



# Hydra, an intimate holiday destination brimming with history

Hydra, one of the Saronic Islands in the Aegean Sea between the Saronic and Argolic Gulfs, is a beautiful island brimming with history and architecture, and the perfect destination for visitors seeking a quiet, more intimate destination for their holidays.

Separated from the Peloponnese by a narrow strip of water, the island was known in antiquity as Hydrea (derived from the Greek word for water), due to the island's numerous springs.

No cars, motorcycles or other motor vehicles are allowed to circulate on the island, by law, and thus the only means of public transportation are donkeys, bicycles and water taxis. But the inhab-

ited area is so compact that most people walk wherever they want to go.

Hydra has a number of lovely bays and natural harbors, as well as a strong maritime culture, making it a popular yachting destination. It is also home to the international Kamini Yacht Club based in the port of Kamini.

The island also has 300 churches and six monasteries, the two most noteworthy being the 19th century Profitis Ilias Monastery and the monastery of Aghia Efpraxia, both on a hill overlooking the main harbor.

Further, the old Monastery of the Dormition of the Virgin, sitting on the quayside in the town, is now the island's Cathedral and contains the tomb of Lazaros Kountouriotis, the island's richest sea captain, who gave his entire fortune to support the 1821 War of In-

dependence from Ottoman rule, to arm the Greek navy.

Hydra also brims with history, as it was the home of many 1821 revolution naval heroes, including Miaoulis, Tombazis, Voulgaris, Kountouriotis, Tsamados and Kriezis, some of whom also served as prime ministers of the new Greek state.

The Tsamados mansion on the left-hand side of the main harbor is now a Maritime Academy, while the Tombazis mansion is now part of the School of Fine Arts.

The mansions of Lazaros and George Kountouriotis, Kriezis, Voulgaris and Miaoulis all contain collections of 18th century island furniture, while the descendants of Lazaros Kountouriotis donated his mansion to the Historic-Ethnologic Institute of Greece and today

operates as an extension of the National Museum of History.

Having developed into a strong maritime power, Hydra contributed some 150 ships, including supplies, when the War of Independence broke out, playing a crucial role in the fight against the Ottoman Turks.

According to archaeological finds, Hydra was populated during the Byzantine era, as attested by vases and coins discovered in the area of Episkopi, while there is evidence of farmers and herders from the second half of the third millennium BCE.

With the end of the Revolution and the creation of the Greek state, Hydra gradually lost its maritime position in the eastern Aegean, and the mainstay of the island's economy became sponge fishing.

.....GASTRONOMY.....

## Beans means Greek freshness

Packed with goodness, this local household favorite is now in season

The common bean is a staple in every Greek household and the spring and summer vegetable par excellence.

Piled up on the stalls at local street markets, this flavorsome vegetable should not be ignored, as it is rich in numerous vitamins and nutrients that are crucial to our health.

*Phaseolus vulgaris* ("fasolia" in Greek) is one of the varieties of vegetables that has enjoyed widespread proliferation around the world. Hailing from the subtropical and tropical regions of the Americas and Asia, it was first brought to Europe in the 16th century by Spanish conquistadors and Portuguese explorers returning from their journeys to the New World. Today, of the 150 known varieties of the common bean only seven are cultivated in large quantities.

Depending on when they are harvested, the common bean is

split into two categories: the fresh bean, which is eaten like a vegetable, complete with pods, and the dry bean, which is the bean that grows inside the pod and is harvested when it is fully mature.

Recent developments in agricultural technology and hybrid species of the common bean have made the vegetable available year-round but because it is vulnerable to pests and diseases, its cultivation includes a good deal of pesticide use.

Greece has 10,000 hectares of bean fields, in greenhouses and in open fields, though this number is dropping due to competition from imports. This has not put Greek farmers off, however, and they continue to try different hybrids and varieties.

When buying fresh beans, make sure to wash them very well in plenty of water to make sure you get rid of any traces of chemicals.



Some suggest soaking them in a mild solution of water and vinegar for half an hour and then rinsing them well, as vinegar is considered an effective antibacterial agent. Also, make sure there are no dark

marks on the pod and that a part of the stalk is still attached so you know they have been picked recently.

You can store fresh beans in your refrigerator for seven to 10 days as long as you wrap them in

kitchen paper and store them in a plastic bag. If you want to freeze them, blanch them first in boiling water, allow them to dry well and then store in a bag.

*Article from Kathimerini by Ilias Kantaros*