

48 HOURS SANTORINI

Why wait for the honeymoon? This Greek island is an ideal spot for a short break, writes Emma Winton

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Dazzling sunsets and panoramas, delicious wines, an interesting history and fantastic walks along the caldera make Santorini a fantastic place to visit, and it's easy to see why tourism numbers keep growing and growing.

Its trademark landscape – the towering cliffs along the east side – came to be 3,600 years ago, during the Minoan era, when a volcanic eruption caused part of the island to sink into the sea, creating the half-moon shape of the island we know today.

At smaller than 30 square miles, it's easy to travel around the whole island in one weekend. Here we pick the highlights to watch out for along the way.

DAY ONE

09.00: Start off with a wine breakfast – it's a holiday, after all – at new 10-room boutique Carpe Diem, which offers two

complimentary glasses of Santorini wine for those wanting to start early. The spread ranges from traditional Greek salad to egg and sausages, so there's plenty for those who prefer to indulge in food instead.

10.00: Work off breakfast with a two-mile walk through impressive mountain landscapes and vast vineyards to the Prophet Elias Monastery. Built 565 metres above sea level on the highest peak of Santorini, the monastery offers panoramic views of the island. It dates back to 1711, and ran as a school for four decades until it was seriously damaged by an earthquake in 1956. Nowadays, the monastery isn't open to visitors, but there is an impressive bell tower and chapel adorned with religious icons that you can visit. The few monks that live here make wine and food that you can sample or purchase.

12.30: Head back to the main square in Pyrgos village and stop for lunch at Selene Meze. It's split into two sections: a formal restaurant, and the Meze & Wine taverna, which is perfect for lunch and serves traditional Greek dishes and Santorini wines. Popular choices include the sautéed squid and seafood youvetsi (stew). selene.gr

14.00: Take a relaxed stroll up to Pyrgos Kallistis, a 10-minute walk from Selene. Built on a hill, it offers panoramic views of Santorini. Wander around the narrow, winding streets and passages to the top, where the ruins of medieval fortress Kastelli castle remain. Just below the castle's main entrance gate is the blue-domed church of Agia Theodoris, which in the past was considered the protector of the walls. Small art galleries

and shops with handmade creations are dotted throughout the village, and available at much cheaper prices than in the tourist hotspots.

15.00: Cool off in nearby Franco's cafe. A quaint venue popular with the locals, it's the perfect place to rest your legs, sip a traditional Greek frappe on the rooftop terrace and enjoy the classical music playing in the background.

16.30: Book a table at Santo Wines. Opened in 1992, it's one of the more modern wineries in Santorini and boasts stunning views of the caldera. The island is famous for crisp, dry whites made from the assyrtiko grape, with vines grown low to the ground here to protect from strong winds. A tour of the winery includes a visit to the cellars and tasting session. santowines.gr

19.00: For dinner, head to the Aroma Avlis Food & Wine restaurant and nab a table in the atmospheric courtyard. Try the sesame-seed crusted feta cheese and the delicious seafood kritharoto, a risotto-like seafood and orzo dish. artemiskaramolegos-winery.com

DAY TWO

09.00: Join the locals at the family-owned Kantouni cafe in Pyrgos's main square. It is one of the last traditional kafenia (coffee houses) on the island. The sfougato (egg and potato omelette) is a good choice with a Greek coffee and grape preserves on the side.

10.00: Take a 15-minute drive to Perivolos black beach at the southern end of the island. It's less than two miles from another popular seaside town, Perissa, so you can take a pleasant stroll

along the whole coastal stretch. Water sports for the more adventurous include windsurfing, scuba diving and jetskiing, while music-filled bars such as JoJo Beach Bar draw a younger crowd.

12.00: While there, lunch at Seaside Restaurant, where the catch of the day comes with a side of seafront views. Head chef Tassos creates traditional recipes with a modern twist, and recommendations include the marinated tuna with guacamole. seaside-restaurant.gr

14.00: Carry on to the tranquil village of Akrotiri in the southwest of the island to see the Akrotiri Lighthouse. Built in 1892, it is one of the oldest in Greece. There is no public access inside, but it's an excellent sunset-viewing spot, so come back here for a peaceful and romantic evening. →

TOP TIP
Book VIP sightseeing with a private tour in an SUV, with local guides from Experience of Santorini experienceof.santorini.com



➔ **15.00:** Just down the road is Faros Market. It's a must-stop for anyone who loves souvenirs and delicious homegrown food. Owner Maria is very enthusiastic about visitors trying nearly everything in the store, including the delicious goats' cheese, capers, sundried tomatoes, fava beans and honey. Then it's on to the drinks of home-brewed raki and white wine to finish. Maria also has her own winery, and can give an informative tour of her beautiful cellar where the wine is made. farosproducts.gr

16.30: Drive on to Oia, stopping en route at Ekklesia Profitis in Ilias, a beautiful blue-domed church that's

easily recognisable from postcards. It boasts fantastic views and is much quieter than other tourist hotspots on the island.

17.00: Arrive at the scenic village of Oia, in the northwest of the island. It's the most-Instagrammed town in Santorini, famous for its white-washed, blue-domed churches and traditional Cycladic houses carved into the rockface on top of the cliff. Oia's narrow streets are wonderful to amble along, and it's considered one of the best places to see the sunset – though be aware that it can get crowded. The Panagia Platsani church is one of the key sights here.

20.00: Head back to Carpe Diem for dinner at the 270° restaurant. With poolside dining, it's a quiet spot where you can enjoy delicious Mediterranean and Greek cuisine. Start with the Santorini salad, which includes the famous tomatoes that grow exclusively here. They look like cherry tomatoes but are packed full of intense flavour, stimulated by the island's meagre rainfall, blustery weather and high daytime temperatures. The melt-in-the-mouth beef fillet is divine, while for those with room for dessert the creme brûlée has to be tried. Finish with a cocktail by the pool, drinking in the dramatic sunsets for which Santorini is so famous. **TW**



12.30: Pyrgos



14.00: Pyrgos Kallistis



16.30: Santo Wines



15.00: Faros Market



19.00: Aroma Avlis Food & Wine



16.30: Ekklesia Profitis

PICTURES: ANTONIS ELEFThERAKIS; GEORGE FAKAROS/FAKAROS.COM

→ **Tried & Tested**

CARPE DIEM EXCLUSIVE BOUTIQUE RESORT, SANTORINI

Located in the village of Pyrgos, this is an adult-only hotel, perfect for couples looking for total relaxation. Far from the tourist hotspots of the rest of the island, it's so peaceful you can feel like you're the only person staying here.

Its 10 suites each have different decor, but all feature a large private terrace with plunge pool and panoramic views of the island. The minimalist interiors are bright and spacious; in fact, the lower suites are the largest of any hotel on the island, at 120 square metres. All offer privacy, but for clients who want total seclusion, recommend the suites on the upper level.

A mobile phone in all rooms is a great perk, providing guests with unlimited data usage anywhere on the island, plus free calls to anywhere in the world.

The poolside 270° restaurant is open for all meals and has a wide selection of Greek and Mediterranean meals. The Althea spa is geared towards couples, and includes a double yin-yang Jacuzzi, a sauna and steam room, and an extensive menu of treatments and massages.



Tested by Emma Winton



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