

THE TIMES

25 idyllic short breaks in Greece for an easy getaway

Whether you're eyeing up a city break in Athens or a dreamy resort in Santorini, the country has plenty of options for a quick trip in spring and summer. Our expert shares his favourites



There's so much to love about a holiday in Greece, whether you're thinking about a beach break, cultural immersion or even a cruise round the islands. And the country's charms — including fascinating history, great food and sublime beaches — are just as soul-filling on a short break as they are on a longer holiday.

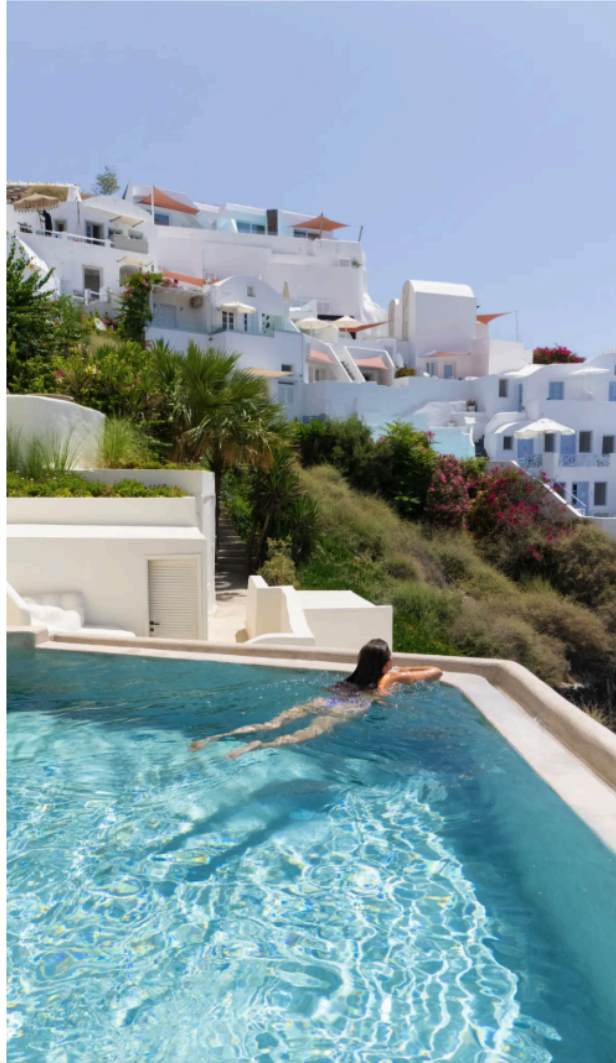
With flight times of about four hours from the UK, Greece is very doable for a couple of days away. City breaks work particularly well and I've enjoyed long weekends in Thessaloniki and Athens, the two biggest urban centres. Each is packed with street food, shopping, bars and cultural attractions, from museums and Ottoman architecture to the temple-topped Acropolis. And while a lot of beach and island-based tourism in Greece is seasonal, with many hotels only operating between Easter and late October, city breaks work all year round.

Elsewhere, a short, sharp burst of history or hiking can fill a fascinating few days. But even a mini fly-and-flop on one of the islands can be a restorative tonic, especially if you keep things straightforward and choose a place to stay that's within easy reach of the airport. Rhodes is particularly good for this, with boutique hotels and all-inclusive resorts within a 15-minute drive from the airport. Better still is Skiathos, where I've actually walked from the terminal to Skiathos Town.

Indeed, accessibility is the key to short-break success. Although you can fly to nearly 20 Greek gateways (from 18 UK airports), it's the ones with the greatest airlift that lend themselves best to shorter stays. Athens, Heraklion (Crete), Rhodes, Thessaloniki and Corfu welcome the most traffic, giving you scope to maximise time on the ground by planning an early outbound and a later return flight. And if you want to keep it ultra-convenient? Choose Corfu or Preveza, whose northwest Greece locations give them the shortest flying time from Britain.

Here are our picks for the best short breaks in Greece, whether you want a beach or city break, a trip into the mountains or countryside or to go island-hopping.

8. Dreamy Santorini escape



This sickle-shaped volcanic isle is best known for the one-of-a-kind views across its crater. It's a scene best soaked up from the cliff-edge villages, particularly Oia; but why join the crowds who descend here when you can ogle those views from your suite's private plunge pool? The best examples are carved into the cliffs, such as at Andronis Boutique Hotel, whose all-cave architecture celebrates traditional island style. As the day wanes, relocate to sister property Andronis Arcadia, down by the sea, to celebrate the sunset on its poolside, west-facing terrace.

Details B&B doubles from £420 (andronis.com). Fly to Santorini