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Kea: The artistic island with the cosmopolitan character (English Version)

For many years, Kea, aka Tzia, has linked its name with a weekend getaway, but if you visit it you will discover that this quaint little island, with the artistic character can be an ideal destination for your summer vacation.

By Katerina Konstantopoulou

Luxury villas, amazing natural landscape, historic monuments, archaeological sites, springs, picturesque churches, lore, myths and tradition, lavish sail boats, hiking trails, gourmet restaurants and traditional taverns "meet" daily and create a unique place that offers so many things to discover and many more to live. Besides the great beaches with the clear blue waters, such as Koundouros, Gialiskari, Pisses, Kampi, Otzias, Frea and Mpouri, Hydroussa, as Kea was known during ancient times will enchant you with its diversity. Because here one moment you are chilling on your luxury yacht in the quaint harbour and the next moment you are determined to explore the island by crossing every pathway. As a matter of fact Kea has a network of trails, of 81km in total, many of them cobblestone. On each of these paths you will find wooden road-signs with information on the route and the number of the trail.

In beautiful Kea, you won't just relax in the comfortable sunbeds of one of its amazing beach bars but you will also have the chance to experience alternative holidays, as it is a favourite destination of sea-sports enthusiasts. Besides classic sailing, you will have the opportunity to try water-skiing, wakeboard, surf, wake-surfing, windsurfing, kite-surfing, Jet Ski, SUP, and many other exciting activities. So let's become better acquainted with Kea...

IOULIDA: Picturesque and glorious

Amphitheatrically built on the hills of Kastra and Myloi, commanding and picturesque, Ioulida the island's Chora, welcomes many visitors daily into its serene embrace. It is an ideal spot from where you can enjoy the magical sunset, is built on ancient Ioulida, the remains of which can be seen to this day. A walk down its cobblestone streets will bring you face to face with the characteristic of Cycladic architecture two-story buildings with the tile-roofs, the small squares and of course the Kastro (castle). From the ancient city, remains of the forts of the acropolis and a part of the wall survive to this day. In the same place, a castle built by Venetian Domenico Mikelli in 1210, which used parts of the fort-walls, still stands today.





Must visit

Among the most famous buildings of the island are the Historic and the New City Hall, both masterpieces of the great Saxon architect Hernst Ziller. The New City Hall's history goes back 100 years, when it was first built to house the School, the Gymnasium and Lyceum. The preservable and recently renovated building, used to house the Municipal school of the island before it became home to the town hall. The Historic City Hall is an impressive, neoclassic 1902 building, which is adorned by various findings from archaeological sites of the island. On its face the statues of Hermes and Apollo stand out, while on the west side a female sculpture and an embossed reenactment of the classical years are inlaid. In the building's interior there are embossed inlays, while the conference room contains admirable ceiling murals.





VOURKARI: The cosmopolitan side of the island

This quaint harbour is a meeting point for sailboats, while luxurious yachts and racing-boats are a part of Kea's daily cityscape. And this is not at all random, since sailing is a long-standing tradition for the inhabitants of the island, while the Cycladic Regatta, one of the most important sailing races has Kea as its starting point and never fails to enchant contestants and spectators alike. On the beach-road of the harbour, you can enjoy traditional flavours in one of the famous restaurants, a drink under the star-lit sky at night by the waves and a walk gazing at the white sails of the boats fluttering in the clear blue sky.







Must visit

Anyone who visits Kea and finds themselves in the island's beautiful port will definitely experience one of the most beautiful moments of his life by visiting the Aghia Eirini peninsular, which took its name by the small church of the same name and is located exactly across from Vourkari. Excavations that took place in 1960, uncovered one of the most important prehistoric settlements and the only temple of Dionysus (2000 BC) in the Cyclades at the time, part of the fort fence with the tower and gate (2000-1500 BC) and remains of the water-supply and sewage system (15th BC century), and the "lord's residence" remains of a luxury residence built according to Mycenaean standards (16th- 15th century BC). The most world-renowned and impressive finding though, are the "Kores", 50 clay statues of the Bronze Age, which came to light in the area of the temple, and are thought to depict worshippers, priestesses or even goddesses. All of these amazing findings can be seen up-close in the Archaeological Museum of Ioulida.





Agia Irini peninsular, took its name by the small church of the same name that is located here.

KORISSIA: The first image that you'll see

Livadi, as the island's port is otherwise known, is the first thing one sees when they step foot on beautiful Tzia, with the majestic church of Aghia Triada (Holy Trinity) overlooking it. Korissia is built at the foot of the hill, where the ancient city of Korissos used to be, thus harmonically combining the green of the trees that surround the settlement with the white of the houses, the orange of the tile roofs and the blue of the sea and sky. As you walk along the harbour, at its edge you will come upon the Aghios Nikolaos Lighthouse, which is built on the remains of the temple of Poseidon. The lighthouse was built in 1831 by the French Lighthouse Company, and stands at 8mt tall, while it was the first to switch on its lights in the Cyclades and the second in modern Greece. Right next to it, you will find the church of Aghios Nikolaos, which has been characterized as a monument since 2010, and is appertained to the category of Protected Antiquities.





The church of Agia Triada is the trademark of the harbor.

Must visit

The Enamel Factory with the 45mt tall chimney was the only Greek factory that produced enameled utensils, and the biggest in the Mediterranean, ran from 1927 to 1957, and is a significant part of the island's history. Tobacco merchant Ioannis Gleoudis, founded the factory in 1927, which during the pre-war era mainly produced housewares and inscriptions for private or public use. The Directorate of Modern Cultural and Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports declared it as a preservable monument in 1991, while a lot of the machinery and utensils were passed on to the "Friends of the Enamel Factory Association". The responsible carriers intend to turn the factory premises into an industrial museum in the future.

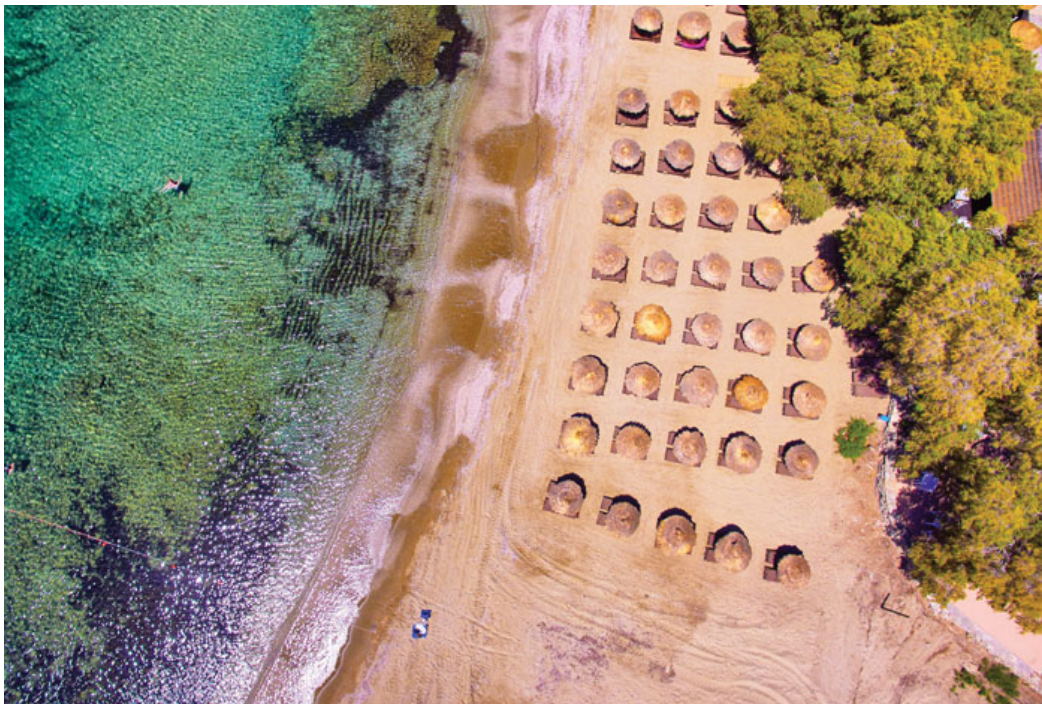




KOUNDOUROS: Fun at the beach - Explore the seafloor

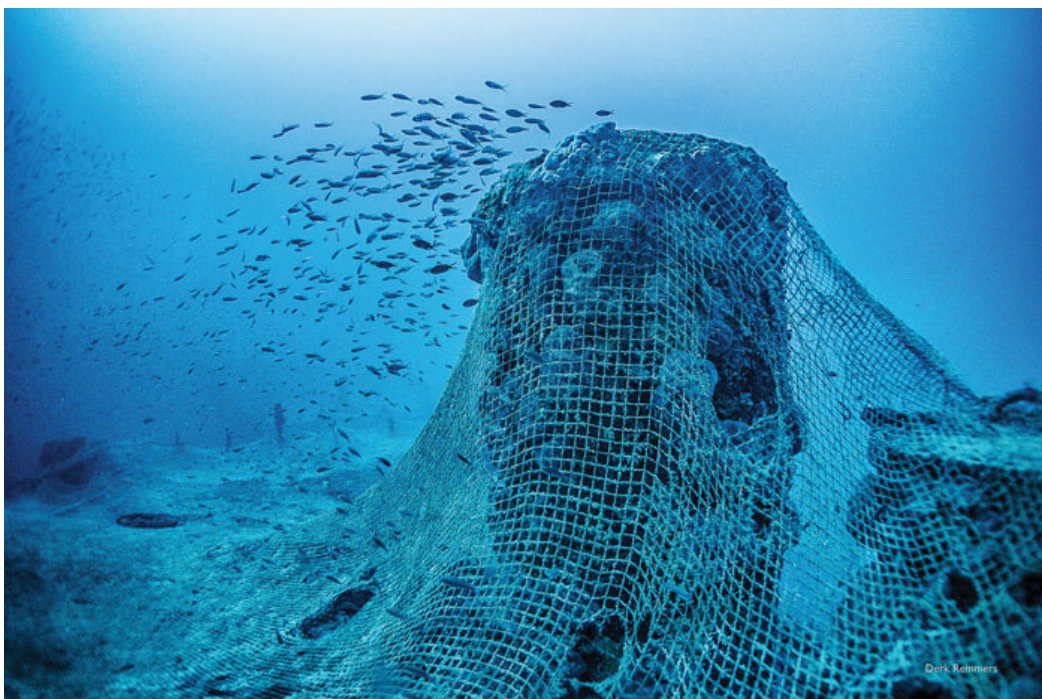
Koundouros is a relatively new settlements and one of the most famous and cosmopolitan beaches on the island. You will find it almost 14 km southwest of the island's Chora, Ioulida. The renovated stone-built windmills are among the highlights of the settlement. In reality the beach of Koundouros is made up of many small beaches and coves, which are organized and a meeting-place for anyone who wishes to have every comfort during their holiday. One of the advantages of this beach is that due to its location it is shielded from the winds. Following the road at the left side of the Koundouros settlement, you will reach an enchanting sandy shore with crystal clear waters; Koundouraki as it is called is one of the most gorgeous beaches on the island, famous for its water sport facilities. Another beach, close to the south part of Koundouros, which you have to explore, is Kampi, where you will find small protected coves.





Must visit

The island's sea floor is especially thrilling, and this is why it is an ideal destination for those who love diving and exploring. Don't hesitate to rent the necessary equipment and pay a visit to its famous shipwrecks, like the hospital ship the "Britannic", sister ship of the "Titanic", the French ocean liner "Burdigala", the paddle steamer "Patris" and a German world war II Junkers 52 airplane. Also the islet Spanopoula, is an ideal place to come across some impressive fish.



OTZIAS: Where the past meets the present

Just 5.5km from the port of Korissia, a very well-organized and cosmopolitan settlement will be the ideal starting point for your vacation on the island. The huge, organized beach of its bay is impressive and it is a perfect destination for families. Naturally, you cannot go to Otzias without making a small detour to marvel at one of the most impressive monasteries of the Aegean up-close, we are of course talking of the Panagia Kastriani monastery.



Must visit

The island's trademark is none other than the famous Leontas or Liontas (lion), an archaic sculpted monument of the 6th-7th BC century, which you will find on the path that leads from Aghios Spyridonas to Otzias. According to the prevailing myth, Zeus sent a lion to protect the inhabitants from the larvae began to kill the women of the village. As soon as the godsend lion completed its mission it turned into stone at this particular location.



PISSES: An oasis of green

Welcome to the fertile flatland of Poisses, where exactly where the green shoreline ends the deep blue of the sea starts. The settlement is 11km away from Ioulida and it is one of the most beautiful beaches. The tamarisks (salt cedars) which are in abundance in the area, protect the beach and offer the visitors their cooling shade. From here one can make out the remnants of the ancient city of Poïessa, such as parts of the circular tower of the wall or the port facilities. Into the background of the valley, the small church of Aghios Isidoros, built with ancient structural components, is worth a visit.



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