



matt barrett's  
travel guides

# Greek Islands: Santorini

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## Santorini

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## Santorini: First Impression in 1975

We arrived at night by boat to the port of Athinaos and my friends got on the bus to Thira but it was really crowded. Since my friends were getting on my nerves anyway I decided to walk to town, not realizing what the road was like. If you have never been to Santorini the only way I can describe this road is to imagine a slinky toy stretched up a thousand foot cliff. For an hour I walked back and forth making my way to the top of the crater that I did not even know was a crater because I had never even looked at a picture of Santorini. (Don't laugh. I know Athenians who have never seen the Parthenon). I tried creating short cuts by cutting through, going straight up and dissecting the road but it was bloody and difficult to do, especially at night. Finally after an hour I made it to the top. Totally exhausted, I walked a couple miles to a small church in the middle of an enormous field of grapes and fell asleep in my sleeping bag.

When I woke up I started walking towards Thira and that was the first time I saw the volcano. I had no idea there could be anything so spectacular. It was mind boggling and all I could do was stare at this enormous crater filled with sea, so high that the cruise ships anchored below Thira looked like models and the wind on the water looked like calligraphy.

When I got to the main platia it was the usual tourist island mass of confusion, with motorbike rental signs, fast food, ticket offices, travel agents and an atmosphere more like Orlando Florida than the Greece I was familiar with at the time. But when I walked up the main street from the square there it was again: that big awe inspiring hole that just makes everything else irrelevant when you stare at it. This was at 10 AM and I looked at all the cafes on the cliff with the tables and chairs facing west and came to the profound realization that this must be the best place in the world to watch the sunset. I was right.

## Santorini Now



It had been about 5 years since I wrote that and about 15 years since I had visited Santorini. So like any responsible travel writer I made a return visit to Santorini in the summer of 2002. Not much had changed. Thira was still touristy and though it was early enough in what was going to be a slow season so that it was quiet by Thira standards, I still had a pretty clear impression of what it would be like in August. Oia had become a smaller quainter version of Thira, as were Imerovigli and Firastefani. They were more like cities than Greek villages. Thira had an area that was like the fast-food section in an American mall. All

the towns were shopping paradises. Boutiques, galleries, cafes, jewelry shops, restaurants, gift shops and even some shops that specialized in local traditional goods like the island's excellent wines. I realized right away why they are so popular with Americans. You can eat, drink and shop on the edge of a volcano! What could be more exciting? At night the bars and clubs would be blasting music and it would just be a matter of finding the ones that suits your taste.

But this was 2002 and I was not a young bachelor looking for action or a newlywed looking for a place that would make my honeymoon as memorable as the courtship. I was now 48 years old and traveling with my wife, my daughter, my niece and my mother. So instead of staying at one of the fashionable cliff side hotels whose famous names are passed around on internet travel boards we went to the small village of Akrotiri on the southwestern tip of the island and stayed at a quaint family run hotel (with AC, a bar, restaurant and two full-sized swimming pools).

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## Around Santorini



Oia

Santorini is like three islands. One side is the caldera with the villages of Thira, Imerovigli, Firastefani and Oia perched so far above the sea that it may as well be a painting. This is the commercial part of Santorini. This part of the island brings in most of the money and is completely dependent on it's image to attract the visitors. They do a damn good job. You can say what you want about the changes tourism brings to a community but it is impossible to not be impressed with the beauty of these towns and if there is another earthquake they will be sorely missed when they slide down into the sea.



Perissa

The towns of Perissa and Kamari attract to their black sand beaches, thousands of suntanned boys and girls with perfect bodies. I remember hearing of these marvels of nature (the sand, not the tanned bodies). Black sand to me was like white whales or purple mountains majesty. Something that was considered beyond special and had to be seen to be believed. What the tourist guides don't tell you about black sand which would be fairly obvious if I had thought about it is that it's hot as hell. On a summer's day you cannot walk from your towel to the sea without your flip-flops. You can look down the beach and see the heat rising in waves off the black sand and the shore is lined with flip-flops, waiting like patient dogs whose masters have gone for a swim. Perissa and Kamari are full of restaurants, bars, cafes and shops. The drop in package tourism may have hurt business somewhat but it has made these beaches a better place for people like you and I who want a little Greece with their Greek Island. There are supermarkets, campsites and even some kind of water park for kids in Perissa. Both Kamari and Perissa have diving centers. On the way to these beaches you pass through towns like Megalochori and Emborio which are agricultural communities that held out til the last minute before giving in to tourism, where you can still find restaurants that are filled with mostly Greeks.



Akrotiri

The third part of Santorini is Akrotiri, known of course for the famous ruins from the Minoan period. The actual village of Akrotiri is not as well known and that is for a number of reasons. The main reason is that the road to the archaeological site does not even go through the town. Tourists see the site and then head for the next spot on their itinerary or else to the beach. Very few go to the village. So on the island that is probably the most popular tourist destinations in Greece there is a village with all the qualities of a remote island.

There is not much to see in Akrotiri town. People go about their work. They are farmers mostly or engaged in some kind of craft. Probably many of the people work in hotels and restaurants around the island. But it is a quiet village and enjoyable to wander around in. There is an old fortress at the top of the town which was destroyed during the earthquake in 1956. This was the site of the town and instead of restoring it they rebuilt the town below the fortress. You can still go up and wander around. From the top of the village you can see the caldera of the volcano and miles of grapes. In fact you can see most of the island.

In my opinion the narrow section of the island which contains Akrotiri has the two best beaches (Red Beach and Vlichada), some of the best (and cheapest) tavernas, and is close enough to the popular Perissa beach too. There are beaches within the volcano crater too like Caldera Beach. Before you get the idea that Red Beach and Vlichada are remote, secluded beaches, no such luck. It's rows and rows of umbrellas and beach chairs, but in a setting that could be on another planet if not for the familiar blue-ness of the sea.

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## Santorini Nightlife



George Papalexis

There is certainly plenty of nightlife in the beach towns but the true romantics stay in or near Thira and get back there from the beaches with plenty of time to shower, take a short nap and then walk to one of the bars that line the volcano for a few drinks and to watch the sunset. These are the types of places where friendships are made since you are all sharing the same remarkable experience. It is an experience that heightens one's awareness of nature and his own place within it. It's a sense of awe combined with the relaxation that comes from the drink you have and the knowledge that there is nowhere you have to be. It's also a great place to meet girls (and boys).

Some of the hotels provide live Greek music for their guests. The Villa Mathios for example features George Papalexis, an excellent bouzouki player with several CD's who plays with an assortment of friends, relatives and fellow employees at the hotel.

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## Santorini Archaeological Sites



Akrotiri

There is more to Santorini of course than the bars, restaurants, views of Thira, the quietness of Oia or the beaches and nightlife of the outer coast. There are the ruins of Akrotiri which some claim is evidence that the people that once populated the island may or may not have been the civilization of Atlantis. The first trace of the city was discovered by French archeologists after an eruption of the volcano in 1866. Professor Spyridon Marinatos later unearthed the rest of the city which was preserved by volcanic ash.

Marinatos was killed by a fall on the site and he is buried among the stones to which he had devoted his life. Since the ruins are mostly of mud brick the site is covered to shelter it from the elements. You should get here early because once the tour buses arrive it becomes a slow process.

There are the ruins of Ancient Thira on a mountain between the beaches at Kamari and Perissa which are best visited in the early morning before the sun has gotten too hot. The terraced ruins that overlook the sea date back to the 3rd century BC and the Ptolemies, with also the remnants of Hellenistic and Roman civilization.

Many of the artifacts found in ancient Thira and Akrotiri can be found in the **Prehistoric Museum** in Thira which you can find by asking directions from anyone.

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## Galleries and Wineries in Santorini



Art Space

When you get to Santorini you may notice endless fields of grapes. If you know grapes you will be surprised at the way they are grown on the island. They don't have them in arbors but they are low to the ground in baskets which are actually made up of the stems or stalks of the vines themselves. They don't water them either since there is very little water on the island. The grapes and the other crops are watered by the dew. There are a number of large wineries on the island that have tours all day long that include wine-tasting and food. Most people go to the larger wineries which are well advertised in the hotels and around the island. There are also wine tours that you can book through agencies in Athens where you visit all of them. We took the advice of Jorg at Thirak Tours and visited Art Space Gallery and Winery in the small village of Exo Gonia. In fact we did more than take his advice. He drove us there. Art Space is a winery built in 1830. It was also a processing center for the incredible Santorini tomatoes. It is owned by Antonis Argiros, whose great-great or great-great-great grandfather built it and it is now a gallery as well as a winery. You won't find the massive equipment that you will find at the bigger wineries but you will find some pretty good art in a fascinating setting and at the end of the tour you sample Antonis wine which in my opinion is excellent. I bought 2 bottles but the two girls from Texas who were staying at the Villa Mathios with us bought about 6 apiece. [Take the Art Space Tour](#)

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## The Volcano of Santorini





I can't help but to keep coming back to the volcano because even sitting at my desk writing, it looms in the back of my mind like a sleeping giant. And it is *asleep* , not dead. It's an active volcano that erupted in 1956 and may do so again one day though perhaps not in our lifetime. Proof of the life that still exists within this giant hole filled with water is the island of Nea Kamini in the center of the bay which emerged in 1707. Next to it in the older island of Palia Kamini you can take hot mud baths, usually an indication of something brewing beneath the surface. You can reach these two islands by excursion boats. Across the bay is the island of Thirasia which is actually the other rim of the volcano and was once part of the same island. There are hotels, tavernas and a village that faces the cliffs of the volcano on the main island.

*I had a dream once of Santorini erupting. I had not been there in years but in the dream I was on Sifnos and we saw the plume of smoke and I had the sensation of major change that one gets in a hurricane or when he looks out the window and sees tanks in the square across the street. Even as we talked of what we were witnessing we could see stretched on the horizon the line of boats as the first refugees from Santorini came, seeking shelter from the earth's upheaval.*

Since there were no human remains found in the ruins of Akrotiri, it's a good indication that the inhabitants of Santorini knew what was coming and took off for safer ground. But did they make it? It is believed that when the volcano erupted in the 14th century BC it caused a tidal wave that destroyed the cities of Minoan Crete. That is quite a tidal wave and the eruption was perhaps the biggest cataclysmic event within human history (so far).

For all Santorini has to offer, it's fine beaches, active nightlife, restaurants, tomato keftedes (deep fried tomato balls are an island specialty), raki (like ouzo but stronger and does not taste like licorice), excellent wines (the volcanic soil and climate make the island one of the best places to grow grapes in the world): it's the volcano that is the star of the island. Take it away and all you have is another island with tomato balls. The black sand beaches, the wine, the raki are all by-products of the explosion that destroyed life on the island and created in its place a destination that offers what few others do, that is not only fun but profoundly dramatic in scenery. I don't think you could go to another planet and be more impressed than you will be when you see Santorini for the first time.

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## Where to Stay in Santorini



This is the big question for many people. Should we stay at the beach and visit the towns of Thira and Oia and the fantastic views of the volcano, or should we stay on the volcano and make the trek to the beach by bus, taxi, rental car or motor-bike? First of all let me say that everyone wants to stay in Thira and Oia. They have seen the pictures and imagine waking each day to a glorious view. But if you have children this is not practical. Who wants to stay somewhere that you are on edge all the time because you imagine your kids falling off a 1000 foot cliff? Not me. Plus kids usually want to go to the beach and getting them there on a daily basis can be a strain. But if you are staying at the beach what if you want to make the nightly visits to Thira? Another hassle. So it is a matter of making the choice of whether you want to be near the beach and rely on public transportation or a rental car or bike to see the sunsets and experience the nightlife or do you want to stay in the cliffside towns and take the trek to the beach. Last time I was in Santorini I stayed in Akrotiri at the [Villa Mathios](#) with a rental jeep and it was a much more low-key experience than Thira or Oia. Plus I had my wife, my daughter, my niece and my mother with me so I was not really in a partying situation and the nights at the hotel pool with George playing bouzouki and Kostas dancing was enough for me. A car is a good idea so you can see the rest of the island. There are some nice tavernas in the village too. For the price it would be tough to beat the Villa Mathios or their cousins and neighbors the [Villa Kalimera](#) which is highly praised by their guests and by [Dolphin Hellas Travel](#). Neither have caldera view. You have to cross the street to see it. The [Hotel Ether](#) in Oia has what comes close to Caldera View rooms for 115 euro and sometimes cheaper when there is a special. I say they come close because they don't face the center of the Volcano but are off to the side, but the view is still spectacular. Also the [Delfini Rooms](#) in Oia comes highly recommended. Keep in mind that if you want caldera view you will probably have to climb some steps somewhere along the way. If you don't like steps then the small [Ellinon Thea Hotel](#) has an entrance at street level and the rooms and balconies face the caldera with a splendid view. No steps to climb.

If you want to stay on the beach because you have kids, or you like beaches, the [Boathouse Hotel](#) comes highly recommended. It is a family run economy hotel with a nice pool, air-conditioned rooms, a popular seafood restaurant, the Almira and just a few steps from the black sand of Kamari Beach.

Most newlyweds and couples stay in Thira or Oia as well as Firostefani and Imerovigli which are all large towns on the rim of the volcano where you can find hotels suspended in space that even have swimming pools. Hotels as well as food and beverages are a little (or a lot) more expensive in Oia and Thira, particularly if you want to be in a room overlooking the caldera. Like most places in Greece with a little effort and some assistance you can find good deals at hotels that are not on prime real-estate or even specials at the well known hotels. The newly restored cave villas, the [Alexander Hotel](#) is worth looking into if you are looking for 5-star luxury in a very romantic setting. Even more impressive are the [Volcano View VIP Villas](#) are five stylish, individually designed luxury villas, **each with its private swimming pool** and a balcony with a breath-taking view of the Aegean. If you are looking for an affordable house to rent on a weekly basis check out the [Villa Patricia](#), a restored 17th Century house and the [Villa Athina](#), its newer and smaller cousin next door.

Tom Mazarakis stayed at the [Volcano View Villas Hotel](#) which is a beautiful complex on the cliffs overlooking the volcano. "Was it any good?" I asked him.

"It wasn't good. It was fantastic!" he told me.

The photos on their web site are impressive. You would not even have to leave the hotel. You could just sit by the pool or in front of the room and be awestruck at your surroundings.

There are people who come to the port to rent rooms on the island. The days of the little old ladies advertising a room in their house are over. They have been replaced by professionals whose job it is to get you to a hotel and they are paid by the head. They are called *kamakis* and the word means *harpoon*. You can find cheap rooms and if you are a backpacker this is a hit or miss situation because if the room is lousy you can leave and wander around and find something else or even go to Perissa Campsite. But if you are a family, honeymooners or a little older you can find accommodations to suit your budget by working with a reliable Greek travel agency. In the end when you factor in things like ferry schedules and the information you can get from the agencies you come out way ahead. A knowledgeable travel agent will know the best place for you to stay out of the hundreds of hotels on Santorini. They also receive better rates with hotels they book in advance (called commitment) and can offer bargain prices at certain times since they would rather put you in the room they have already paid for and break even than have it empty and lose money. You can find these hotels as well as the agencies that book them at [www.hotelsofgreece.com/cyclades](http://www.hotelsofgreece.com/cyclades)

## Food in Santorini



Tomato Keftades

Santorini is an odd island and its food is a combination of climatic factors and the tastes of those who have occupied and lived on the island. In Thira and Oia you can find whatever you want and at whatever price you can afford or not afford. For good food at reasonable prices a car is useful. As a rule we stay away from places that are overtly commercial and go to the family run fish taverns located nearby the smaller beaches and communities. My favorite restaurants were the **Limanaki** in Vlihada beach between the new marina and the old tomato-processing factory which serves excellent fish and the **Forum** on Perissa Beach which is a restaurant-bar-cultural center that has live music on weekends. There are plenty of places to eat in Thira and Oia but we did not try them. Be sure to try the fried tomato balls of keftades and be sure to ask for local tomatoes in your salad. They may be the best tasting you have ever had. There was an International Cherry Tomato Conference held in Santorini in June of 2002. Cherry tomato experts and fans came from all over the world to share stories and secrets and discuss the future of cherry tomatoes. You can get information on next year's conference by e-mailing Kelly Papanikolaou at [cherrytomato@heliotopos.net](mailto:cherrytomato@heliotopos.net)

If you want to know the best restaurants who better to ask than [Captain Ted Stathis](#), a Greek-American living on the island who takes people out in his catamaran for daytrips and overnights, serving them gourmet meals cooked by he and his wife.

*"When we go out we usually like to go out for dinner. Fish is my favorite as well as Dina's and the place where we like to have it is in **Ammoudi**. Every visitor that we meet really enjoys the place because it is an exceptional place to dine regardless of the fact that it has become a popular site. Another very good restaurant that we like is*



**Ambrosia Nector** in Oia. The owner is Tony Mosiman an excellent host and a great guy. He serves a Greek Infused menu that has unique flavors.

There is a great little place by the name **Me taxi Mas** in Exo Gonia, this place was converted from a traditional house and has great views of the opposite side of the island (Monolithos and Kamari). Frequented by local and now getting discovered by tourists. It is situated behind the big church (can't remember the name, however it has keramidia on it).

The food variety on the island is getting so much better than 15 years ago, it makes living here alot more satisfying. "

Dimitris from [Ocean Wave Tours](#) has sent me a nice list of his favorite restaurants on the island so take a look by [clicking here](#).

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## Honeymoons and Weddings in Santorini



It is no secret that Santorini is one of the most popular destinations for Honeymooners and for weddings too. The reason is obvious. It is because the island is so spectacular and unforgettable and just about anywhere you choose to take your vows you are in an amazing setting. There are a number of companies doing weddings in Santorini. Some offer entire packages and some give you assistance by taking care of the paperwork and let you take care of the other aspects. For more information on weddings in Greece see [www.greecetravel.com/weddings](http://www.greecetravel.com/weddings)

Fantasy Travel has gotten much praise from the many people who have entrusted them with the details of their wedding in Santorini. You can see what they offer on the [Fantasy Travel Santorini Wedding Page](#) or if you are already married and still feel like you need a romantic reason to come to Santorini see their [Renewal of Vows](#) program.

Honeymoons are popular in Santorini too for similar reasons. You feel pretty special when you step out of your honeymoon suite on the edge of a volcano. Take a look at [Fantasy Travel's Honeymoon pages](#) and avoid the temptation to do it on the cheap by booking hotels directly or with the automated booking sites which may lead to missed or non-existent ferries and confusion. You want your honeymoon or wedding to be perfect and having a knowledgeable travel agent helping you make decisions may not only save you money, it may save your marriage as well. I have heard from plenty of honeymooners who through frugality or arrogance decided to 'do it on their own' and the mishaps that occurred because of lack of reliable information had them thinking about divorce before the ink on the marriage license was fully dry.

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## Transportation to and from Santorini



#### [All Ferries Italy Greece](#)

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#### [Santorini Accomodation](#)

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## Getting to Santorini:

There are many ferries a day in the summer and usually one or two a day in the off-season. The ferries take about 9 hours to Santorini and stop at a couple other islands on the way, usually Paros, Naxos and Ios. There are a couple highspeed ferries that take half the time and cost twice as much. Making connections to other islands by boats can be tricky but usually there are daily boats to Paros, Naxos, Ios, and sometimes to Mykonos and Sifnos. There is an airport in Santorini with several flights a day to Mykonos and in the summer connections to Rhodes and Crete(maybe). There are even international charters from Europe in the summer. Ferry schedules are unreliable especially for boats between the islands. Unless you are a backpacker and don't mind having to improvise it is a good idea to have a travel agent book your ferries with your hotels because more than any other island Santorini's hotels fill up in July and August. You will get a packet when you arrive in Greece with your hotel vouchers, ferry tickets and timetable and when you arrive in Santorini there will be transportation to your hotel. Otherwise you can get the schedules every day in the Kathemerini insert of the International Herald Tribune. The only problem is that they only have them for that day and by the time you pick up the paper half the ferries have already left. You can pick up a weekly schedule at the Greek National Tourism Office except they never have the whole week and they always tell you to call the ferry company to make sure it is correct. You can also get the ferry schedule in the Athens News which comes out every Friday. Don't be discouraged by the port of Santorini called Athenaios. Unlike most islands it is just there for coming and going and not hanging out in.

## While in Santorini:

There are frequent buses all over the islands. There are also taxis. A rent a car is the best way to see the island. A jeep is fun but not essential. The roads are pretty good. They can be narrow in places and crowded at times so you need to be on your toes and don't drive when you have been drinking. You can rent motorbikes all over the island. Lots of people do and lots of people have accidents so be careful. Dimitris of [OceanWave Tours](#) provides transfers from the port and the airport to hotels as well as interesting tours around the island. You can go around the island by sea with Ted Stathis and [Santorini Sailing](#) and get a really unique view of the island.

## Leaving Santorini:

Some hotels booked in advance will send a bus to pick you up at the port or airport and take you there when it is time to leave. Your Greek travel agent can tell you which. Otherwise take a taxi or bus. Usually the boats returning from Santorini are crowded especially in the summer. This is a good time to use a taxi transfer so you don't have to

fight 800 people for the five taxis on the dock in Pireaus. You will know one of those taxis is yours. See the web site of **George the Famous Taxi Driver** at [www.greecetravel.com/taxi](http://www.greecetravel.com/taxi)

Most cruises of the Greek Islands include a stop in Santorini. They dock in the port below Thira and you can go up the side of the volcano by cable-car, donkey or on foot (if you are completely out of your mind since it is about one million steps). See [www.greecetravel.com/cruise](http://www.greecetravel.com/cruise)

## Helpful Santorini Info



### Rare Santorini hotels

Small holiday hotels, villas  
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[www.achtypistours.gr](http://www.achtypistours.gr)

### Santorini Restaurants

Romantic dining with Caldera  
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[Ambrosia-Nectar.com](http://Ambrosia-Nectar.com)

### The Majestic Hotel

The most prestigious 5 star Hotel  
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[www.hotel-majestic.gr](http://www.hotel-majestic.gr)

### Honeymoon in Greece

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For Hotels in Santorini and Island combinations see [Fantasy Travel](#) , Kiki Zikou at [Dolphin Hellas Travel](#) or [Aegean Thesaurus Travel](#) (all excellent agencies, reliable and English-speaking Staff). These agencies can organize your ferries, flights, transportation from the ports and airports and answer all your questions. They can also organize car-rentals on Santorini.

For a listing and descriptions of hotels in Santorini recommended by me and the agencies on my website see [www.hotelsofgreece.com](http://www.hotelsofgreece.com)

The [Volcano View Villas](#) are on the rim of Santorini's famous volcano, with three large swimming pools, restaurant, bar, AC in all rooms and a view so amazing you may never leave the premises. Great rates for a hotel of this quality and highly recommended by everyone who has stayed there.

For Honeymooners or people looking for something a little more special the [Volcano View VIP Villas](#) are five stylish, individually designed luxury villas, **each with its private swimming pool** and a balcony with a breath-taking view of the Aegean.

**Honeymooners!** Before you commit to anything (besides each other of course) take a peak at [Fantasy's Honeymoon Packages](#) which includes Santorini and Mykonos and/or a 4 day cruise.

If you want to stay in a beautiful traditional Cave Villa in Oia check out the [Alexander Boutique Hotel](#).

For budget travelers looking for quality in a caldera view hotel try contacting the guys at [Aegean Thesaurus Travel](#) and ask them about the [Delfini Rooms](#) in Oia. Probably the best deal for a budget hotel with a view is the [Hotel Ether](#) which is in Oia. A double at

the Ether will cost you around 115 euros. For an economical beach hotel check out the [Boathouse Hotel](#) on Kamari Beach. Dolphin Hellas has a special at the [Villa Kalimera](#), in quiet Akrotiri. If you are looking for an affordable house to rent on a weekly basis check out the [Villa Patricia](#), a restored 17th Century house and the [Villa Athina](#), its newer and smaller cousin next door.

For those who complain that travel in Greece is getting expensive and don't think a trip that includes Santorini and Mykonos, all ferries, transfers and hotels, including Athens is within your means see [Budget-Travel](#)

For hostels and very cheap accommodation see [www.greecetravel.com/youth-hostels](http://www.greecetravel.com/youth-hostels)

For Cruises that include Santorini see **Fantasy Travel** at [www.fantasytravelofgreece.com](http://www.fantasytravelofgreece.com)

**Sailboat Cruises around Santorini:** Greek-American Ted Stathis does charters around the island on his luxury Catamaran which includes gourmet meals, swimming in isolated coves, and a spectacular view of the island. You can take half-day, full day and overnight trips. See [Santorini Sailing](#)

**Land Tours of Santorini:** If you are coming to Santorini on a cruise ship and want a **tour of the island** or need **transfers to hotels**, or want to **visit the wineries**, remote beaches or have a pic-nic somewhere off the beaten path contact Dimitris at [Ocean Wave Tours](#).

The most important advice I can give anyone traveling to Santorini is to arrive by boat and get there before sunset. Be sure to visit Thira and Oia, at least once during your stay, sit on the edge of the caldera and let your mind try to grasp the immensity of what you are looking at. You may come back a changed person. If you have any questions about Santorini, island connections, ferries, where to stay or if you are just generally confused about what to do you can always [e-mail me](#)

**Santorini Today:** This monthly info-magazine is free and can be found in many hotels in Santorini. It contains a color map of the island, tourist information, museums, art galleries, important phone numbers (like hospitals, police, emergency road service, port authority, etc), embassies and consulates, transportation, shopping, dining and nightlife. If they don't have it at your hotel ask for it. There is another one available in Athens called **Athens Today**.

If you arrive from abroad and you need to get to Pireaus to catch the ferry to Santorini I recommend **George the Famous Taxi Driver**. Plus if you have some time to spare, as some of you will, you can do a little tour of the city. For your return to Athens from Santorini I also recommend using him to get to your hotel or the airport. When the ferries arrive in Pireaus there are usually just 3 or 4 taxis waiting for several hundred disembarking passengers. You will be very relieved to see a guy holding up a sign with your name on it. See his website at [www.greecetravel.com/taxi](http://www.greecetravel.com/taxi)

**See also:**

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