



CUT-OUT-AND-GO GUIDE | RELAXED RHODES



instant escapes

Relaxed Rhodes

Want this popular Greek island all to yourself? Now's the time...

The hordes have disappeared, the late-summer sun is still shining, and it's less than four hours away. It doesn't get any better than Rhodes right now. Add empty beaches, a seductive Medieval citadel, a surprisingly leafy interior and life lived firmly in the slow lane — all together, it's the recipe for a truly laid-back getaway. **By Lee Mannion**



SEE & DO

● Out of sultry high season, the 350 steps to the super-cute church at Tsambika don't seem too painful, especially given the **knockout coastline views of Rhodes Town to the north and ancient Lindos to the south** once you get there. Below you is Tsambika beach, the best on the island, with calm waters, loads of empty sand and a smattering of decent tavernas.

● Not a beach person? Take a wander into the green interior, passing through shady oak forests scented with wild sage. A four-hour hike up the wooded mountain of Profitis Elias delivers **deliciously cool hill breezes and clear views all the way to Turkey** (we recommend the book *Walking on Rhodes* by Paul van Bodengraven and Marco Barten, published by One Day Walks Publishing; available at amazon.co.uk, from £6.55).

● The Medieval citadel of Lindos is straight out of a movie epic. White buildings tumble down the hillside like outside sugar cubes, hemmed in by a mountain and a fortress; between them, the narrowest streets hide shaded cafes and cool boutiques. Climb the hill (on foot or by donkey) to the fourth-century acropolis (entry £5) and see the whole city laid out before you, then **bathe like a local and jump into the water from the jetty**, where day-tripping boats from Rhodes Town arrive. Swim to the right, through jade-coloured water, where there are caves to explore.

BE A GREEK WINE BUFF

Coach parties head to the two big wine producers Emery and CAIR, but we would recommend a visit to the charming and friendly micro-winery Kounaki (kounakiwines.gr) in Embonas

Twilight zone: left, the entrance to Rhodes harbour; walking the line; Tsambika beach

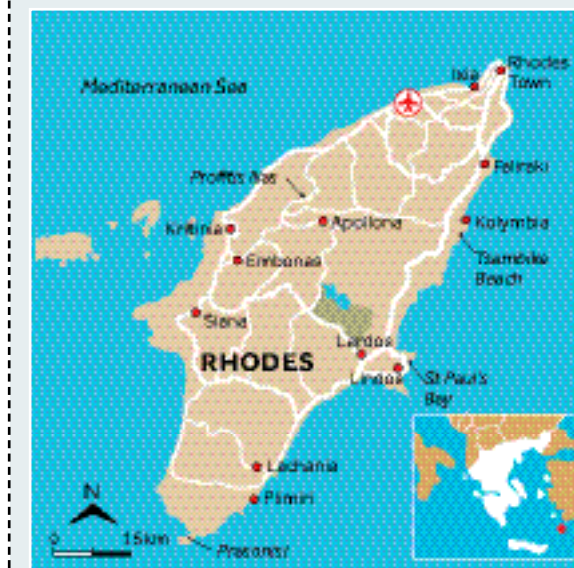
● Beware of Greeks bearing goats — it means you'll end up spending a whole afternoon lurching local-style (on the aforementioned meat). Amid the pine forest of the hinterland, Apollona village has lots of restaurants and is a much-loved spot for long Sunday meals. The dish to order is **tender baked goat casserole with giant beans**.

● It takes a while to do the weekly shop on Rhodes, and involves trips to the world's sleepest high streets. Start in Siana and wander along a lane where a scattering of stores and market-stalls sell locally made thyme-scented honey and olive oil. Then drive the 15km to Embonas village to **taste wine produced by the island's vintners. It's potent, if not award-winning**.

● Take to the water. Curving like a backbone at the bottom of the island, the **strange, desert-like spit of sand at Prasonisi is blustery to say the least**. Its western beach is popular with kite-surfers, but a gentler breeze and shallow sea on the eastern edge mean prime windsurf-lesson territory. Falling in is half the fun (prasonisicenter.com; two-hour equipment hire, £32pp).

● Shop, bar- and restaurant-hop through Rhodes Old Town, Europe's oldest inhabited Medieval city. A Unesco World Heritage site since 1988, it has four kilometres of pebbled lanes and alleyways to explore behind its old defensive walls. **Leather goods and jewellery are the things to buy**, and you can pepper your shopping with pitstops at hip bars and trad tavernas.

● Take the ocean road. Hire a car to explore Rhodes's sleepy west coast, **darting between the tiny seaside towns south of Ixia, passing turquoise coves that make bathing stops irresistible**. At Kritinia, follow the road as it heads high into the hills. Your destination: Bakis Brothers in Embonas (00 30 22460 41247; mains about £11), for a plate of the best grilled meat to be found on the island. If you're wondering why octopuses are hanging from the rafters of so many houses, it's because sun-drying is the traditional Greek way to tenderise them. >



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EAT

● **Laid-back beach shack**
BANANA BEACH BAR, TSAMBIKA
(Mains about £5)

Because: Pre-holiday stress goes out the window at this waterside shack, which serves bargain Greek salads.
Travel's tip: Don't fret about finding this place among the other beach tavernas. Just look for the gigantic fake banana swaying above it. *Tsambika beach.*

● **Stand-out spot**
MAMA SOFIA, RHODES TOWN
(Mains about £10)

Because: This is the undisputed best in a line of restaurants with waiters inviting you to sit down as you wander through the Old Town: worth a stop even if you're not hungry, and the people-watching is great. **Travel's tip:** Traditional Greek dishes are the way to go here, with moussaka and *stifado* elevated to a higher level. 28 *Odos Orfeos* (00 30 22410 24469).

● **Freshest fish**
PLIMIRI TAVERNA, PLIMIRI *(Mains about £13)*

Because: It's an enchanting restaurant, with its bright blue tables overlooking the beach, and a world away from the holidaying hordes. **Travel's tip:** Don't go if you need choice. They serve only whatever's caught that day, grilled or fried and charged by weight. *Plimiri beach* (00 30 22440 46003).

● **Famous with foodies**
MAVRIKOS, LINDOS *(Mains about £16)*

Because: Dimitri Mavrikos recently won one of Greece's top 'Golden Hat' awards as the chef of one of the country's best restaurants. **Travel's tip:** Go at lunchtime. The restaurant's crypt-like arches and sea breezes provide relief from the heat. *Lindos Main Square* (00 30 22440 31232).

● **Gorgeous garden**
MARCO POLO, RHODES TOWN
(Three courses about £24)

Because: There's nothing more romantic than dinner among almond and apricot trees, with the old city walls as a backdrop. **Travel's tip:** Take a map and allow plenty of time to find it in the maze of Old Town lanes. 42 *Agios Fanouriou* (00 30 22410 25562, *marcopolomansion.gr*).

WHAT TO DRINK
 Skip time scanning the bar for recognisable names — just order a *Mythos* beer and look like a local in an instant.

MENU DECODED
 Too shy to ask what *stifado* actually is? It's a rich, slow-cooked beef stew, heavy on the garlic and rosemary. Expect roasted potatoes on the side.

BEACHES & SWIMS

● **Sundowner scene**
ISLAND BEACH BAR, KOLYMBIA
Because: It's the best place in Rhodes to catch a sunset, with bobbing boats in the foreground. **Travel's tip:** It's hard to find — take a left after you've passed all the bars on leafy Eucalyptus Avenue. *Kolymbia beach* (00 30 22410 56250).

● **Fish central**
ST PAUL'S BAY, LINDOS
Because: Just below the fortress of Lindos Town, this tiny bay is quiet and sheltered. **Travel's tip:** Take your snorkel — there are plenty of fish hiding out in this wondrous natural cove.

● **Chic swim**
KALLITHEA SPRINGS, FALIRAKI
Because: Just a few kilometres from Faliraki's famously debauched stretch, these thermal springs are more Ibiza Beach Club than Rhodes Uncovered. **Travel's tip:** Head inside to see restored '20s mosaic floors and magnificent arches, leading to a swimming platform strewn with wicker sofas and white umbrellas. *Kallithea Springs* (00 30 22410 65691, *kallitheasprings.gr*).

ASK THE LOCAL
 Sofia Mailli has worked in Lardos, on the south of the island, for the past seven years

“ I'm from Rhodes Town but I fell in love with the south the minute I started working here. It feels like a quieter island altogether. If I have a day off, I'll go to the huge, deserted beach at Lachania. It's pebbly but the water is clear. In Rhodes Town, Meltemi (corner of Plateia Kountourioti and Rodou), is a beachside taverna that's great for fish suppers and sunsets. Also visit Moooi bar (1 Plateia Arionos) — it does fantastic cocktails and is well off the tourist trail. For picnic lunches, stock up at Rhodes market (every Wednesday and Saturday). It's a locals' secret, packed with island-wide producers selling fruit, herbs and olive oil.



STAY
 ● **High life**
ELAFOS HOTEL, PROFITISILIAS
(Doubles from £55, B&B)
Because: This is something completely different — a chalet built by Italians, 780m up in the inland forest. **Travel's tip:** Ask for a room at the back, for astounding views towards Turkey. *Profitis Ilias*; 00 30 22410 44808, *elafoshotel.gr*.

● **Starry stay**
RODOS PALACE, IXIA *(Doubles from £61, B&B)*
Because: This concrete behemoth feels a little outmoded these days, but it has had some illustrious guests: Thatcher (Margaret) and Bond (James: in this case, Roger Moore) have both checked in, and the location is hard to beat, looking onto the beach, with Rhodes Town just five minutes away. **Travel's tip:** The garden suites cost more but are worth it as they're newer, and sit in their own greenery, away from the bustling main hotel building. *Trianton Ave*; 00 30 22410 25222, *rodos-palace.com*.

PHOTOGRAPHS: ALAMY, AWL, 4CORNERS, GETTY, ROBERT HARDING, SUPERSTOCK, MAP: MAIDENHEAD CARTOGRAPHIC



● **The romantic B&B**
S NIKOLIS HOTEL, RHODES TOWN
(Doubles from £63, room only)
Because: The plant-covered sandstone facade of this charming hotel, on a quiet cobblestone street in the Medieval Old Town, hides some delectable rustic-lush boudoirs. Plus, there's a lovely shaded patio garden. **Travel's tip:** Whatever you do, don't skip breakfast. It's served on the roof terrace, which has gasp-inducing views of the town and harbour. 61 *Hippodamou St, Old Town*; 00 30 22410 34561, *s-nikolis.gr*.

● **Good nights**
SPIRIT OF THE KNIGHTS, RHODES TOWN *(Doubles from £83, B&B)*
Because: Ottoman meets the Middle Ages (Pasha Suite, Crusader Suite...) in this boutique hotel, which makes for an atmospheric hideaway within the Old City walls. **Travel's tip:** Pick the brain of the hotel manager, Alex Gabriel — ask him to give you his best not-in-the-guidebooks restaurant tips. 14 *Alexandriou*; 00 30 22410 39765, *rhodesluxuryhotel.com*.



● **No kids!**
AQUA GRAND, LINDOS *(Doubles from £95, B&B)*
Because: Your break will be blissfully noise- and tantrum-free at this arty, adults-only resort. It comes complete with designer furniture, bonsai trees, a scattering of modern art pieces and a location right beside the beach. **Travel's tip:** It'll take you at least 30 minutes to walk into central Lindos, which is a good 1.5km away, so take a taxi to escape the heat — it'll only cost you about £4. *Navarone Bay*; 00 30 22440 49100, *aquagrand.gr*.

● **Stylish hideaway**
LINDIAN VILLAGE, LARDOS *(Doubles from £103, B&B)*
Because: This stunning faux village is criss-crossed with streams and topped with gorgeous gardens. Plus, there's a private beach. **Travel's tip:** Suffering from moussaka-overload? Take advantage of Rhodes's only Thai restaurant, Mr Danton, which is on-site. *Lardos beach*; 00 30 22440 35900, *lindianvillage.gr*.

WRITER'S TIP
 Not a fan of pebbles? Head to the sandier shores of Pefki town beach — it's about 3km away.

On a stroll: clockwise from top left, the picturesque Avenue of the Knights in Rhodes Town; the ubiquitous Greek salad; tranquil spot in the Spirit of the Knights hotel; St Paul's Bay in Lindos, with the acropolis in the background; Kallithea Springs, Faliraki

GET ME THERE
GO INDEPENDENT
EasyJet (easyjet.com) flies from Liverpool and Gatwick from £27 one-way. **Jet2** (jet2.com) flies from Glasgow, Manchester, East Midlands, Newcastle and Leeds Bradford to Rhodes from £207 return. **Ryanair** (ryanair.com) flies from Liverpool, Bournemouth, East Midlands and Stansted, from £86 return. **Thomas Cook** (flythomascook.com) flies from nine UK airports, from £179 return.

GO PACKAGED
Thomas Cook Ultimate Style (0844 412 5970, thomascook.com) has seven nights' half board at the AquaGrand, from £695pp, with flights from one of nine UK airports and private transfers. **Bailey Robinson** (01488 689700, baileyrobinson.com) has a week at the Lindian Village from £760pp, B&B, including Gatwick flights and transfers.

FURTHER INFORMATION
 See visitgreece.gr.