

Saronic Islands

The islands of the Argo-Saronic, to give them their full title, run south from Athens and hug the sheltered shoreline of the eastern Peloponnese.

They are the easiest islands to get to from Athens as they have a frequent and fast hydrofoil/catamaran service running from Piraeus, and as such do get busy at weekends and in high season with Athenians and foreign tourists alike. The closest (Aegina) can take just 40 minutes to reach; the furthest (Spetses) 2 hrs 15 mins.

Although all the Saronics are different they do have certain common characteristics. Here aromatic pine trees dominate more than olives, often running down to a rocky shoreline. There are sandy beaches but more often you will find many smaller shingle beaches and coves dotted around the coastline. The sea, is sparkingly clear everywhere.

Architecture is handsome, including elegant sea captain's mansions (especially on Hydra). Red-tiled roofs predominate rather than the flat Cycladic style.

These islands, being so near one another and easily reached from Piraeus, work very well as a twin-centre or island hopping itinerary or in combination with a short stay in Athens at the start. They have a long season and holidays can be arranged from the start of April to the end of October.

Tiny **Agistri** (55 mins from Piraeus), at just 13 sq kms in size, is the smallest of the chain and often overlooked. But the island packs a punch far greater than its size.

Agistri is heavily forested - in fact over 80% of the island is pine-covered. Easy walking is an attraction - there is nothing very steep (the highest point is 245m) and 3 walking paths have now been opened up, with more to come.

There are only three settlements on Agistri, linked by a bus. Skala is where most visitors stay, thanks to its spit of sandy beach overlooked by a blue-domed church. For such a small place Skala has a very wide choice of tavernas, cafes and small shops.

There is plenty to do - the waters around Agistri are turquoise-hued and very clear, so perfect for snorkeling (the bay of Aponisi in the south has Caribbean-like waters). Aegina can be reached in just 10 minutes by sea-taxi or hydrofoil, and you can easily visit Athens for the day. Horse riding, bike hire, sea kayaking, diving and boat excursions (including to the mainland Peloponnese and fishing trips) are on offer.

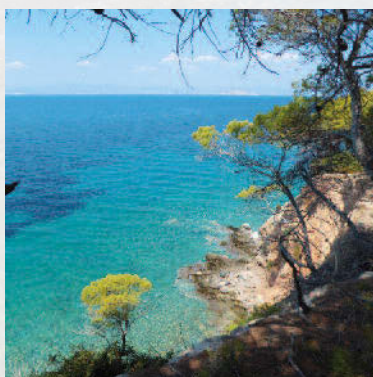
Lastly Agistri is very good value and prices are reasonable. Friendly, laid-back, genuine and very Greek, Agistri is a secret that you will not regret discovering.

On fashionable, upmarket **Hydra** (90 mins from Piraeus) all forms of private motorised transport are banned - the only way around is on foot, by boat or on a mule!

The main town and port is one of the most beautiful in Greece, with preserved neo-classical mansions, whitewashed village houses and narrow cobbled lanes climbing steeply up from the horse-shoe shaped harbour. The whole is preserved as a national monument. The mansions date from the 18th century and are a reminder of Hydra's prosperous past. The bustling port is at its best in the evenings, when the quayside twinkles with cafés, small shops, bars and atmospheric restaurants.

Although rocky, Hydra has some good beaches - some pebble, some sand, some backed by pines, some with a taverna or two. Outside the hotter periods walking is an attraction, and a network of signed paths offers plenty of variety. Non-walking options include mule-treks and the hire of a water-taxi for private use.

This magical island has been home to well-known artists and writers over the years. Although Hydra today receives plenty of visitors, the island has retained its small island charm and traditions, including many festivals.



Agistri coastline



Spetses (2hrs 15mins from Piraeus) is known as a retreat for the well-heeled Greeks (of which there remain more than you may think!), as evidenced by the discreet walled villas and glitzy yachts in the marina. Spetses Town is most attractive, with whitewashed bougainvillea-strewn mansions, wide piazzas and a pretty old harbour called Dapia.

As on Hydra cars are banned, so transportation is provided by horse-drawn carriage, bicycles, water-taxis and many buzzing mopeds. Taxis and two local buses also run.

There is a serviceable town beach, and also sandy Kaiki at the town's western end. Both can be busy in season but it is not difficult to find quieter beaches further afield.

Only 10 miles square, Spetses has a circular road running around the island, giving access to various beaches, the best being in the south. Walking trails run through the centre, passing through pine forests and beside ancient chapels on the way.

The Greek heroine, Laskarina Bouboulina, was born here and led a tremendous fight against the Turkish fleet in 1821. Her life is commemorated in a little museum here. The naval festival over the second weekend of September re-enacts the battle with a famously spectacular event, for which the island is packed.

Saronic Islands Information

Getting to Agistri, Hydra and Spetses

Flights from Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted, Manchester and Edinburgh to Athens. 1 hour taxi to Piraeus port for high speed cat or hydrofoil to the island (included - see descriptions for length of journey). Onward transfer to your accommodation on Agistri and Spetses. Transfers on Hydra are not provided as the hotels are close to the port but porters meet the boat if required. On your return the reverse applies.

Multi-Centre Options

All three featured islands are easy to combine - there is a minimum stay of 3 nights on each. All can be combined with Athens, or tailor-made with a wide variety of options - mainland fly-drive, Cycladic islands, and any island served by ferry or domestic flight from Athens (which is most of them!).

Representatives

We do not employ our own representatives on these islands and transfers are unescorted. Our hotels should be able to give any information required. We do have a local agent on Spetses and our main agents in Athens can always be contacted if required.

Oasis Hotel Agistri

The Oasis must be the best located hotel on Agistri. It is directly on Skala's sandy beach, and just a couple of minutes' easy walk from the centre of the village and a wide choice of tavernas, cafes and small shops.

The hotel has 25 rooms, either above the pool or the small garden to the rear. They are furnished in a classic style with iron beds (mostly doubles) and pretty decor. In-room facilities include AC, WiFi, TV, mini-fridge, tea-making equipment, room-safe and hairdryer. All rooms have a modern walk-in shower and good-sized covered balcony with sea, pool, garden or village/mountain views.

The hotel has a spacious Suite, family maisonettes and rooms with garden access (no steps). It offers room service and a laundry service.

To the front is the 90 sq m seawater pool, with a good terrace cafe-bar and restaurant to one side. On the beach sun beds can be reserved for guests free of charge, and beach towels provided.

Michalis and Dorina could not be more welcoming and are always on hand to help their guests get the most from their stay on Agistri.

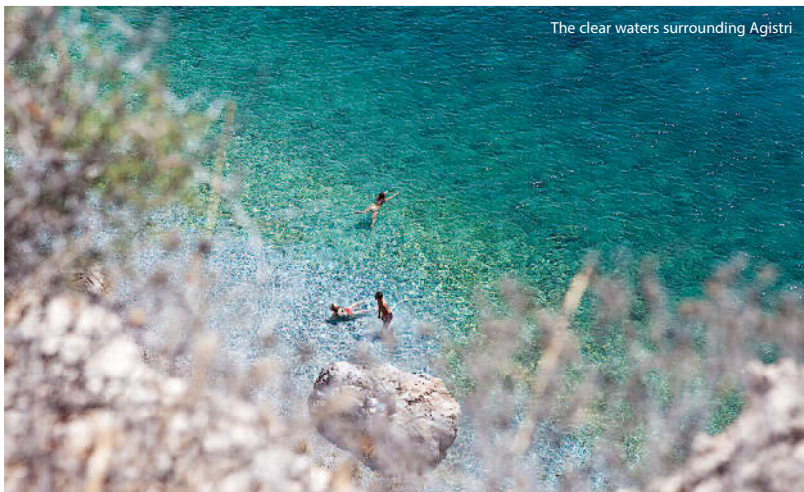
The Hotel: 3 Stars Plus
 Bed & Breakfast
 Air Conditioning
 Swimming Pool
 Free WiFi



Skala, Agistri



Skala, Agistri



The clear waters surrounding Agistri



Hydra



Spetses Town beach

Hydroussa Hotel Hydra

The Hydroussa enjoys a very convenient location an easy 2-3 minute walk back from the harbour with no hills to climb. It is a 3-storey building designed in the attractive island style and looks over Votsi square to the front.



The 40 rooms here are all twin-bedded and possess AC, TV, mini-fridge and shower room. Furnishings are simple and traditional in flavour. Due to the age of this large former mansion rooms do not have balcony but most are spacious.

The lovely courtyard garden to the front has tables and chairs, and breakfast can be taken here. WiFi is available in public areas.

A very well-priced hotel for Hydra, a little dated in places but comfortable, well kept with some character and in a great location.

We can also arrange stays in an upmarket mansion hotel - see website for details.

The Hotel: 3 Stars
Bed & Breakfast
Air Conditioning
Free WiFi



Spetses Town



Economou Mansion Spetses

Standing above the narrow seafront road, this restored sea captain's mansion dates from 1851 and has just six cosily furnished rooms. Carefully converted to preserve its character the hotel is a 10 minute walk above the sea from the centre and Dapia harbour.

All rooms possess traditional iron double bed, high wooden ceiling, AC, WiFi, mini-fridge, safety deposit box, tea-making facilities and a walk-in shower. The studios also have light cooking facilities. Due to the age of the building there are no balconies, but most have sea views through their window and one

studio has an outdoor sea view patio in the garden to one side.

There is a delightfully furnished lounge, and a swimming pool (8m x 5m) in a walled garden area.

You will find a number of restaurants nearby, and it is a 10-15 minute walk to Kaiki beach as you

The Hotel: 3 Stars
Traditional Hotel
Bed & Breakfast
Air Conditioning
Swimming Pool
Free WiFi

SARONIC ISLANDS		Guide prices shown are in £'s per person departing on or between dates shown						
ACCOMMODATION	PERSONS BASIS	May/Oct		Jun/Sep		Jul/Aug		
		1 wk	2 wks	1 wk	2 wks	1 wk	2 wks	
Agistri								
Oasis Hotel	Classic Mountain View	2 BB	643	853	723	954	924	1322
	Classic Sea View	2 BB	727	996	771	1050	984	1442
	Maisonette	2 BB	811	1208	918	1345	1192	1858
		3 BB	676	944	751	1037	944	1390
	Suite	4 BB	651	853	709	926	862	1198
	2 BB	835	1305	1010	1529	1283	2041	
	3 BB	692	1008	812	1160	1005	1512	
	4 BB	663	902	755	1018	908	1290	
Hydra								
Hydroussa Hotel	Standard Room	2 BB	902	1300	984	1382	996	1446
Spetses								
Economou Mansion	studio	2 BB	916	1289	1070	1614	1127	1671
		3 BB	848	1181	978	1453	1031	1507
	Standard Garden View	2 BB	967	1392	1150	1779	1212	1842
		3 BB	882	1250	1031	1564	1088	1620
	Standard Sea View	2 BB	1052	1562	1236	1950	1298	2012
	3 BB	939	1363	1088	1677	1144	1734	

Payment by Credit or Charge Card will incur a 2% processing charge (note: should this change due to the credit card companies increasing their charges to us, you will be advised at the time of booking).

Departure date determines basic holiday cost. Prices include all airport/fuel charges & taxes known at the time of printing - for surcharge policy see booking conditions. To add: room & board supplements (see text - single room prices on request), Travel Insurance. **Prices are based on Gatwick flight costs as sourced from Easyjet in November 2016. Regional flight supplements on request. Please note, prices shown are guideline prices only and may vary according to the cost of flights which we buy in on an individual basis for these holidays. A firm price will be quoted on enquiry.**