

MAKE IT MYKONOS



Escape to the paradise of the Greek islands for your yoga fix

The cradle of Western civilisation, Greece has been in the press for all the wrong reasons lately. But has the euro crisis taken away the Greek sunshine, the pretty villages and outdoor night-lights that dot the harbours of the country's islands, or the healthy, scrumptious Mediterranean cuisine? No, it has not.

Despite its current travails, Greece remains a great place to escape to the sun and kick-start your healthy new way of life. And it's a special place to seek out the perfect yoga spot too. Of all the islands - there are 6,000 of them if you include the tiniest uninhabited ones as well - there's no better place to explore than Mykonos, where you'll get the best of Greece and some pretty super yoga too.

A part of the Cyclades island group, Mykonos is big on tourism but tends to appeal to a more discerning clientele. Seattle indie band Fleet Foxes had a 2009 single, Mykonos, named after the island. That cool vibe is reflected at the super chilled and stylish retreats offered by Yoga Escapes (yoga-escapes.com), which has been running various dates through the summer and is lining up another in September.

It offers highly experienced instructors to blend luxury, yoga and culture on all of its holidays, all in fabulous 5 star locations around the world. The retreats this summer are taking place at the exclusive Kivotos Hotel Mykonos, one of the best boutique hotels in Greece, and now a luxurious European yoga retreat destination.

Yoga Escapes taps into the vibrant Mykonos lifestyle, ambience and cuisine and, most importantly, into the magical energy at work on the island that genuinely makes people feel alive. In fact, it was the magic of Mykonos that first seduced Yoga Escapes founder Laura Bianchini to pursue her retreat dream.



“Over the years, I’ve enjoyed practising out in the elements and regularly found myself on holiday, rolling out my mat under blue skies, overlooking crystal clear waters sparkling in the Mediterranean sunshine,” she says. “On one such trip three years ago in Mykonos, whilst taking in the panoramic views, the scents and magic of the island from the peace of my yoga mat, the idea of Yoga Escapes was born.”

She wanted to create something that combined her passion for travel and yoga, allowing people to discover new places without

compromising on the quality of yoga or the level of luxury. To that end, every Yoga Escapes destination is hand-picked for its sophistication and the luxury it offers, whilst staying true to the boutique intimacy that makes guests feel relaxed and at home. Bianchini is hoping to repeat that same formula in Italy later this year, another place dear to her heart - she was born and raised in Rome with an American mother and an Italian father. A qualified yoga instructor, she has been practising yoga herself for many years, immersing herself in various styles from Vinyasa, Iyengar and Bikram to restorative and yin yoga.

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Getting to Mykonos is simple enough. Like most of the country’s other notable islands it can be reached either by air or sea. Among the airlines making the trek from the UK is every budget traveller’s friend, easyJet. The extensive ferry system that plies the Greek seas also makes travel between the islands and the mainland very straightforward.

But it is yoga that is the heart and soul of any of the Yoga Escapes retreats, whether that’s Mykonos or Italy. In the Greek islands you’ll get a range of active and restorative classes to suit the time of day and mood though the philosophy revolves around allowing maximum flexibility in the schedule to allow guests to take time out, experience and integrate into the local culture as well as feel the benefits of a regular yoga practice.

“In other words, we send clients home feeling like they have had a real holiday, aligning body and mind and filled with renewed energy,” says Bianchini. “We don’t believe you need to check out of life itself on holiday, just switch off from the day-to-day stresses of your own whilst experiencing the world around you with fresh eyes.”