



THE REAL DEAL

A LONG-TIME MYKONOS INSIDER UNPACKS HOW THE ISLAND'S ENDURING ALLURE



BELIES ITS PARTY REPUTATION. WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY YIORGOS KORDAKIS



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HIRTY YEARS AGO I STARTED going to Mykonos, as part of a group of Athenian teenagers who would spend long, slow summers there. We'd be on the beach until sunset, then have a nap before moving on to Astra, a classic nightclub in an Aegean cottage designed by renowned Greek jeweller Minas. There we would dance until the sun came up. The island was different then – no beach clubs, no Champagne. There were a few party spots in the Chora, the main town, but it was a typical, go-slow Cycladic island, all whitewash-and-blue cottages, spicy kopanisti cheese and louza spiced pork eaten in little tavernas. It was a place for swimming on quiet beaches, where no one cared if you took all your clothes off. For us kids from Athens, Mykonos meant freedom and party time, but not the hedonism of today.

Towards the end of the 1990s I noticed the island changing. The economy was booming and Greeks started buying up villas and land. But it wasn't until the financial crash that things really shifted. A lot of that first wave of owners ended up in debt and had to sell. After that international buyers arrived on the scene, bringing with them a different crowd who wanted the kind of services they were used to in St Tropez, Ibiza or St Barth's, with concierges, drivers and chefs – all things that had never been part of the island.

I've seen it all over the years, but I've noticed also that this place has never lost its old, Cycladic soul. Underneath it all, this is still the Mykonos I first experienced as a teenager. A few years ago I picked up a camera and started to document both sides of the island that I love: the traditional villas and family tavernas, as well as its more stylish,

jet-set side. I wanted to celebrate the fact that here you can have the best of both worlds – that sense of rustic timelessness, but also parties, energy and change. My book is a love letter to the place I grew up visiting; those long hot summers when anything seemed possible. It's a reminder that the real Mykonos is still there, and it always has been – it's just that you need to look a bit harder to find it these days. *'Mykonos' by Yiorgos Kordakis is out now (ode-studio.com)*



This page, clockwise from top: a rustic side of the island; Agia Sofia church; Mykonos books on a makeshift shelf. Opposite, terrace at Tigani House. Previous pages, from left: relaxing at a villa in Maou; view from Tigani House.



THE LOWDOWN ON MYKONOS

WHERE TO STAY

I always recommend people stay in villas to really feel the soul of the island. I love **Papyrella**, a beautiful six-bedroom place with views across the harbour from its aquamarine pool and balconies bedecked with hammocks. While it's highly sophisticated and coolly contemporary, it also has a real respect for tradition with its terrazzo floors, rustic carved doors and simple colour scheme of textured white walls and soft blues. **Tigani House**, meanwhile, is a combination of traditional and modern, with amazing views out to the Aegean Sea. The five-bedroomed **Big Blue Beach Villa** is sharper in some ways, with an infinity pool on its own beach, but it's also a cool mix of rustic stone and clean white interiors, surrounded by terraced gardens of olive trees and scented clusters of rosemary and lavender.

Another favourite is the **Myrsini Beach House**, set in a secluded bay with a very special, freewheeling Seventies vibe. This unique villa is comprised of a series of cube-like constructions that, from a distance, resemble a small village by the beach. papyrella.com, [@house_in_tigani](https://www.instagram.com/house_in_tigani), myprivatevillas.com, [@mykonos_beachouse](https://www.instagram.com/mykonos_beachouse)

WHERE TO EAT

The **Fokos** taverna is one of my favourite local restaurants – a beautiful whitewashed villa with an indoor-outdoor terrace overlooking the chilled and beautiful Fokos beach – which serves great grilled fish and meat. The unique **Kiki's Tavern** is just up the hill among the trees, with views of Agios Sostis, another lovely beach. There's usually a queue but the simple grilled food – fresh fish, octopus, stuffed chicken and huge pork chops – is worth it. Other favourites are **Nikolas Taverna** on Agia Anna beach, where the same family has served some of the island's best seafood since 1967; and the family-owned **Rizes**, on a typically Mykonian chorio (farmhouse) in the undeveloped Maou area, with a riding stable and honest, earthy food straight from the land. nikolas-tavern.com, rizesmykonos.com

WHERE TO SHOP

A fixture of the island's chi-chi Little Venice neighbourhood since the late 1970s, the **Parthenis** range of gender-fluid fashion captures the minimalist Cycladic aesthetic. Its in-store café opened last summer, a low-key spot to catch the sunset with a pink G&T. Simplicity and purity are also

From top: cactus garden at a private residence; Agios Panteleimonas monastery. *Opposite, clockwise from top left:* Tigani House; signage; sun-baked horns; traditional pigeon loft; tables at Alemàgou; mezze at Scorpios





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the hallmarks of **Minas**, a jewellery store in a 17th-century townhouse. Everything from the sinuous walnut stools to the solid-silver cuffs and chokers were created by the late Minas, who also designed the Astra nightclub nearby. Every winter, Loukas Doukas travels to Bali and Borneo to stock up on batik sarongs and baskets for **El Pareo**, his hole-in-the-wall shop that sums up the fading bohemian spirit of Mykonos. Irene Syriano grew up between Mykonos and the neighbouring island of Delos, an ancient settlement where many houses still have incredible mosaic floors. At **Asteria**, her workshop behind the port, you can watch her patiently creating reproductions and new mosaics – or join one of her popular workshops. partheniscafe.com, minas-designs.com, @doukasloukas, art-mosaic.gr

WHERE TO DRINK

Long, boozy lunches often turn into starlit beach parties at **Alemàgou**, an effortlessly sexy bar that occupies a sandy cove at the end of blustery Ftelia Beach. The sunset rituals at **Scorpios** tap into the island's metaphysical magic, with electro and acoustic sets and barefoot dancing around a firepit. In Mykonos Town, **Caprice** holds its own as the very best spot for sunset beside the windmills, in spite of the jostling crowds. (If you dress up, beware the front-row seats on the waterfront strip – when the wind is up, you'll get splashed.) Casual, colourful **Appaloosa** is where old-time Mykonos aficionados always return to feel at home. alemagou.gr, scorpiosmykonos.com, capriceofmykonos.com, appaloosa-mykonos.com

WHAT TO DO

Hidden in a botanical garden in the heart of Mykonos Town, **Cine Manto** is the most delightful open-air cinema. Cats wander among the palm trees, there's gravel underfoot, a cabana serves cold beer and there's even a guy grilling souvlaki. You can't go inside the **Armenistis Lighthouse**, but its remote cliffside setting is spectacular at sunset. **Baytrip** has a fleet of three renovated kaikia – traditional boats that can be hired for private tours of ancient Delos and its sister island Rinia, which is populated by shepherds and fringed by beaches – by far the most authentic and sustainable way to reach both magical destinations. cinemanto.gr, baytrip.gr

Additional listings by Rachel Howard

From top: traditional house in Maou; Tigani House. Opposite, clockwise from top left: bedroom at Mykonos Beach House; lunch at Kiki's; heading to Ftelia Beach; Caprice Bar; riding at Rizes Farm

