gov)

### American Citizen Services (these numbers DO NOT have information on U.S. Visas or Federal Benefits)

These numbers are for emergencies involving arrests, deaths, hospitalizations, victims of crime other than passport theft, and welfare and whereabouts concerns. They do not answer questions about visas, federal benefits (including social security), or passports. The U.S. Embassy does NOT issue International Drivers Permits – you must contact AAA or IATA directly.

- Phone: [\(+30\) 210-721-2951](tel:+302107212951)