# **Greek island yachting**

Cruising the Greek Islands on a private chartered yacht is, for most of us, just a dream. But as Dermott Brereton discovered, gather a group of friends and it could be a reality. With long, hot summers and the stunning natural beauty of its waters, Greece has long been known as a yachting paradise.

ermott rented a 12.8m yacht out of Athens and sailed through the Aegean Sea. Noone in the group was a sailing expert, so they went the extra drachma and hired skipper Akis Papadopolous who guided them safely around the islands on Oceanis 411. It has four cabins and sleeps up to eight people.

The idea is that you tell the captain what your wishes are and he plans an itinerary around that.

### Poros

Part of the Saronic Islands, Poros ticked a few boxes and everyone delighted in the three-hour sail to reach it. On approach you will see the island's historic clock standing on the top of a hill among prickly pears and pine trees. It was built in 1927, and is the jewel of Poros.

It has rugged shores and sandy beaches and houses by the sea are large and neo-classical. There are many small taverns, cafes, bars and discos, so there's plenty to do ashore. There's an archaeological museum and library in the centre of town and an open-air cinema on the beach.

Half an hour's bike ride will take you to Palatia and the 6th-century Temple of Posidonas. Entry is free and the scenery is rewarding.

There are plenty of beaches to enjoy, including Kanali, Askeli, Monastiri,



Vagionia, Russian Dockyard Bay, Neorio, Love Little Port and Lemon Forest. Each offers something different – fishing, swimming, tavernas, cafes – but all share typical Mediterranean beauty.

#### Hydra

Hydra is said to be one of the pretti-

est Aegean islands. Brilliant white houses with red-tiled roofs and brightly coloured woodwork are sprinkled over two rugged hills, separated by paved streets and alleys.

Lying between Poros and Spetses, near the coast of the eastern foot of the Peloponnese, Hydra has many 19thcentury mansions built by wealthy ship owners and merchants. It was a popular artists destination in the 1960s and has kept its cosmopolitan character.

It's all highly protected and laws prohibit new construction that's not according to traditional and authentic colour and style. Motorised vehicles are forbidden and, where transport is needed, donkeys and mules are used.

Not known for sandy beaches, Hydra does offer great swimming off its rocky coast.

### Spetses

This small island is very popular and if you are heading to it on a weekend, get in early. Dermott reckons be there by midday on Friday! People flock to Spetses for its wonderful beaches, secluded bays and rich vegetation. Villages are beautiful and authentic and the capital is architecturally charming, full of two-storey neo-classical houses with wooden balconies and coloured walls, and narrow, stone-paved alleys.

Renting your own yacht is more fun than staying in a hotel, and you'll probably get to see more of the islands and linger longer at the ones you really love.



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