

## THE INSIDERS IKARIA, GREECE

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BRAIN HEALTH EXPERT

**RELAX:** The best feature about Ikaria, a beautiful island in the Aegean Sea, is that nothing is hurried; many of the locals don't bother with watches. Without the rush, it's amazing how stress levels evaporate, which is great for enhancing health and wellbeing. Treat yourself to afternoon naps.



**EAT:** Wherever you choose to dine, you will be guaranteed the food is fresh and sourced locally. The Ikarians eat a predominantly plant-based diet using many wild edible greens to consume with legumes and some meat, mostly goat. Try Thea's Inn in the village of Nas for a relaxed lunch with a salad, olives and fresh figs warm from the tree, or the MaryMary restaurant in Armenista for Greek food at its best. Go for the goat's milk ice cream for something a little different; [visitikaria.gr/en](http://visitikaria.gr/en); [theasinn.com](http://theasinn.com).

**STAY:** Small, unpretentious and unhurried, whether you choose to stay at a hotel or villa you will be given a warm welcome by your hosts and looked after like a long lost friend. My preference is to go self-catering. The Pyrgos Exclusive Boutique Villas at Agios Kirykos are very comfy with beautiful views and the Plumeria Flowery Pension is a great base for explorations; [pyrgos-ikaria.com](http://pyrgos-ikaria.com); [island-ikaria.com/pensions-rooms/Plumeria-Flowery](http://island-ikaria.com/pensions-rooms/Plumeria-Flowery).

**ENJOY:** During the summer, take the opportunity to attend a panagiria, a traditional feast day that typically starts in the afternoon and continues until the next morning. Join the villagers to eat local food, drink plenty of Ikarian red wine and dance to live music. Ikarians have a very strong sense of family and community, a feature thought to contribute to their longevity. There is no shortage of such festivals in July and August; [island-ikaria.com](http://island-ikaria.com).

**DRINK:** Homemade red wines that have no preservatives are a must, as is the mountain herbal tea based on a local variety of sage. The Ikarians drink their coffee boiled and it's believed to improve vascular health, so that's good for hearts and brains.

**ESCAPE:** Hire a car to explore the island with its myriad sparkling beaches and mountains. Wade in the thermal pools at Spilaio Spa then grab your hiking boots and follow one of the many well-marked trails. A highlight is to visit the 12th-century Theoktiskis Monastery and make sure to sample the local loukoumades, delicious Greek doughnuts with honey.

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Avalon Waterways has waived single supplements on its Europe river cruises in 2017; book by July 29 for dozens of departures next year; [avalonwaterways.com.au](http://avalonwaterways.com.au).



An hour south of Krabi in southern Thailand, Anantara Si Kao is sited amid one of the last Southeast Asian habitats of the dugong; the resort has a program to rejuvenate seagrass resources, the marine creature's main food; [anantara.com](http://anantara.com).



Dictionary of Sydney's latest app is Randwick Heritage Walk, a DIY ramble of about one hour around the significant landmarks of the eastern city precinct, complete with GPS maps; [dictionaryofsydney.org](http://dictionaryofsydney.org).



Scriptwriter and journalist Jimmy Thomson will lead a 15-day literary-themed tour to Vietnam from October 4 featuring key sites of three novels and writing workshops; \$3950 a person twin-share, with flights; [mildrover.com](http://mildrover.com).