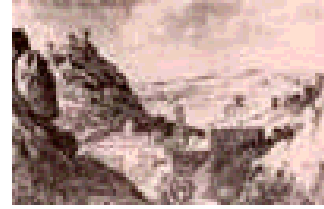


The History of the Island

The name of Hydra is owed to the rich waters, which sprang out from the quarries which existed in the antiquity. During the post Helladic era, Hydra became an outpost of the Mycenaean kingdom because its land was suitable for supporting the mountain inhabitants the Dryopeans.



During the end of Mycenae era, Hydra was attacked by the Mycenaens. It is rumoured that during the Persian Wars the Hydraeans had taken part in the historic Battle of Salamis. When the Macedonians appeared, Hydra, once again, served as a naval base or grassland of the powerful city of Halieis and when it was invaded and destroyed, Hydra fell into oblivion.



After the Byzantine Empire was split, Hydra remained a Venetian dominion until it was passed to the Turks in 1460. At about that time the island of Hydra was settled by Albanian refugees as well as Orthodox Christians, who

were later joined by settlers from Epirus, Crete, Evia, Kythnos and Asia Minor. Then in the 18th century Hydra welcomed a large number of refugees from the Peloponessos during the Russo-Turkish war.

The island during the Ottoman occupation of Greece was largely left alone by the Turks most likely because of its lack of water. By the end of the 18th century Hydra had become quite prosperous because of its commercial fleet which was trading as far as France, Spain and even America. During the Napoleonic wars it was the Hydriotes ships which broke the English blockades and were able to feed the hungry people of France and Spain. The island was quite wealthy at this time and was in a position to



Dimitrios Voulgaris,
seven times Prime
Minister of Greece.

contribute itsr ships and supplies to the cause of Independence from the Turks. The help of Hydra in the ethnic-liberating Battle of 1821 was important. It offered 130 ready to battle ships, with a tonnage of 30.000 tonnes, 5.400 men and 2.400 cannons. Hibraim called Hydra a "Little England". The Hydrian fleet dominated this sea during the seven year war, contributing this way resolutely to the freedom of Greece, sacrificing human lifes, ships and money.

With the success of the Hydriot spongefishing fleet at the end of the 19th century the island again began a period of prosperity which lasted until 1932 when Egypt forbade fishing along it's coast and corruption in the industry caused profits to dwindle and loans to mount. By the second world war the Hydriotes were again leaving the island, many of whom went abroad. During World War II, the Italian and German conquerors left the island in ruins.

In the 1950's Hydra was discovered by the early tourists, many of whom had read of it in Henry Miller's "Collossus of Marousi." Since then the island has prospered, living off its beauty as the mansions and homes have been restored. It is a popular place with artists as well as writers who come for inspiration and sometimes never leave.



Hydra Today



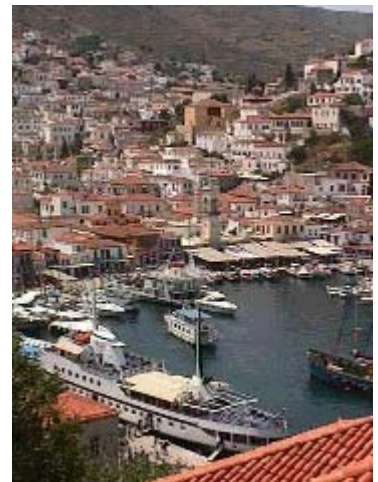
Hydra is perhaps the most beautiful port village in all of Greece. A tiny harbour ringed with cafes, restaurants and jewelry shops is surrounded by a village of stone houses and villas that rise up the hills like an amphitheatre. But one of the best things about Hydra is that there are no cars. Everything is moved by donkey, including groceries, building supplies, people and their luggage. Hydra is the former home of Leonard Cohen and stomping grounds of Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Pink Floyd and many other famous and not so famous people.

Hydra is one of the Saronic Gulf islands, which includes Aegina, Angistri, Poros and Spetses. Of these, Hydra is the most unspoiled even though it is the most popular. The reason is because growth has been limited and while the other islands expand outward to accommodate tourism, Hydra has remained the same. Most of its visitors just come for the day because there are simply not enough places for them to stay.



The main hobby on Hydra and on most islands is people watching. You can get a coffee or a soda and sit in a cafeteria all day long. Nobody will ask you to move. There are plenty of shops to keep you busy, on the waterfront and a few on the main streets leading away from it.

There are ships and yachts going in and out all day, including several large cruise ships with groups who fan out around the town looking for bargains in gold jewellery and tourist paraphernalia. They have 2 hours to buy everything they can carry back to the ship and disappear, only to be replaced by the next group. Some make their way to the rocks for a quick swim. The tourists come, they shop, they see the attractions, they eat, and they return to the cruise ship. Since the daily cruise ships visit Hydra for two hours, there was no need to develop the island, as other islands have, with hotel after



hotel. The island has basically looked the way it looks now for the last two hundred years and certainly as it did when Henry Miller visited it on the eve of World War Two. Developers have attempted to buy territories on the island and create resorts, but have been stopped.



There are 3 main streets, which go up through the village from the waterfront. The first street you come to from the ferry is Tombazi, on the corner where the donkeys hang out. The next street is Mialouli, which is next to the Monastery of the Panagias and the clock tower. The third street is Lignou, which goes up the hill and ends up in the village of Kamini. Wandering up these streets is an enjoyable pastime and getting lost is both easy and fun. The interior of the village is very different from the cafe-ringed harbour with its jet setters and urban Greeks. Hydra is as traditional looking as even the most remote village once you break away from the masses. Some people who live in the village may not go down to the harbour for days and many of the

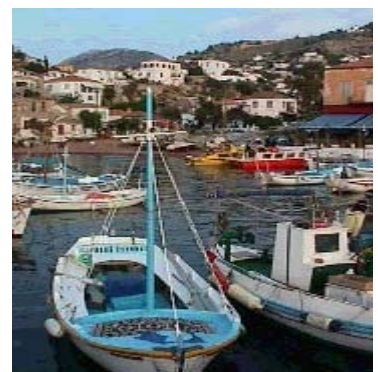
resident artists, writers and soul-searchers don't go down there at all once the summer begins.

The Monastery of the Panagia (Conference Venue) is right in the port, with its entrance by the clock tower. The monks' cells are now municipal offices but you can go in and admire the church, the marble stones and columns and visit the small byzantine museum upstairs.



There are many paths through the hills that lead to small settlements, monasteries and churches and a walk in springtime will introduce you to the islands large array of wildflowers. The walk to the Monastery of Profiti Illias will take you an hour but the view is worth it. There are still monks living there. Donkey rides are also a means to get to the Monastery.

Despite the lack of long sandy beaches (the swimming is great off the rocks!) Hydra is a great place to visit and one can not underestimate the value in spending time in a place that has no automobiles. You feel safer and go will return home relaxed and at the same time feeling like you have a second home.



WHAT MAKES HYDRA UNIQUE ?

What makes Hydra unique in Greece is the fact that it has escaped modern development. It does not have high rise apartment buildings and large hotels. In Hydra strict architectural conservation laws are enforced to preserve the beauty of the island.



NO NOISE POLLUTION : The island does not have an airport. Private vehicles or motorbikes are not permitted and there are no roads suitable for bus transport. Hydra has no land traffic, no annoying engines to disturb the peace.

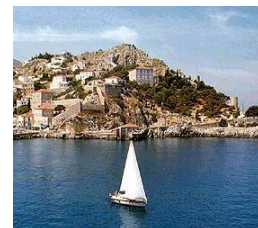
NO INDUSTRIAL POLLUTION : As the economy of Hydra consists of light tourism, traditional crafts, fishing and farming, there are virtually no activities taking place that pollute the environment.



UNIQUE ARCHITECTURE : You will not find anywhere else in Greece such a concentration of gracious 18th and 19th century architecture. In 1830 Hydra had a population of 30,000 and was dominated by wealthy merchants and ship-owners. Venetian builders, carpenters and artisans were imported to work on their mansions. Practically all have been preserved along with hundreds of smaller attractive houses. So the impression you receive when stepping off the boat at Hydra is little changed from that you would have received two centuries ago.

ART : All of the above features, plus a favourable climate and the natural beauty of the island attract prominent artists, writers and other creative people. Among those are the American poet and songwriter Leonard Cohen and the painter Jannis Kounellis father of the arte povera, Brice Marden an American minimalist etc., who have houses on Hydra.

Hydra has been voted the **“BEST PRESERVED ISLAND OF THE MEDITERRANEAN”** by UNESCO. Hydra is unique for its ecological policies and acts of preservation.



WHERE TO SWIM...



IF WEATHER PERMITS !!

The island of Hydra has only a very few sandy beaches. Most of the places for swim are small bays and coves with pebbles or rocks. All

Hydra beaches have crystalline waters.

Mandraki (MIRAMARE)

This is one of the few true beaches of Hydra. It is a pebble organised beach with clear waters which offers various water sports equipment for hire (such as windsurf, water-ski, beach volley, etc...) and a view over the Peloponnese.

Mandraki is also known as Miramare, from the resort hotel located over the beach. It can be reached by 35 minutes walking from the main harbour or by taxi-boat (10 minutes).



Avlaki

Avlaki is consisting of a few small stretches of pebble forming a tiny beach. It can be reached from stone steps from Spilia Beach. It can be reached by 5 minutes walking

Agios Nikolaos

Located on Hydra's west coast, Agios Nikolaos is a beautiful beach accessible only by boat. If one takes a taxi-boat to reach the beach, he has to be sure to arrange the return trip.



Spilia

Spilia (Cave) is a rocky area nearby the main harbour where the grey crags have been blasted and laid with cement which is forming sun decks. The water is clear and of a nice deep blue colour. It can be reached by 5 minutes walking.

Hydronetta

Hydronetta is a rocky swimming area with cemented sun decks and profound blue waters.

It is a very popular place because of the bar hanging from the rocks, playing relaxing ambience music 20 hours a day and offering one of the most magnificent view over the sea and the surrounding islands It can be reached by 5 minutes walking



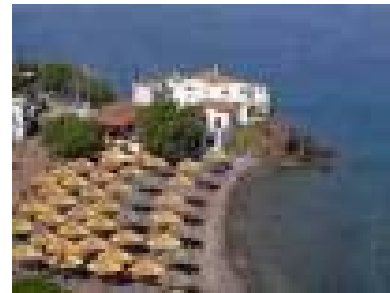
Kamini

Situated between Vlihos and Hydra Town, Kamini is a small fishing port surrounded by a few fish taverns; the small area is called Mikro Kamini (Small Kamini.) It can be reached by 25 minutes walking

Vlyhos Beach

Also one of the few true beaches of Hydra, Vlyhos Beach situated in the little resort of the same name. It is a small pebble beach with crystal-clear waters. A few taverns are available near the beach.

Vlychos beach can be reached by a 40 minutes walk from the harbour or 20 minutes by taxi-boat.



Bisti



This small beautiful beach is run by the diving centre of Hydra but it can be used even without participating in the sportive activities which are kayak, snorkel and scuba dive. It is accessible only by boat.

Molos

About an hour walk from Hydra Town one can reach the quiet pebble beach of Molos; it can also be reached by taxi-boat.



Limnioniza

Accessible by private boat or taxi-boat, Limnioniza is a deserted pebble beach located in the heart of a small bay, to the south coast of Hydra.

PLACES OF INTEREST

Lazaros Kountouriotis Mansion



The mansion of Lazaros Kountouriotis was built in the late 18th century. It is an exceptional architectural example of the transition from post-byzantine tradition to neo-classicism. Lazaros Kountouriotis was one of the notables of the

island during the years of the Greek Revolution. In the upper floor of the mansion representative works of contemporary Greek handicraft are exhibited. The 1st ground floor houses the permanent exhibition of paintings of Periklis and Constantinos Byzantios (opening hours, daily: 10.00- 14.00, 17.30-20.30).

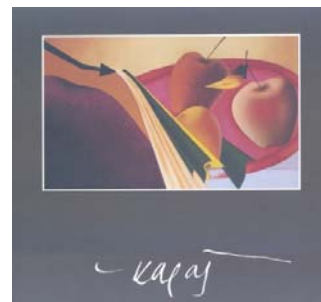


Museum of Hydra - Historical Archives



The Museum operates in two levels: at the ground floor you can find the contemporary exhibition of paintings of Christos Caras and in the halls of the floor, there are exposed Hydrian costumes and figureheads. In the 1st

floor, it has been created historical picture gallery, with works of master painters. The library lodges in the ground floor of the building and contains 4,000 book titles (opening hours, daily: 9.00- 16.00, 19.30-21.30).



Pavlos Kountouriotis Mansion

Pavlos' Kountouriotis grandfather built this mansion before the Greek Revolution of 1821. On 1991 the Ministry of Culture bought it and turned it into a museum. The Municipality of Hydra, in an attempt to honour the artist Panayotis Tetsis, organises an exhibition with his paintings entitled "Hydra of Tetsis". The exhibition takes place in the Pavlos Kountouriotis Mansion with the support of Stavros Niarchos Foundation and Ioannis F. Costopoulos Foundation and is open to the public from June 16 till September 30 (opening hours, Tuesday- Sunday: 11.00-14.00, 19.00- 22.00) The paintings come from museums and private collections.

