



WE IN 10 TO TRAVEL

THE year of the staycation has passed as Brits vow to get out of the UK in 2010. More than half of those who holidayed at home this year plan on going abroad next summer, a survey by website [simonseeks.com](http://simonseeks.com) reveals. Over half of Brits surveyed will head for places like Spain, home of flamenco, above, the US and France, although they plan to cut back on spending by an average £391. Site founder Simon Nixon says: "The research reveals a real determination to travel - especially among those who didn't take a holiday overseas in 2009."



GREEK CHIC... Rhodes town

**EVEN** the Guns of Navarone would have struggled to halt the invasion of rowdy boozed-up British holidaymakers.

But the beautiful Greek island of Rhodes - where scenes from that famous war film were shot - seems to be winning the battle.

For years yobs who were tanked up on lager and ouzo besieged the resort of Faliraki, giving it a reputation it could do without. Now it's the invasion of four- and five-star hotels which is slowly changing the island's image.

Sure, Faliraki is still a fun and lively place to stay, with plenty of wild nightlife. But Rhodes has so much more to offer and the locals hope that moving upmarket will encourage families and a better class of holidaymaker.

Views

Talking of class, you would be hard pressed to find a finer hotel than the adults-only Lindos Blu where I stayed.

It is built on the side of a cliff overlooking stunning Vlichia Bay, and the guide books describe it as a chic boutique hotel.

All 70 rooms and villas have amazing views over the Aegean sea, while some of the posher suites boast luxurious lounges and huge balconies with Jacuzzis and private pools. Trust me, you will not want to leave the hotel.

If you want to take the kids you can always try Blu's four-star sister hotel next door, Lindos Mare.

The hotels are just a few minutes' drive from the pretty town of Lindos which is overlooked by its ancient acropolis. Little alleyways filled with shops and restaurants lead up to the ruins, parts of which date back to the 4th Century BC. It's a tough

Go: RHODES

PETER stayed at the Lindos Blu ([lindosblu.gr](http://lindosblu.gr)). Double rooms with breakfast start from around £160 per night.

EasyJet flies from Gatwick to Rhodes from £79.98 return, including taxes.

The flights operate between April and September 2010. Book online at [easyjet.com](http://easyjet.com).

Find out more about Rhodes at [rodosisland.gr](http://rodosisland.gr).

are worth it. If you're not too mobile you can always take the local taxi - a donkey!

With my bulk I felt sorry for the poor animal... and besides, I needed the exercise.

Lindos nightlife is low-key and centres mainly on the bars and restaurants. Mavrikos in the main square is very popular.

My advice is to eat like a Greek and go for the meze, a seemingly endless selection of local classics such as dolmades - vine leaves stuffed with minced pork and veg, spicy meatballs and black squid ink risotto.

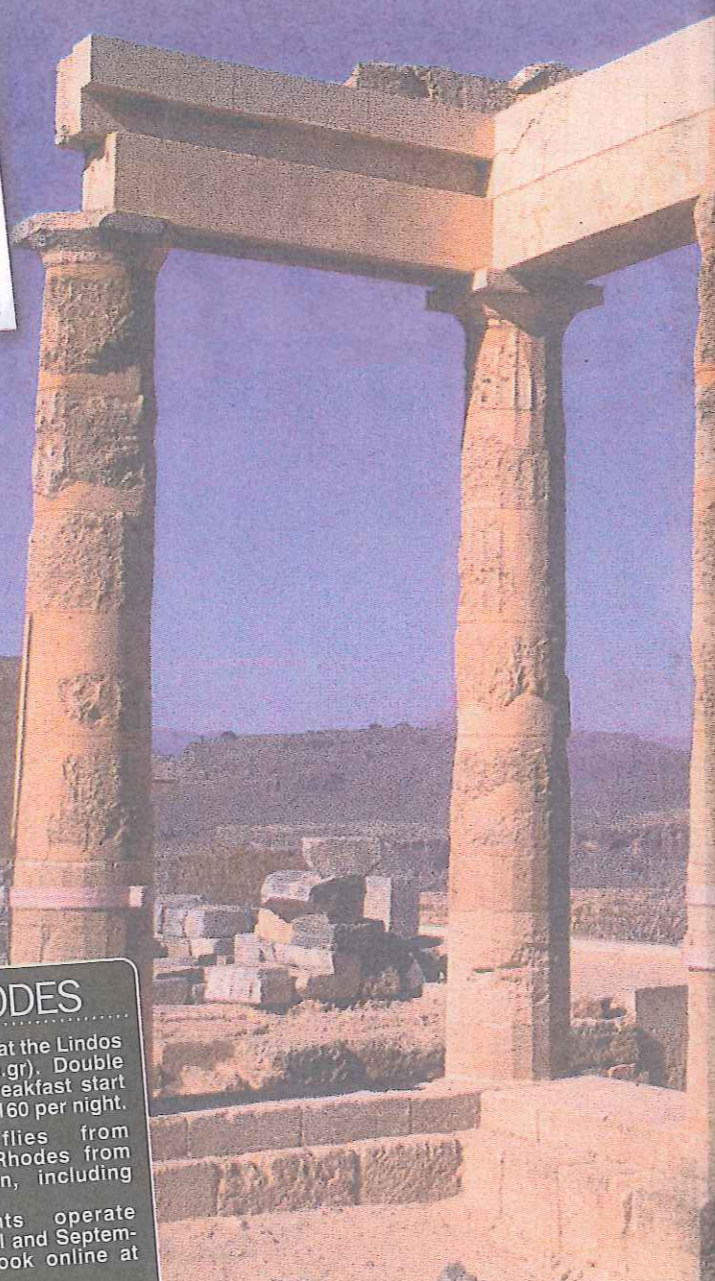
Not sure about the last one, so glad I did the acropolis walk before dinner. If you like

climb on a hot day but the views lie a maze of narrow cobbled streets packed with fascinating boutiques selling everything from carvings and hand-made jewellery to bars of olive soap.

The old town has 11 gates and is packed with historical gems such as the Grand Master's Palace, once the HQ of the Knights of the Order of St John who conquered the island in 1309. One of the best restaurants is the award-winning Nireas where owner Theodoros talks you up enthusiastically through his menu.

Away from the tourist hordes is the mountain village of Embona, famous for its wines. Rhodes is not known for vintage

# Hit the Rhodes



plonk but I was most impressed, especially after a few glasses.

But the real highlight of my visit was meeting 86-year-old Maria Konstantakis, a sweet little old lady who has become a local celebrity showing tourists inside the tiny one-room traditional Rhodian house where she has lived all her life.

Gems

It seemed a million miles from Faliraki's bright lights but summed up for me the real Rhodes.

On the drive down from the mountains it is well worth stopping for a photo. On a clear day you can see the coast of Turkey some 12 miles away.

Other gems off the beaten track are the Valley of the

Butterflies in Petaloudes, home to thousands of the panaxia species, and Seven Springs in Epta Piges. The water here is supposed to improve your health but take care as you clamber over slippery rocks to drink from the streams. A fall here will not lengthen your life.

Back on the coast near Faliraki are the ancient Kallithea springs. The Italians built a monument here in 1929 and now the original baths and buildings have been restored.

It is a beautiful spot and featured in another classic war film, *Escape To Athena*, starring Roger Moore and David Niven.

Talking of movies, Anthony Quinn is a hero on this island since he came in 1961 to film *The Guns Of Navarone*. There is

even a bay near Faliraki named after him. I took a boat trip there and enjoyed a swim.

Another of Rhodes's five-star diamonds is Amathus Beach Hotel at Ixia on the rugged north-west coast.

The hotel has recently opened some luxury suites, each with a private pool. It also has an amazing health spa - just the job after a hot day's sightseeing.

OK, so enough of all this luxury and adults-only boutique hotels. What about the kids?

Well, with the lager louts under control, I would recommend Faliraki any time. It might not be known for its history and sophistication but it has stacks to do, a great beach and plenty of family-friendly hotels to suit all budgets. Classy hotels such

as the fab five-star Apollo Blue Palace and its cheaper sister Apollo Beach next door are showing the rest of Faliraki how it should be done - perfect for children who want a huge swimming pool and miles of golden sand on their doorstep.

So here's to the reinvention of Rhodes and a makeover minus those misbehaving binge-drinking lads and ladettes. I'll certainly raise a glass to that. Well, just a small one!

PETER BAILEY

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