

Ancient treasures

History and culture abound in the city of Rhodes and Lindos town, discovers **Yolanda Zappaterra**

Seventeen years ago, a very, very wet and depressingly dull week spent on a Greek island swore me off the country's other 226 inhabited islands.

But softened by time and other travellers' fulsome praise for their fresh food, friendliness, excellent accommodation, amazing archaeological attractions and general affordability, I recently headed to Rhodes for a few days, weather-proofing the trip with a Kindle loaded with novels and a Chromebook crammed with TV shows. Spoiler: they weren't necessary.

QUINTESSENTIAL GREECE

Rhodes, just 11 miles off the coast of Turkey in the southern Aegean Sea, is a quintessential Greek island – its dramatic interior is covered in pine trees and cypresses and its 137 miles of coastline is a mix of rocky limestone coves and pretty beaches.

Across it all, cute white towns and villages are filled with golden acacia, regal red hibiscus and swathes of vibrant bougainvillea – the last of these lining the roads along the short route from the airport to the east coast and my hotel, the Elissa Lifestyle Resort. Having opened last year as an adult-oriented resort sharing the coastline and 16 pools with its

family-friendly sister space Helea, it's a very fine spot in which to enjoy some R&R after a day of seeing the sights – and what sights they are.

Top of my list was the little city of Rhodes. Sharing the same name as the island, the city is a mesmerising mix of classical and Roman remains, medieval Byzantine wonders built by the Knights of St John, elegant wooden balconies leaning out over narrow streets that hark back to its Ottoman period, and Brutalist buildings erected by the island's early-20th century Italian rulers. They're all linked by bustling cobbled streets opening out on to squares dotted with come-hither bars shaded by vines and climbing roses. Echoes of such a multi-faceted history abound, be it a doughty defence tower, elegant Doric column or 14th-century fountain.

HISTORICAL ATTRACTIONS

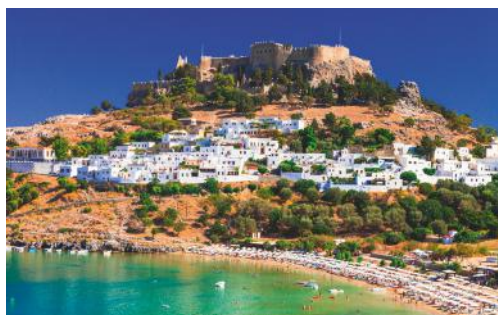
And there are many depictions of Helios, the sun god most famously represented as the city's 33m-high Colossus of Rhodes, built on the harbour in 282 BC. One of the original Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, the statue is sadly long gone, but there are still plenty of attractions in and around the city. There's the Acropolis of Rhodes on its outskirts and, at its heart, ➤

Palace of the Grand Master of the Knights of Rhodes

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DESTINATIONS

GREECE & CYPRUS | RHODES



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: The Acropolis of Lindos; St Paul's Bay, Lindos; Mandraki Harbour

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the gothic Palace of the Grand Master of the Knights of Rhodes, set in the Citadel of Rhodes, the medieval walled town that's a deserved Unesco World Heritage Site. A tour of this Italian-renovated building reveals a fascinating past – including its role as a holiday home for Italian king Victor Emmanuel III and later for Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini, whose name can still be seen on a plaque near the entrance.

Better still is the nearby Museum of Archaeology, located in what was the hospital of the Knights of St John. It's worth a visit for the architecture alone, but with its absorbing collection of delicate and beautiful statues, pottery and jewellery dating back more than 6,000 years, the museum becomes one of my island highlights.

LOVELY LINDOS

Less than 50 miles south, past Faliraki, is the small, beautiful town of Lindos. All whitewashed houses and

“The hilltop's fortress walls and columns draw you up and up to the stunning Acropolis of Lindos

churches across a hill overlooking the sparkling ocean, it's a delight to explore. As is the town's Church of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary, recognisable by its imposing bell tower and a must-visit for its brightly coloured frescoes and traditional Lindian pebble mosaic floor.

Eventually, however, the hilltop's fortress walls and columns draw you up and up to the stunning Acropolis of Lindos, where the 4th-century Temple of Athena Lindia is just one of a cluster of ancient marvels. From here, amid

the steps and temples where people worshipped thousands of years ago, the views out over the sea and coastline, taking in lovely Lindos Beach, St Paul's Bay and Agathi, are spectacular. And the wider area has plenty of other things to enjoy too, such as the ruins of the nearby medieval Castle of Feraklos.

Heading back to the hotel, I learn from my driver that the windswept east and south coasts have their own treasures, but with my time on the island over, they will have to wait for my next visit. Which, after such a wonderful time here, will be a lot sooner than 17 years. **TW**

BOOK IT

Jet2holidays offers seven nights' half-board in a Superior Deluxe room for £2,416 per couple, including flights from Stansted departing on September 18, coach transfers, 10kg hand luggage and 22kg baggage per person. jet2holidays.com



ELISSA LIFESTYLE RESORT

Located on the island's Kallithea Beach, the five-star Elissa Lifestyle Resort

opened last year. The adult-focused east coast property encompasses neighbouring Helea Family Beach Resort and shares some facilities with it, including the spa and watersports centre. Elissa's 332 bright, contemporary rooms, suites and waterfront bungalows with private pools offer sea or pool views and balconies or terraces – on which, after a peaceful night's sleep, I start each day with a Nespresso coffee. The 15 freshwater pools give the resort a tranquil feel. There are five restaurants: Fanes, a Mediterranean spot; Fourni, for meat and seafood grill; Kavos, for seafood; Asian venue Masari; and the Street Food Hub, offering global dishes. There are other bars and eateries across both resorts. At the Ella Wellness & Spa, I indulge in a massage, do a yoga class and a gym session, and use the indoor pool and steam room. Other facilities include tennis and padel courts, table tennis, and motorised and non-motorised watersports.

Lifestyle Suite

