

GREEK ISLANDS

Words by Natali Lekka

WITH 2,000 ISLANDS SCATTERED ACROSS THE GREEK ARCHIPELAGO, lovers of the sun and the deep blue will be spoilt for choice.

September is admittedly the best time of the year to visit Athens. A walk down Dionisiou Areopagitou a pedestrian street lined with impressive neoclassical buildings, will take you to the new Acropolis museum, open since 2009.

After a strong dose of Ancient Greek culture, hit the colourful streets of Plaka, with its narrow winding alleyways and open-air tavernes. Here, you can haggle in one of the many tourist shops or try a traditional *meze* (an assortment of various delicacies) accompanied by views

of the Acropolis. For your evening rendezvous, head to the exclusive quarter of Kolonaki for refreshing cocktails on the roof garden of St. George Lycabettus Hotel.

The next day promises to be exciting as you head to the airport to catch the first flight to Mykonos. Also called Island of the Winds, Mykonos is a hot destination for many Greek celebrities, who love it for its heavy nightlife, picturesque windmills, whitewashed houses with their blue doors, and its 365 chapels – one for every day of the year.

A short journey by boat will take you to the crescent-shaped volcanic island of Santorini (or Thira), voted among the most beautiful in the world by many travel magazines. Its capital, Fira, is amphitheatrically built at the edge of the caldera, offering gorgeous views of the Aegean Sea. For an experience you will never forget, sip a glass of the local Vinsanto wine at sunset.

Crete is an island that has it all: pristine blue seas and gorgeous sandy beaches, cities brimming with culture, and an ancient history that goes back to an illustrious Minoan civilization. Famous for its healthy cuisine, the *dakos* salad (bread rusks with tomato, oregano, and feta cheese) will more than satisfy you.

THINGS TO DO

For a breathtaking view of the caldera and the Aegean Sea, treat yourself to a romantic candlelit dinner at the White Cave Dinner Restaurant at Kirini Suites & Spa, in the town of Oia in Santorini. This gourmet restaurant offers a wide selection of local wines and eclectic dishes from the sea and land of Santorini. Try the local fava (yellow split peas).

While in Mykonos, take the boat to the nearby island of Delos, an open-air 'museum' with ancient monuments and impressive mosaics. The island, which has been listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, remains uninhabited; at the end of the day you will have to take the last boat back to Mykonos.