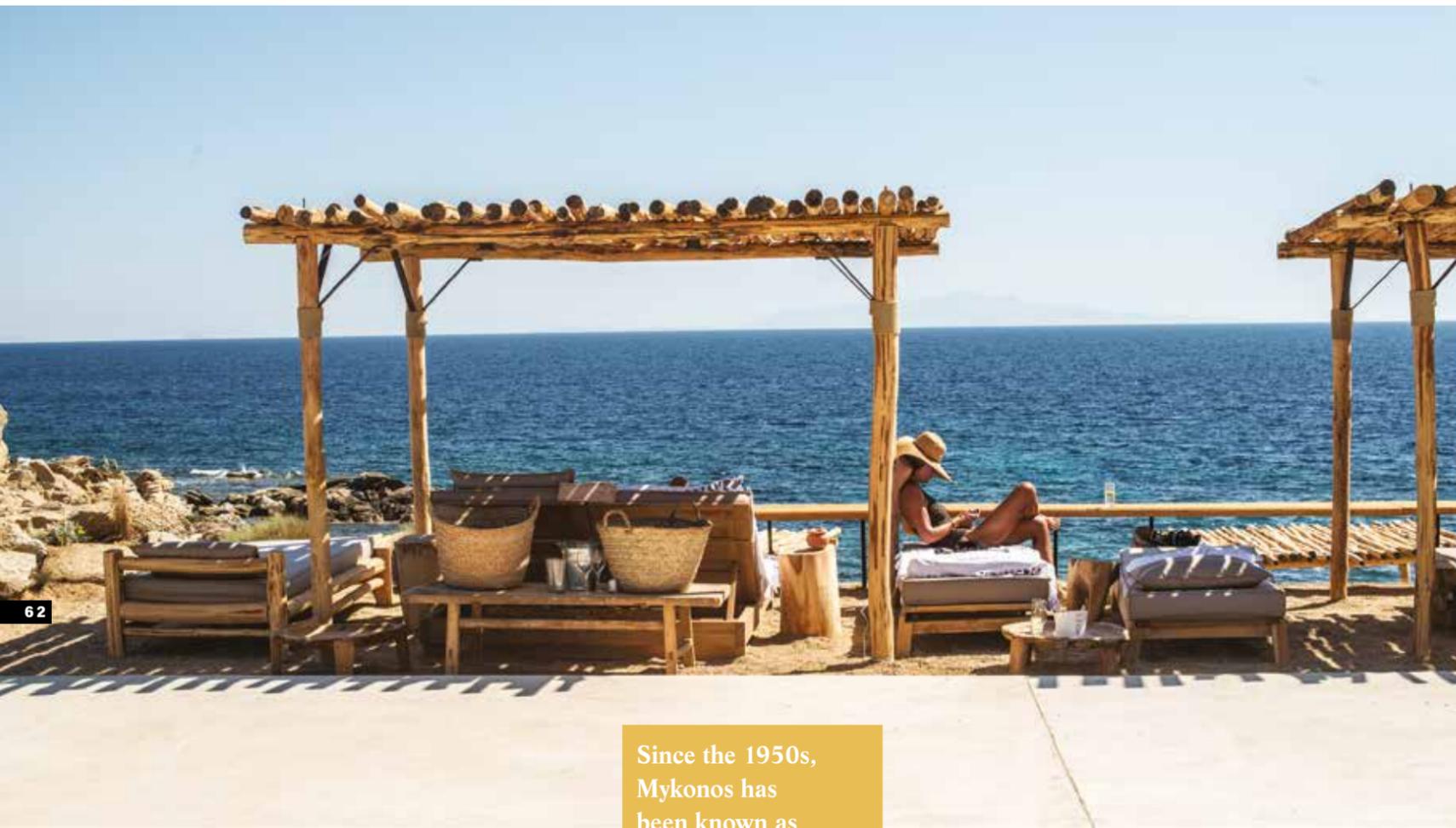


LIFE CYCLADES

Mykonos has an ancient charm, and new beach clubs, bars and restaurants ensure its appeal continues today

WORDS JENNY SOUTHAN





Since the 1950s, Mykonos has been known as a glamorous, hedonistic escape

ABOVE: Scorpios beach club by Paraga bay is prime territory for relaxing in the sun

Scorpios beach club is like a sun-kissed, al fresco Soho House. Positioned on a Mars-like rocky outcrop next to the bay of Paraga, there are day beds scattered over the sand and under the striped shade of timber awnings. Transcendental chill-out music pumps a steady beat as barefoot staff – more akin to sun-bronzed Greek gods and goddesses, clad in frayed organic cotton robes and mirrored sunglasses – run around delivering iced water.

Life's a beach

Launched in 2015, Scorpios is one of the most popular beach clubs in Mykonos; and while you may

or may not want to party, dining at its rough-hewn, open-air restaurant should be experienced. Under sackcloth awnings, people recline at driftwood tables and order up platters of scorpion fish with Kalamata olives and chilli, lobster linguine and wood-fired tiger prawns with garlic oil. As the sun begins to set, speed boats begin arriving, offloading the "Rich Kids of Instagram", who stroll along the jetty and up to the club. Here they order giant bottles of Belvedere vodka to be delivered to their cabanas. By this point, the ethno-electric beats are getting louder and the outfits more dazzling.

First impressions

Since the 1950s, the Greek Cycladic island of Mykonos has been known as a glamorous, hedonistic escape in a similar vein to Ibiza. But at just 100 sq km (versus Ibiza's 570 sq km) and with just two million annual tourists (versus more than seven million for Ibiza in 2016), there is a more boutique feel. And there isn't the same 24-hour clubbing vibe. "If you start partying in the afternoon you are in bed by midnight and then have the next day ahead of you," says Stelios Koumantakis, general manager of the Mykonos Blu hotel. "We want people to come and feel completely relaxed."

Mykonos Town – or simply "Chora" (meaning "town"), as

INFORMATION

- scorpiosmykonos.com
- baosmykonos.com
- capriceofmykonos.com
- belvederehotel.com
- nammos.gr
- syachting.com
- bill-coo-hotel.com
- jackieomykonos.com
- visitgreece.gr

it's known locally – is where you'll find the main concentration of bars and restaurants, although there are other gems dotted around such as Kiki's Tavern on the northern coast. Just a ten-minute drive from the airport, one of the first photo stops for visitors are the windmills of Kato Mili, on a hill overlooking the Chora. Continue down to the waterfront and you come to Little Venice, where you can sit with a pine-scented fresh basil and Mastika mojito and watch the water lap at the base of the sea wall just a few feet away. (Favourite bars include Caprice and Bao's.)

After watching the sunset deepen to a dark bruise on the horizon, the sea as smooth as opal yet broken up in places by islands of jet black, the



WHERE TO STAY

MYCONIAN KYMA

This hotel is perched high on a hill overlooking the Aegean Sea and Mykonos town, and is about 15 minutes' walk from the centre. Myconian Kyma has 52 fresh, minimalist rooms and 29 suites from 26 sqm to 40 sqm, all with terraces or balconies and some with plunge pools. As with many of the hotels on the island, the Cycladic architecture is that familiar mix of whitewashed walls with splashes of ultramarine, but here you'll also find iridescent pots and Scandi furniture. There's a spa and two outdoor pools next to the restaurant and bar. Rooms from €300 in May. designhotels.com



MYKONOS BLU

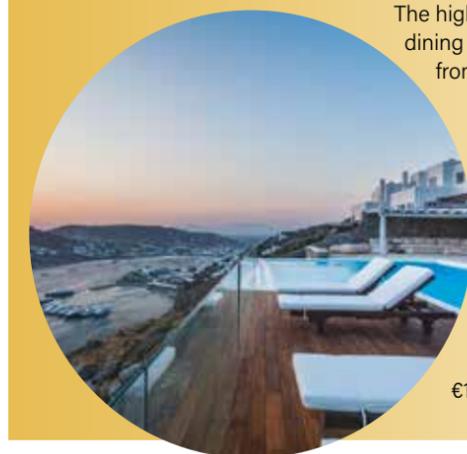
Part of Grecotel, this stunning hotel is well positioned above Psarou beach, about ten minutes from Mykonos town. Painted brilliant white both inside and out, it has dazzling turquoise lagoon pools and impressive views of the bay. There are two restaurants which serve contemporary Greek cuisine. The food available to people on loungers at the beach is also delicious. There is a wide array of rooms and suites across Island Bungalow,



Island Suite and Blu Villa categories. If you feel like splashing out, the 125 sqm two-floor Deep Blu Villa (from €1,832 a night) is a staggering place to stay. Rooms from €220 in May. wmykonosblu.com

MYCONIAN VILLA COLLECTION

Midway along the southern coast of Mykonos is a cluster of resort hotels high above Elia beach (you need to take a minibus down and up). There are five styles of property. The Myconian Utopia and the Myconian Villas are a mix of two- to six-bedroom luxury villas, plus there are guest rooms from 30 sqm to 40 sqm, all with sea views. The highlight is the infinity pool, while attractive fine-dining restaurant has a Mediterranean menu. Rooms from €265 in May. myconianvillas.gr **Blue Villas**



BLUE VILLAS

Blue Villas has about 120 properties scattered all over the island, ranging from the affordable to the outrageously decadent, making them a great option for groups and families. A concierge team is available day and night to help with transfers, yacht charters, massage bookings and meals, as well as organising staff such as butlers and nannies. Villas from €350-€1,200 per day. bluevillascollection.com



BEFORE YOU GO...

Restaurants and hotels open seasonally, so Mykonos is best visited in June or September as August gets unbearably crowded. Be warned that when leaving the island, the airport check-in hall is tiny – prepare for queues outside. It's also important to think carefully about the location of your hotel, as there aren't many taxis on the island – you will either need to walk, take a bus, or hire a vehicle (car, motorbike or quad bike). A new app, Aegean Taxi, is similar to Uber and worth downloading.

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With the sea to yourself, you can go snorkelling before drinking sparkling wine on the deck

evening is an idyllic time to wander pretty winding streets lined with souvenir shops and designer boutiques. Houses are painted white and blue, with vibrant pink and purple bougainvillea tumbling over garden walls. Packed Greek tavernas, with patrons drinking wine at tables outside, are plentiful. But for something a little more jetset, Matsuhisa restaurant from chef Nobuyuki “Nobu” Matsuhisa at the Belvedere hotel is a romantic choice. Tables are placed in an oasis around a swimming pool illuminated by overhead lanterns,

while the delicious Japanese-Peruvian dishes are presented like miniature works of art.

All at sea

Once it's time to really unwind, a boat trip is unbeatable and SYachting has five vessels available for charter. If you're lucky, you will have Captain Zoe at the helm – one of the few female captains in the whole of Greece. With the sea to yourself, you can dive off into the water to go snorkelling before enjoying fresh canapés and drinking sparkling wine on the deck.

ABOVE: Iridescent seas and whitewashed walls dripping with bougainvillea in Mykonos Town

Upon returning to the shore, you'll be back just in time for another sunset party – Jackie O's beach club does drag shows, while Nammos on Psarou beach regularly sees revellers dancing in the surf. Both have outstanding garden restaurants, too – the latter known for its seafood priced by the kilo, Kobe beef burgers, and methuselaha of Château Haut-Brion Blanc for €26,000 a pop.

If it's peace you're after, head to the serene Bill & Co Suites and Lounge hotel for a massage, followed by a gin and tonic mixed at a trolley beside the infinity pool. At night, its gourmet restaurant offers dazzling views of the stars over the Aegean. Come to think of it – almost every location is Mykonos is picture-perfect. **BT**