



There are plenty of reasons why Santorini is the poster child of the Greek islands: the black and red beaches, flaming sunsets, and white-on-white hotels teetering on multi-hued cliffs. But this madly popular island still harbours a few secrets.

Why it's special



It's impossible not to be swept away by Santorini's fierce beauty. A black smudge of volcanic rock smoulders in the caldera, the submerged crater created by an eruption thousands of years ago. It covered ancient Akrotiri, the Pompeii of the Aegean, under a cloak of ash that preserved this Minoan settlement for eternity. And it created the perfect terroir for the cool white Assyrtiko and sweet Vinsanto wines produced here since antiquity and now prized by connoisseurs worldwide.

Don't miss the award-winning wines (and swoony sunsets) at Sigalas winery and Vassaltis Vineyards on the island's undeveloped north-east coast, paired with delicate, perfectly balanced dishes. The revival of Santorini's wines is introducing a more sustainable kind of development.

Away from the mesmerising views – and crush of Instagrammers – along the cliff top caldera, are inland villages such as Emborio, Finikia, Exo Gonia, and Pyrgos, where the traditional Cycladic way of life stubbornly goes on.



Credit: Getty

You'll never forget



The mind-blowing views across Santorini from Thirassia, a breakaway splinter of land that remains marooned in another era. Only a few minutes by boat from Ammoudi harbour, just below Oia, this tiny island with just 250 residents has miraculously escaped the masses.

Expert tips



1.

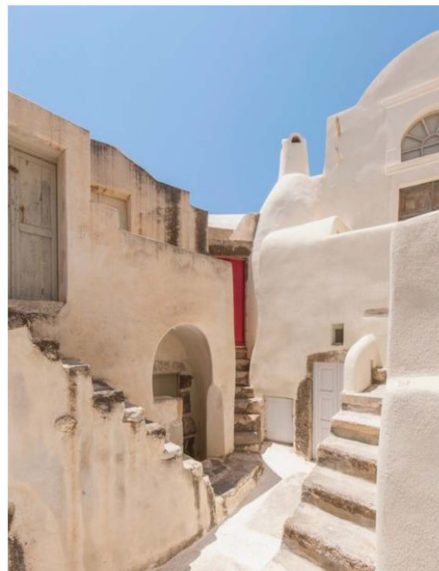
Although it's much quicker to reach Santorini by plane than by ferry, a boat trip across the caldera is a must: it's like drifting into a different planet. Skip the fleet of flashy catamarans offering sunset cruises and get in touch with Anthi from [Giorgaros Fishing Tours](#). Her family owns a beautiful wooden caique for licenced fishing trips.

2.

The best way to explore the places most cruise shippers and honeymooners never see is on foot. The utterly charming Nikos Boutsinis from [Santorini Walking Tours](#) will guide you to hidden villages, farms, and chapels, with lively commentary along the way.

3.

While everyone else is squeezed onto Oia's clifftop tip, desperately trying to snap the sunset, nip through the back alleys to [Oia Vineart](#). Painted in shades of ochre and terracotta, this mellow wine bar is the prettiest place to try wines from all 19 of Santorini's wineries, paired with cheeses and cured meats from all over the Cyclades.



How to do it



British Airways ([britishairways.com](#)), Easyjet ([easyjet.com](#)), Norwegian ([norwegian.com](#)), and TUI ([tuigroup.com](#)) operate direct flights (around four hours) to Santorini from various UK airports, usually from April / May to September /October. From Athens, Aegean ([aegeanair.com](#)) offers several flights a day throughout the year; the flight time is 45 minutes. Blue Star and Golden Star ferries operate a year-round service (7.5-8 hours) from Piraeus port in Athens. Hellenic Seaways and SeaJets run high-speed boat services (5-5.5 hours) from early spring to late autumn.

Check [Ferry Hopper](#) for timetables and prices. For maximum privacy and a very personal approach to hospitality, check into [Erosantorini](#), [Perivolos](#), or [The Vasilikos](#). But be prepared to pay a premium – those views don't come cheap.

