



Welcome to GIC's Villa Collection

Each year we visit hundreds of properties in Greece, selecting those which tick the right boxes. Needless to say, in the 43 years we have been operating we have noticed our customers' tastes alter and we like to think our portfolio of properties reflects these ever changing requirements.

Feedback has shown that not all our customers are looking for seclusion; their preference is for a stylish villa with modern facilities within walking distance of shops and tavernas. There is also a desire for smaller villas, ideal for couples wanting a break without the family. So, for 2012, we have introduced some new properties that we hope will fulfil these requirements.

The demands on our lives seem to grow every year, so a holiday is an important break away from day to day working stresses. It is therefore no surprise that, increasingly, we just want to spend our holiday relaxing around the pool.

However, having spent a great part of this year travelling in Greece, I realised I had forgotten just how relaxing it can be to sit on a ferry connecting the islands or to potter along the coastline in a hired motor boat. Our company motto is 'find the real country' and I would urge you to leave your villa and explore, even if just for a day.

Our villa holidays are advertised as seven and fourteen night breaks, with a price inclusive of flights. We still feel this is the best way to travel as it ensures you are looked after every step of the way. Should anything go wrong (always possible when travelling), we are best placed to help. If, however, you do wish to travel for an odd duration, with flights from a different airport or just want to book a villa on its own, please call the office for a tailor made quotation.

Our team of specialists in Isleworth and Greece visit all our destinations and properties regularly, so please call us and we will be happy to make suggestions or answer any queries you have about a particular holiday.

For the first time, having discovered some beautiful properties in and around the picturesque village of Sivota, we have included a location on the Greek mainland. Named after the group of islets in the bay, Sivota offers dramatic scenery, extensive beaches and a charming harbour with an array of cafes, restaurants and shops.

As we are constantly travelling, we discover new properties all the time, so our internet site www.gicthevillacollection.com is the most up to date source of information and may have additional properties not shown in the brochure. We are regularly adding extra features and information, so please do check. You can also keep up to date with our news via Facebook and Twitter.

If you are new to The Villa Collection, we look forward to welcoming you to the programme. If you are one of our many returning guests, we are delighted to welcome you back.

Chris Wright
Managing Director

The Greek mainland, at the southernmost tip of the Balkan peninsula, is bordered by the two seas of the Ionian and the Aegean. Over 2000 islands lie within Greek waters but only about a hundred are inhabited. Each island has its own unique history and character. The distinct beauty of Greece is to be found in a variety of contrasts.

Off the West coast of mainland Greece lie six islands of the distinct Ionian group: **Corfu, Paxos, Lefkas, Kefalonia, Ithaca** and Zakynthos; Kythira, the seventh island lies further south as a gateway to the Aegean. With the exception of Lefkas the Ionian islands escaped the occupation of the Ottoman Turks, but came under Venetian rule for almost six hundred years until 1797. Their union to Greece was finally granted after seventy-five years of French, Russian and British protection.

Anglo-Venetian architecture is evident in Ionian churches, schools, castles and houses with delicately shaped arches, imaginative wrought ironwork and the gentle slope of red tiled rooftops.

The Ionian landscape is a rich green of olive, pine and cypress with a Spring and Autumn carpet of grass, bracken and wild flowers.

Off the East coast of the Peloponnes peninsula of mainland Greece are the Sporades islands of **Skiathos, Skopelos, Alonissos** and Skyros. The islands were part of a thirteenth century Byzantine Empire and have retained the beautifully crafted churches of that period. A Venetian occupation was followed by an overpowering Ottoman Empire until the islands were granted reunion to Greece in 1830.

Skiathos, Skopelos and Alonissos are richly forested with pine and olive, and share a similar landscape of cultivated hillsides which overlook sparkling beaches of sand and pebble.

Crete, the largest of the Greek islands and cradle of early Mediterranean civilisation, has a fascinating combination of rugged mountains, vineyards, citrus groves, forgotten ruins and isolated chapels. The coastline offers many good sandy beaches. Painters and poets have been inspired by the island's varied scenery, the distinctive character of its people and its impressive archaeological remains, which date from different periods of its history: Minoan palaces, Byzantine churches, Venetian castles and Turkish minarets.



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Our holidays

Personal service

For 43 years we have tried to preserve a personal service for all those who holiday with us. There will be no attempt to organise you. Having met you at the airport, and settled you at your villa, we see it as our task to provide, unobtrusively, a range of services on which you can rely if the need arises.

Each and every GIC villa offers something unique that makes it that extra bit special – whether it be a cottage close to the sea with a boat mooring, a child-friendly villa with pool or a village home where you can truly immerse yourself in the local community. Properties are handpicked for their privacy, standards of comfort and proximity to the sea.



Villa services

Each of our villas has a twice weekly maid service and linen change.

Welcome pack

On arrival at your villa we provide a complimentary "starter pack" of provisions. More elaborate hampers and our special "Junior Hampers" can be pre-ordered on request.

Secluded villas

Our properties have been chosen for their privacy, standards of comfort and proximity to the sea. Some of our villas are more secluded than others and require a car for ease of access to villages and beaches, although tavernas are often only a short walk away. For these villas, car hire is included in the package price and this is mentioned in the respective villa description.

Greek Islands Club



In 1965 the founders of the Greek Islands Club visited the Ionian Islands of Greece aboard a friend's yacht. They were so enchanted that they returned a year later to the small island of Paxos and built a house amongst the olive groves of the east coast. Over the succeeding years they built up a programme of properties throughout the Ionian Islands, at first inviting friends to visit, and later slowly introducing the area to people who wanted to discover one of the less developed areas of Greece. Greek Islands Club was never a Club in the true sense of the word. There was no meeting place or subscription fee, you simply became a member by holidaying with us.

Much has changed since 1965. The holiday clubs of 2012 are very different in style to those when the company started 43 years ago and so, to avoid confusion, it was decided last year, to change our name to GIC – The Villa Collection. However, the company philosophy remains the same. We continue to offer a range of special properties in the Ionian and Aegean seas for those who are looking to escape from the crowds.

GIC Premier

The GIC premier logo is displayed on properties that offer a higher standard of comfort, with quality furnishings and stylish interiors.

GIC Concierge

This new service is for those that require a more personal experience. Meet, greet and escort to the aircraft at your UK departure airport, airport lounge access, private sea taxi transfers or a personal chef are all services that we can arrange for an extra charge. Please enquire for further details.

How we get you there

Corfu and Paxos

Morning flights on Mondays from Gatwick, Bristol and Manchester direct to Corfu. For our Paxos clients, the coach transfer from Corfu airport to the port of Benitses takes 20 minutes and then a 2½ hours crossing by privately chartered ferry to Paxos. Snacks and drinks are available on board. (Note early and late season the transfer may leave from Corfu Town port). Due to different flight arrival and departure times, guests may have time to enjoy a drink at one of the cafes in Benitses, as there may be a short wait at the port.

Kefalonia and Ithaca

Morning flights from Gatwick and Manchester on Saturdays, direct to Argostoli in Kefalonia. Ithaca is reached by a 1 hour coach drive from Argostoli airport to the port of Sami and then a 40 minute crossing on a privately chartered ferry to Ithaca. Snacks and drinks are available on board.

Lefkas, Meganissi and Sivota

Morning flights on Sundays from Gatwick and Manchester to Preveza airport on the Greek mainland. Our Lefkas villas are within a 1 hour drive from the airport. Our Meganissi clients catch an early afternoon ferry from Nidri on Lefkas, taking 30 minutes. Our Sivota villas are within a 90 minute drive of the airport.

Crete

Morning flights on Tuesdays from Gatwick and Manchester to Chania. Our villas are within a 1 hour drive from the airport.

Skiathos, Skopelos and Alonissos

Morning flights on Fridays from Gatwick and Manchester to Skiathos. On the outward journey our Manchester flight has a refuelling stop at Volos (on the Greek mainland) and on the return journey our Gatwick flight has a refuelling stop at Volos. This refuelling stop adds approximately 1 hour to the flight time. Skiathos clients will be taken to their villa; Skopelos and Alonissos clients will be taken to the port for the hydrofoil or ferry crossing to Skopelos (1 hour) and Alonissos (1 hour 20 minutes). Dependant on boat schedules, clients may have a wait in the pretty Skiathos Town, before heading off to their chosen destination.

How to book

Please telephone one of our specialists on **020 8232 9780** to make sure that the dates you require are available. Our staff know all our houses, villas and hotels and are therefore able to answer any question in detail. Having reserved your holiday dates on the telephone (we will normally hold an option for 48 hours), you will be given a reservation number which should be entered on the booking form. Please complete the booking form and send it to us with your holiday deposit (£150 per person). Your holiday booking will be confirmed in writing. Full holiday payment is due eight weeks before departure.

Alternatively you can check availability and book online at

www.gicthevillacollection.com

Your holiday is fully protected

GIC – The Villa Collection is a fully bonded tour operator. We are licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (ATOL 848) for all our air-based holidays within this brochure. All non-air travel (eg. ground arrangements only) conform to the bonding requirements of the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA Y1612) and the Association of Independent Tour Operators. In the unlikely event of our insolvency, these organisations will ensure that you are not stranded abroad and will refund any money you have paid us for an advance booking.



Greek island lifestyles

The Greek islands have a great variety of things to see and do while you are there. On most islands varied excursions are offered by local agents and one can find sporting activities such as waterskiing, tennis, scuba diving and mountain biking.

On each island within our programme it is possible and enjoyable to explore on one's own, as opposed to an over-organised coach excursion, and discover deserted hamlets, stone threshing floors, ancient churches, wine and olive presses, unusual flora, simple farms and hidden paths leading to spectacular vantage points.

On Skopelos, our agent George Drossou is able to introduce private parties to the fascinating history of the island's town with a guided walk and anecdotes based on his family's long involvement with the island.

On Alonissos, Chris Browne, who has lived on the island for many years, organises a series of walks for small groups wanting to enjoy an educated yet informal introduction to the island's natural and social history.

On Paxos, one can take a guided walk on the harbour islet of St. Nicholas Island with a visit to the old castle.

On Ithaca, Katrina Parsey is an English poet with a passion for exploring Greek islands on foot. Katrina has lived on Ithaca for the past eleven years. Daily walks, averaging four hours in total, will introduce Ithaca's more inquisitive visitor to the island's history, mythology, flora and fauna.

From Paxos and Corfu there are now one or three day excursions to Albania.

From Fiscardo there are intriguing Marine Expeditions and dolphin-watching tours, arranged by a local environmental society.

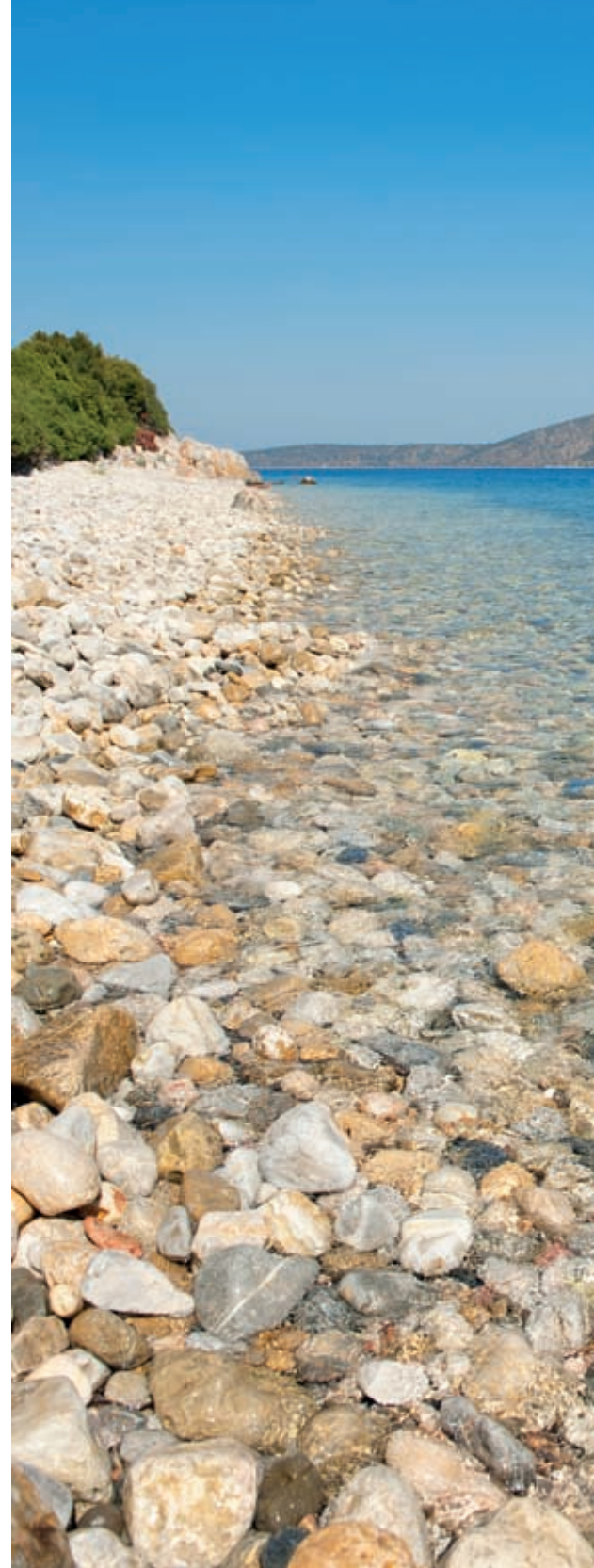
On Crete our local agents have personalised directions to many of the hidden treasures of the island.



Your own private boat

Wherever you are staying on holiday, there is no doubt that the enjoyment of your holiday will be greatly enhanced by hiring a boat with outboard engine to visit deserted beaches; have lunch at a harbourside taverna or a picnic in a secluded cove; to explore a varied coastline or to visit other fishing villages.

For most islands you can pre-book a fibreglass boat with outboard engine from 15HP to 30HP (up to 90HP on Ithaca; 200HP on Kefalonia and 260HP on Lefkas), taking up to 6 persons. Please see our Information and Prices Pages.



Multi-Centre and Tailor-made holidays

Many of the islands and resorts we feature can be combined on one trip and some of the most popular combinations are detailed below. You will need to contact us for an exact costing but we can book all flights, transfers and accommodation as required.

Corfu and/or Paxos and/or Anti Paxos and/or Corfu Town. As well as offering a week on each island using our own flights, we can utilise easyJet flights to make multi centre holidays on these islands more flexible - a few nights in Corfu town could be added onto the end or the beginning of a villa stay. Corfu town with its winding narrow shopping streets, beautiful mix of architectural styles and impressive fortresses is, perhaps, the most elegant island capital in Greece.

North Corfu and South Corfu. A two centre in Corfu should not be overlooked. The south with its long sandy beaches contrasts well with the pebbly coves and dramatic scenery of the north.

Kefalonia and Ithaca. Ithaca, rich in historical legend, is a 45 minute ferry journey from Sami in Kefalonia.

North and South Kefalonia. Kefalonia is the largest of the Ionian Islands and has a varied landscape. Some of the best beaches in Greece are here - from sandy beaches in the south to pebble beaches in the north, including Myrtos beach which has been voted one of the top ten beaches in the world. The drive from north to south is around 2 hours.

Lefkas and/or Meganissi and /or Sivota. Meganissi is a 30-40 minute ferry ride from Nidri in Lefkas. Sivota is in the stunning Epirus region of the mainland and is a 2.5 hour drive from Lefkas (Lefkas is connected to the mainland by a causeway). Epirus is recognised as one of Europe's prime areas of

outstanding natural beauty. Why not spend a few nights in either Ioannina, the lakeside capital of the region or in Mikro Papingo in the heart of the mountains where we can pre-book accommodation. Ioannina is a 1.5 hour drive from Sivota and Mikro Papingo 2.5 hours.

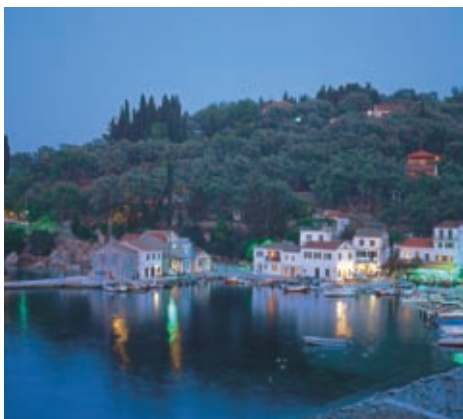
Skiathos and/or Skopelos and/or Alonissos. A regular flying cat service connects all three islands making these islands easy to combine

Crete and Santorini. There is a high speed ferry connection (1.5 hours) from Heraklion on the east of Crete to Santorini. The drive time from our villas in the north west of Crete to Heraklion is around 2.5 hours

Athens. Athens has flight connections to Crete, Corfu, Kefalonia and Skiathos so we can arrange a short stay in an Athens hotel followed by a stay in a villa on an island (or vice versa). In some instances the flight back to the UK may need to be routed via Athens. Short breaks in Athens can also be arranged.

Fly-Drive – Hidden Greece. A fly-drive holiday on the mainland offers the opportunity to discover some of the most beautiful areas of Greece where those interested in history, archaeology or local flora and fauna will be well catered for. A fly-drive allows you to explore areas rarely featured in holiday brochures, and will well reward the independent traveller in search of more adventure than the normal holiday provides.

Island destinations



Paxos pages 10-37

On an island 7 miles by 3 miles you are never far from anywhere. An undulating landscape of silver olives, many sheltered coves and pretty fishing villages – Paxos offers an enchanting escape from the crowds.



AntiPaxos pages 38-43

The tiny satellite island, just one mile off Paxos, offers a rarely found Robinson Crusoe experience. Sandy beaches, valleys of vineyards and just four tavernas.



Ithaca pages 44-65

Ithaca has remained untouched by tourism because, like Paxos, it has no airport and can only be reached by ferry from neighbouring islands or the mainland. A holiday in Ithaca is for those who seek a relaxed holiday in a friendly environment.



Kefalonia pages 66-105

Kefalonia, the largest of the Ionian islands, is popular for its superb beaches and stunning scenery. Kefalonia caters for both the explorer and the seeker of variety.



Lefkas pages 106-123

Lefkas will attract explorers to her green, mountainous interior and those wanting peaceful seclusion close to her beautiful beaches.



Meganissi pages 124-131

A beautiful, unspoilt island just off Lefkas' east coast. Deserted bays and a simple village lifestyle will appeal to those wanting to forget the outside world.



Corfu pages 132-147

An undulating interior of olive and pine-clad hillsides hiding hamlets and villages. A beautiful coastline of small coves and large beaches. A capital of stunning Venetian architecture.



Sivota pages 148-153

The first of our mainland destinations, Sivota enjoys a setting of remarkable beauty. The twisted coastline is indented with rocky coves, sandy bays, and stretches of almost white coarse sandy beach. Just-off shore are three wooded islets with beaches of their own, great fun to explore by boat.



Alonissos pages 154-167

Slow and quiet, Alonissos appeals more to the escapist who wants the simple pleasures of a friendly community, unspoilt surroundings, deserted beaches and good tavernas.



Skopelos pages 168-179

Rich, green hillsides of pine and olive sweep down to enticing beaches. Skopelos is an island for those wanting to explore by boat, car and foot and to have a wide choice of intimate waterfront tavernas.



Skiathos pages 180-187

Skiathos offers a colourful variety of spectacular beaches, well organised watersports, good Aegean food, relaxed or vibrant nightlife in town, wonderful scenery and a cosmopolitan atmosphere.



Crete pages 188-205

An island suited to those who want a more sophisticated choice of holiday activities. An extensive coastline of fishing villages, towns and beaches and a dramatic interior of unique beauty.