



Poolside — and seaside — at Bodrum's design-driven [Spectra Boutique Hotel & Spa](#). *Shahinov/Alamy* 2019

TRAVEL

## Greece is Officially Reopening to Tourism — Here are the Top Hotels to Stay In

The European nation is looking beyond Covid, which means the time to visit — along with neighboring Turkey — is now

By Laura Itzkowitz  
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A year into the COVID-19 pandemic, most of Europe remains closed to Americans, but a recent announcement by the Greek Minister of Tourism Harry Theocharis has given us hope. “We aspire to open by the 14th of May. Until then, we will gradually lift restrictions as health considerations allow it,” he said in a [video that aired as part of ITB Berlin’s virtual trade show](#).

The announcement stirred up a frenzy of excitement among travelers starved of the sun, sea, and glamorous lifestyle of the Mediterranean, especially as more Americans are becoming vaccinated. And with no news on when Italy, France, and Spain might reopen their borders, travel advisers like Jack Ezon, founder and managing partner of [Embark Beyond](#), are advising their clients to book trips to Greece and Turkey—which has been open since mid-2020—now or risk losing out.

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The breakfast views in one of the villas at White Key Mykonos.

Embark Beyond saw bookings for summer travel to Greece rise dramatically from 12.5% in 2019 to 75% last month; bookings to Turkey are up from 1% pre-pandemic to 12%. Ezon has booked eight yacht trips to the Greek islands for clients who would normally visit what he calls Europe’s “jetsetting capitals,” such as Saint Tropez, Capri, the Amalfi Coast, Ibiza, and Sardinia. He’s even encouraging clients to book two vacations for the same period: one to the client’s dream destination and another as a plan B. “I have somebody booked for a birthday party in Italy and also in Mykonos as a backup,” he explained. “Most people have a refundable deposit, so it’s a no-risk situation.”



The dreamy poolside view from Bill & Co in Mykonos.

Of course, Ezon acknowledges that things remain tenuous, even in Greece. Though Minister Theocharis announced the country’s aspiration to reopen, there’s no guarantee that it will—especially if the rest of the European Union remains closed or the number of coronavirus cases rises steeply.

“Let’s make no mistake: We can be sending people to Mykonos thinking they’re gonna be dancing on tables and all of a sudden it could be like South Beach two weeks ago where everything got shut down because they got overwhelmed,” Ezon said. “And we’re trying to temper that message. This is not a normal year. You’re probably not gonna be in a nightclub with your 2,000 closest friends. That’s why we’re also trying to encourage people to go to outer islands, not just Mykonos, where it’s all about the nightclubs and the beach clubs.”



The elevated Concept pool at the Adronis Santorini, where sunbathers can gaze out over the entire city. TRYFON GEORGIOPOULOS

Luckily, Greece has some 6,000 islands, 227 of which are inhabited, so there's plenty to choose from. And the country has seen some gorgeous new resorts with serious design cred open recently, with more on the way. On the mainland, the Athens Riviera witnessed the transformation of the 1961 Astir Palace into a glamorous resort by [Four Seasons](#) following a \$123 million renovation in 2018. It will be joined this August by Brown Beach Corinthia, a new resort with an organic-meets-futuristic design by Elastic Architects on the Saronic Gulf. It will be the first resort in Greece by [Brown Hotels](#), the design-forward Israeli brand that's expanding into Europe with boutique hotels in Greece and Croatia.



Rooftop at the soon-to-debut Brown Beach Corinthia resort in Greece.

Santorini—usually overrun by day trippers—is a great option since there won't be any cruise ship crowds. [Adronis Arcadia](#), a luxury resort opened in 2019 in Oia, has seen the pace of bookings double since Minister Theocharis's announcement. [Santorini Sky](#), a new collection of eight luxury villas perched on the island's highest point, has also seen a surge in inquiries since the announcement. "We have been very successful with Americans as we offer a no-fuss 100% refund if they are unable to travel due to COVID-19 restrictions—refunded within 24 hours," Daniel Kerzner, Santorini Sky's owner, told *AD*.



Inside the luxurious Yalikavak private living room suite at the Bodrum Edition.

Ezon is encouraging clients to look at under-the-radar islands like Paros and Crete too, where a couple of stunning new hotels are attracting design aficionados. Sleek and minimalist with a rustic touch, [Parilo](#) opened as a member of Design Hotels on Paros in 2019 with 33 suites, a breezy restaurant, and a soothing spa. This spring it will welcome the first brick-and-mortar shop by [Anthologist](#), which sells vintage and handcrafted design items made by Greek artisans. [Cretan Malia Park](#)—also a member of Design Hotels—opened last year with a modern-rustic design featuring murals by Greek artists. This summer, it will debut three new room options, culinary and retail collaborations, and wellness programming.

Travelers determined to go to Mykonos will find new resorts there too. The ultraluxe [Kalesma Mykonos](#), which is slated to open in May, will be the only hotel on the island with furniture by Rick Owens. [Katikies Mykonos](#) and [Bill & Co](#)—both members of Leading Hotels of the World—are ready to welcome guests. In addition to its main location in Mykonos Town, Bill & Co recently debuted 15 new suites two miles away on the coast. Sister property to the Santorini original, Katikies Mykonos opened in 2018 on the island's quiet southwestern coast with whitewashed suites boasting private plunge pools. It's a prominent participant in LHW's Healthy Stay commitment and has been accredited by the Global BioRisk Advisory Council.



The street view from Katikies, Mykonos, now open to the public. CHRISTOS DRAZOS

Want something more private for your group? [White Key Villas](#), a leading luxury villa rental agency, has a portfolio of 380 villas on offer, including five new homes in Syros, Paros, Halkidiki, Porto Heli, and Mykonos. Want a private chef for the duration of your stay? How about yoga lessons, guided tours, or family-friendly activities? White Key's staff can arrange that and much more.

Though the Greeks and the Turks have a rocky relationship at best, it makes sense to combine a trip to Greece with a few days in Turkey. While Istanbul seems like an obvious choice, the glistening seaside town of Bodrum is likely to emerge as Turkey's most in-demand summer destination. New resorts like the [Bodrum EDITION](#) and [Spectr Boutique Hotel & Spa](#) are bringing more awareness to the area. The former boasts the minimalist design and on-trend programming that Ian Schrager's brand is known for. The latter offers a more affordable option for cost-conscious fans of clean-lined, modern design.

"In my opinion, I think this is the coming-out party for Bodrum for the American market. I would say the coming-out party for Turkey and the close-up for Greece," Ezon remarked. "I know the Greeks and the Turks don't really love each other, but right now they're gonna be part of the same story."

Explore [location:Ekali, Greece](#) [location:Bosporus Strait, Turkey](#)

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