

Jet Set


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Must-See in Greece

02/25/2013 by Jason Oliver Nixon



Nancy Mantzikos.

Greece has been having plenty of troubles lately, but don't overlook this charmed country for your next vacation. We turned to Nancy Mantzikos of super-chic Greece-focused travel company **Delfinia Group** for her top 10 must-visits when in **Athens** and the islands.

1. My Favorite Athens. In a city full of museums, one of my favorites is the **Ilias Lalaounis Jewelry Museum** where the iconic collections of this world-renowned jeweler are on display. Head to the city's premier sweets shop, **Aristokratikon**, for amazing handmade Greek chocolates and nuggets of Greek pistachios and honey. From there, it is a short walk to the upscale Kolonaki neighborhood where you can enjoy Athens' café culture and shop for gold jewelry masterpieces at **Lalaounis** and **Zolotas**.

2. When in Athens, I always try to eat at **Vassilenas**: Don't miss the to-die-for signature taramosalata, or whipped fish roe spread, and sea bass with celeriac puree. Another must-visit is **Alatsi** where master chef Dimitris Skarmoutsos turns out flavorful Cretan dishes (the menu changes seasonally but, if available, try the oven roasted chickpeas, "siglino" or smoked

pork, and fried Cretan cheese with oat, black sesame seeds, honey and lavender). Both restaurants have a well-edited list of Greek wines.

3. Avoid traveling like a native. On Fridays and Sundays during the summer months, ferries and flights between Athens and the islands are quickly filled with Athenians on a weekend getaway. If possible, travel on Mondays (when many museums and archaeological sites in Greece are closed) or plan Monday as a beach day.

About Jason Oliver Nixon



Global Lifestyle Editor Jason Oliver Nixon is always on the prowl for the latest and greatest finds, whether it's ferreting out the grooviest new restaurant in Paris or unearthing a home design store in Dubai. "I am attracted by color and energy, passion and verve," says Nixon. "Who wants to

be beige and boring?" The former Editor in Chief of Gotham, Hamptons, and Los Angeles Confidential magazines, Nixon makes frequent appearances on television as a style authority. A resident of Brooklyn, New York, Nixon escapes to London whenever possible, where he can be found happily ensconced at Fortnum & Mason perusing new-fangled jams.

To contact Jason Oliver Nixon with your comments, questions and blog suggestions, email him at jasnixon@gmail.com. Or, post your comment on his blog!

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4. Discover Epirus for a hidden, unspoiled Greece. Located in northwestern Greece, Epirus's charms include the lovely city of Ioannina on Lake Pamvotida, the Zagoria (a group of traditional stone villages surrounding Vikos Gorge), culinary delights such as pitas (pies) filled with vegetables or meats and the pristine landscape of mountains, gorges and rivers. During the summer, try white water rafting, kayaking and hiking through the Vikos Gorge.

5. Looking for an island alternative to Mykonos and Santorini? Sifnos, favored by well heeled Athenians and Europeans, features quaint whitewashed villages (the town of Apollonia has an active restaurant and night life scene), monasteries, coves with sandy beaches, a castle and unique cuisine (try Sifnian chickpea stew and lamb mastelo, cooked in the traditional clay pottery for which Sifnos is famous). Stay at the posh **Elies Resort**, on the beach in picturesque Vathi.



Balos Lagoon on the northwest coast of Crete. Photo by Christos Drazos.

visitors will enjoy the sights and tastes of the grape and olive harvests: The smell of wood-burning ovens fills the air, locals distill raki or "tsikoudia" (a potent spirit made from crushed grape skins and stems) and olive oil is pressed. After indulging in the island's celebrated cuisine (famous since antiquity for its health benefits), hike the Imbros Gorge.

7. Milos Island for Greece's best "natural art." The stunning geological formations and jagged coastline of this volcanic island make an indelible impression. Must-sees include the lunar-like white rocks of Sarakiniko, Kleftiko (which once harbored pirates of the Aegean) and the colorful red cliffs of Paliochori beach. Milos is also home to some of the world's oldest and most extensive catacombs.

6. For a great fall getaway, head to the majestic island of Crete. October through early November is good a time to visit Greece's largest and southernmost island.

Temperatures are moderate and

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Photo of Delos by Christos Drazos.

cosmopolitan trading port and the holiest of sanctuaries in pre-Christian times (now a UNESCO World Heritage Site). After visiting the fascinating ruins, enjoy lunch and a swim in an isolated cove before returning with your captain and guide to Mykonos.

9. For some of the world's best windsurfing and kite boarding, head to Naxos island (with some of the best sandy beaches in Greece) and Paros island (home of the World Cup windsurfing and kite boarding championships). When on Paros, be sure to visit the beautiful **Church of 100 Doors** in Parikia, whose original structure was built in 328 A.D. by Emperor Constantine the Great (tradition has it that the 100th door will be found once Constantinople returns to Greek hands).

10. My favorite Greek city is Thessaloniki on the Bay of Salonica. The city is a fascinating mix of the old and new. Enjoy its hip, vibrant scene of waterfront cafes, restaurants, art galleries and boutiques, then relive its Byzantine, Ottoman and Jewish past on a private walking tour of the Old Town. If time permits, take a day trip to the **Royal Tombs of Vergina**, a UNESCO World Heritage and the burial site of Philip II, the father of Alexander the Great.

8. Ultimate Mykonos. Listen to a live DJ spin the hottest hits and dine on sushi and Mediterranean—and Asian-inspired—dishes with your feet in the sand at longstanding favorite **Kuzina** on Ornos Beach. Next, get your culture fix. Take a private guided tour of **Delos**, an islet just off the coast of Mykonos—a once-thriving