

Ikaria

Ikaria is one of the most beautiful and unusual Greek islands we have ever set eyes upon. Its mountains, forests and beaches combine with the island's many legends, foibles and traditions in a heady Aegean cocktail.

The island is also one of only five identified 'blue zones' on the planet - a place where people live remarkably longer lives. All the more wonder then that Ikaria is so little known.

This is largely because it is remote, and historically an island of exile until relatively recently. Neglected by Athens for many years, and ill-served by ferries to this day, Ikaria was left to go its own way. Still difficult to get to, those who make the effort are richly rewarded.

Named after Ikarus, who flew too close to the sun and plunged into the sea here, Ikaria is 40 kms long but never greater than 8 kms wide. With Atheras soaring to over 1000 metres, this means some tortuous roads and dizzy drops, especially when crossing the island from the main port, Ayios Kirikos, in the south.

Our accommodation is close to the fishing village of Armenistis on the north coast, 57 kms from Ayios. With long whitesand beaches to the east and lush mountain behind, it is the prettiest seaside spot on the island, and the centre of what limited tourism there is.

The village has just the right number of tavernas, cafés and small shops to give enough variety. Five more (very good) restaurants can be found above the beautiful sandy cove at Nas 3 kms to the west, which has the remnants of a Temple of Artemis behind. Armenistis has a small beach of its own but, apart from when the meltemi blows, most people head for long Livadi or Messakti beaches just outside the village. Please be aware that Ikaria has some strong off-shore



currents and it is not always safe to swim (main beaches have warning flags).

The forest on the mountainside directly inland from Armenistis is a natural paradise, full of the sounds of birdsong, rushing water and rustling pines. It hides lakes, monasteries and traditional villages, four of which (collectively known as Rahes) have produced a 25 km walking trail, split into sections, which starts just behind Livadi beach - but try not to reach Christos before the evening when it comes to life (the locals sleep for much of the day!).

There is limited public transport on Ikaria and taxis can be hard to find, so car hire is highly recommended (4wd if going much into the mountains) - there is a lot to explore. Excursions do run, subject to numbers; some by jeep or 4wd minibus. One interesting trip last year included a visit to a winery followed by a traditional Ikarian dinner then an evening visit to the 'Asterix' village of Christos Rahes (see above).

Ikaria is famous amongst Greeks for its Panayiri's (Saint's Day festivals), natural beauty, local wine, fresh fish and sunsets. It is not famous at all elsewhere, which is why we would urge a visit to this magical, wild and quite unique island.

IKARIA INFORMATION

Getting to Ikaria

Thursday flight Gatwick to Samos (note: inbound flight via Lemnos), ferry to Ikaria (1hr 30 mins - 2hrs 30 mins) and onward transfer to accommodation (30-90 mins depending on which port is used). For flight details see page 267. It is likely that an overnight on Samos will be required in at least one direction as ferries to Ikaria are erratic and timetables can chop and change throughout the season. We will not have precise transfer information until shortly before your departure, but rest assured all required transfers and necessary 3 star overnight B&B hotel(s) on Samos will be arranged for you by Sunvil.

Alternatively we arrange a tailor-made holiday using domestic flights from Athens, but this may also entail an overnight in Athens in one direction. Please ask for a costing.

Multi Centre & Island Hopping

Ikaria can combine with Samos and/or Patmos. Should ferry schedules remain the same as last year, twin-centre clients with Patmos need not make the mid-holiday transfer via Samos as there was a fast (90mins) direct catamaran service on Mondays, Fridays and Sundays between the two islands. Ikaria can also be included in a tailor-made island-hopping itinerary with many of the Dodecanese islands e.g. Lipsi, Leros, Kos, Kalymnos and Telendos.

Car Hire

See page 268-9 for details.

Representative

We do not employ a resident representative on Ikaria but have a local agent based in Armenistis.

Exchange Facilities

There is no bank in Armenistis and exchange facilities are limited so take a good supply of Euros. The nearest ATM is Evidilos, 30 mins by road.



Erofil Hotel Armenistis

The Erofil is the highest category hotel on Ikaria and occupies one of the best locations – just on the edge of Armenistis, directly above the sea, a three minute walk from the centre of the village in one direction and to the start of beautiful Livadi beach in the other.

Built into the hillside on four floors (please note there is no lift) all 31 rooms possess fridge, satellite tv, hair-dryer, safety deposit box, tiled shower/wc, air conditioning (once the outdoor daytime temperature exceeds 30C) and a very spacious balcony (four have a garden patio) – those to the front have panoramic vistas over sea and coast. Furnishings are of good quality and décor tasteful.

At the lowest level there is a filtered seawater pool of some 90 sq m (depth 1.3m-3.20m) and a small path leads down to the rocks and sea below.

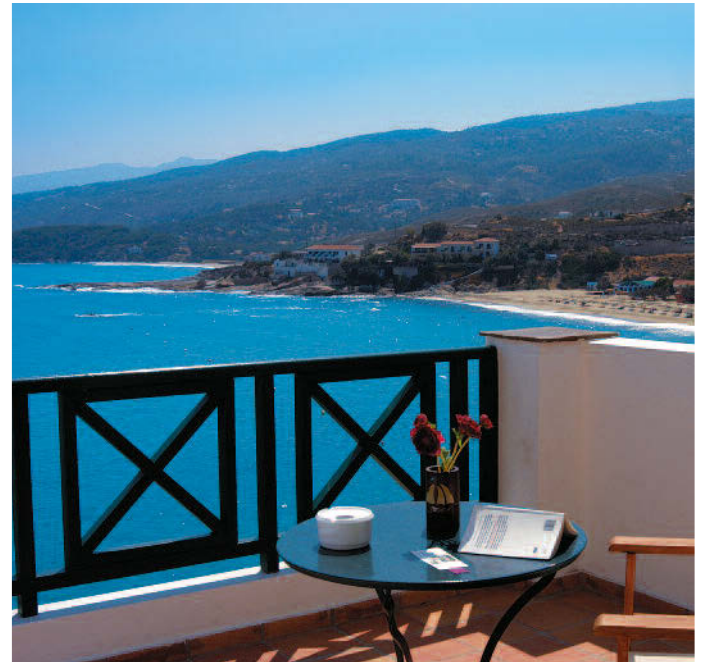
The hotel has an airy reception/lounge/bar which leads onto the large sea-facing terrace where you may take breakfast. The hotel also has free WiFi, an internet corner and a heated indoor thalassotherapy pool with jacuzzi (local charge).

The stunning views of open blue sea and green mountain coastline alone would make a stay here worthwhile.

Early Booking Offer

Reductions apply for holidays completed by 30/5 or commencing 30/8 onwards if booked by 31/3. Please enquire or check online availability for a costing.

The Hotel: 3 Star Superior
Bed & Breakfast
Air Conditioning (high season)
Swimming Pool
Free WiFi



Messakti beach



Valeta Studios Armenistis

Beautifully located directly above the sea, the Valeta Studios are on a small headland between two of the best beaches on Ikaria – Livadi and Messakti. They are a ten minute walk via Livadi beach (twenty minutes walk by the road) from Armenistis village. There is a handy restaurant almost next door if you don't want to go far.

Studios are ground floor (double plus single bed) or first floor (twin beds). Each is spacious and open-plan containing a kitchenette area with mini-oven, rings and fridge, a fan, TV, tiled shower room and good-sized front balcony or terrace with wonderfully open views over the sea and, to the side, the village –

ground floor terraces are especially large. Furnishings and decor are modern, comfortable and of good quality.

Each pair of studios shares a common entrance hallway with an outside door and can therefore be combined for parties of up to five (one ground floor, one first floor).

Good standards, superb views and convenient for both beach and village.

The Studios: Self Catering
Studios for 2/3
Family Units for 4/5
Free WiFi



Livadi Beach and location of Valeta Studios (far end)

Muses Cottages Nas

All you can hear is the sound of the waves from these five cottages. Standing directly above the sea, Muses boast panoramic sea views (and spectacular sunsets!) and are a five minute walk from beautiful Nas beach, reached by a rough path and steps down. Even closer, within a couple of minutes' walk, you will find three of the island's best-known restaurants.

Stepped down the hillside, the cottages possess an attractive traditional design and decor (predominantly blue and white), with high wooden ceilings and tiled floors. All are cool, spacious and open-plan, comprising double-bedded sleeping area, living room with full-sized sofa-bed, fitted kitchen with 2-ring mini-oven and fridge, room-safe and a bath with shower above. All have AC and are tastefully furnished. To the front each cottage has an open sea-facing sun terrace from which to admire the views.

The owner, Dimitris, runs the first of the three fine restaurants here, which specialises in fresh local seafood. A local mini-market opens in season and Armenistis is 3 kms distant, via the small road which runs above the sea. Please be aware that Nas beach is (unofficially) naturist to one side.

Muses offer super individual accommodation in one of the most beautiful settings you could find.

The Cottages: Self Catering
Cottages for 2/3
Air Conditioning



Nas Beach



Armenistis



Ikarian Tours & Activities

One of Greece's most unusual and beautiful islands, Ikaria has much to offer visitors. Here are some of the options that were available last year through our local agent on the island, Dolihi Tours.

Small group excursions by mini-van or small bus

These are not the usual touristy coach trips - they will give you a genuine insight into the island's culture and lifestyle, visiting villages and remote areas. Some walking is involved.

- Full day Island Tour
- Central Ikaria - from Ancient to Ottoman times
- Traditional Ikaria

- Wine Tour and Christos Raches by night
- Fourni, the Pirate Island (by bus and boat)
- Traditional Festivals (Panayiri) - Ikaria is famed throughout Greece for its festivals, of which there are many in the summer months.

Mindfulness & Yoga

Ikaria is the perfect island for this due to its closeness to nature and the island's magical atmosphere and unique culture. Not for nothing is Ikaria one of only five 'Blue Zones' on the planet.

Guided Walks

In Spring/early Summer and Autumn

Creative Workshops

2 hour workshops held 6pm to 8pm, aimed at beginners and held in Artemis Studio weekly from June to September. Techniques you can try include:

- Painting on paper, ceramic or cloth
- Jewellery
- Engraving
- Mosaic
- Ceramics

A website is under construction but in the meantime please see Dolihi Tours Facebook page for further information or to contact them if you have any questions. Bookings to be made directly with Dolihi and do not form part of your package. Minimum and maximum numbers apply.



IKARIA		Guide prices in £'s per person									
ACCOMMODATION	PERSONS BASIS	Low Season (May - early Jul & mid Sep - Oct)				High Season (mid Jul - early Sep)					
		From		To		From		To			
		1 Wk	2 Wks	1 Wk	2 Wks	1 Wk	2 Wks	1 Wk	2 Wk		
Erofilii	Side Sea View	2	BB	929	1132	1026	1371	1106	1461	1153	1509
	Sea View	2	BB	937	1160	1066	1550	1244	1744	1297	1796
Muses	Cottage	2	SC	879	1011	972	1170	972	1284	1124	1436
		3	SC	850	953	935	1095	935	1187	1062	1314
Valeta	Studio	2	SC	839	956	920	1066	920	1152	1044	1276
		3	SC	823	916	887	1000	887	1058	982	1153

Prices shown are indicative only and variable due to offers, changing flight prices and seasonal supplements - please call or check online for a confirmed costing (note: not all holidays can be checked online). Prices based on Gatwick flights and include transfers or car hire (see text); accommodation as described; and all airport/fuel charges & taxes known at the time of printing - for our surcharge policy see booking conditions at the back of this brochure. To add: regional flight supplements, room and board supplements (see text) - single room prices on request. Not all our accommodation is suitable for guests with reduced mobility. Please contact us to answer any questions you may have regarding our properties and to advise their suitability for people with health conditions or impairments.

Not included: Overnight Stay Tax of €0.50 to €4 per room, apartment or villa per night payable locally - the amount varies according to the category of the accommodation (i.e. most self catering and 1-2 star hotels = €0.50, 5 star hotels = €4).