Kos is one of over 160 Greek islands, large and small, which make up the group known as the Dodecanese. These islands are scattered in the Aegean Sea along the southwest coast of mainland Turkey. Kos is one of the largest in the archipelago and certainly one of the most popular. Amazing archeological history, traditional villages, beautiful beaches and the friendly people combine to attract visitors from the four corners of the earth.

Kos Town in particular and the island as a whole have plenty of things to see and do. After all, people have been coming here for thousands of years. From the Greeks of the Classic Age to the Romans, Byzantines, Venetian and Ottomans ... they all knew a good thing when they saw it.

HISTORY

There is an ancient tree on the Greek island of Kos. As if standing guard at the Castle of the Knights of St. John, by seeds and cuttings the shade of this tree literally spreads from Kos Town to Glasgow Scotland, from Bethesda Maryland to Victoria British Columbia to Sydney Australia and beyond. Over 2,000 years ago young men set in the shade of the original tree, learned from their teacher and discussed new ideas. From here these men went out and did little more than change the world.

The story of Kos mirrors the tempestuous political and military struggles which, for thousands of years, rolled over this part of the Mediterranean like storm tossed waves crashing upon this island's shore.

In the 5th century BC, the great Persian King Darius I sought to "punish" Athens and the Greek City-States. At the battle of Salamis in 480 BC the Greeks were victorious over the armada of Xerxes I, son of King Darius. Many historians consider this battle as the dramatic dawn of the Golden Age of Greece. In this Golden Age the very foundation of Western civilization was formed. During this amazing time the intellect and innovation of a relatively small group of men shined as bright as the very stars in the galaxy.

One of the radiant Greek stars made an immeasurable contribution to the shaping of modern medical science and practice. His name was Hippocrates and he was born in 460 BC on the island of Kos. He was nothing short of revolutionary. Up until the time of Hippocrates the practice of medicine or healing consisted of temple priests, animal sacrifice and elaborate rituals all meant to conjure the power of the mythical gods.

Under the shade of a tree in Kos the young men gathered to study under the teacher who would become the Father of Western Medicine. The concepts of Hippocrates were clear, new and radical. "If we could give
every individual the right amount of nourishment and exercise, not too little and not too much, we would have found the safest way to health.” The young medical students listened and learned. “It’s far more important to know what person the disease has than what disease the person has.” With tireless research, painstaking study and gentle words Hippocrates brought forth the dawn of modern medicine.

So make your way towards the Castle of the Knights of St. John. Not far from the harbor front, in the Square of the Plantane you will find the noble 500 year old descendent of the original tree under which Hippocrates, the favorite son of Kos and Father of Western Medicine, taught his students … “Wherever the art of medicine is loved, there is also a love of humanity.”

**KOS PLACES OF INTEREST**

1. **Nerantzia Castle** was built in the 1300s by Knights of the Order of St. John. Construction took over a century to complete. From its bastions overlooking the harbor of Kos the knights were able to defend the island for 200 years.

2. **Casa Romana** (Roman House) is a beautiful mansion which dates back to the 2nd Century. The house is an example of the wealth of Kos during this period. Dozens of rooms surround open atriums as stunning frescoes and mosaics grace the walls and floors.

3. The **Roman Odeon** dates back to the 2nd Century. The wonderfully preserved amphitheatre was rediscovered, excavated and restored in the 20th Century. It was here the people of Kos gathered for entertainment.

4. **Ancient Agora** is a large excavation which includes wide streets, a gymnasium, sanctuaries, shrines and temples. This was the heart of the ancient city with some of the structures dating as far back as the 3rd Century BC.

5. The **Archaeological Museum of Kos** houses ancient artifacts discovered and recovered from around the city and across the island. The stunningly beautiful statues are from the Greek and Roman periods. Some of the pottery dates back to the Bronze Age, 1000 BC.
The Tree of Hippocrates is the 500 year old descendent of the original tree planted by the great Greek physician and son of Kos, Hippocrates. It was here, in the shade of the first tree, nearly 2,500 years ago Hippocrates taught his medical students. Trees grown from it seeds or cuttings are now on the grounds of distinguished medical facilities and universities around the world. The ancient tree has long been carefully maintained and protected by the people of Kos.

Beyond Kos

Asklepieion is the most extensive and perhaps most interesting archaeological excavation on the island. This site is a collection of temples and medical facilities which date to the 3rd Century BC. The complex was dedicated to Asklepios, the mythological Greek god of medicine.

Zia is a popular village in the mountains southwest of Kos Town. This is a wonderful place to relax and explore. From Zia visitors can get a fantastic view of the island.

Antimachia is a small village on the southwest of Kos. The traditional homes and classic windmills are guarded by an imposing Venetian fortress.

Kefalos is located at the far western end of Kos. The narrow streets and whitewashed homes add to the traditional charm of the village. Visitors will also find a very nice beach. There are plenty of small shops and cafés to discover and enjoy.

SHORE EXCURSIONS

To make the most of your visit to Kos and the surrounding island we suggest you take one of our organized shore excursions. For information concerning tour content and pricing, consult your Shore Excursion Order Form or contact the Shore Excursion Desk. When going ashore, be advised to take only necessary items and secure any valuables onboard.

LOCAL CUSTOMS

Bargaining: Prices are usually set.

Tipping: Cafés and restaurants often add an automatic 15% service charge. It is customary to tip a couple extra Euros however.

LOCAL CUISINE AND DRINK SPECIALTIES

The foundation of Greek cooking is the wonderful olive oil. Some of the favorite and most popular dishes include: Mezedes are numerous small selections of a variety of foods, similar to tapas. Tzatziki, a dipping mixture made by combining Greek yoghurt, cucumber, chopped garlic, salt and pepper and fresh chopped mint. Dolmades are a mixture of rice, vegetables, golden raisins and olive oil wrapped with grape leaves and steamed. Fasolada is a traditional bean soup adding carrots, tomatoes, celery and olive oil. Yemista is peppers stuffed with a mixture of vegetables, rice, herbs and olive oil then baked. Giouvetsi is a combination of lamb and orzo (pasta) baked in an earthenware pot. Gyros are pita bread stuffed with roasted meat, covered with tzatziki and sprinkled with chopped tomatoes and onions. Baklava is the always popular dessert which uses a mixture of honey, cloves, nuts and syrup wrapped in phyllo dough and baked till golden brown.

You may want to sample the famous Greek ouzo. Other favorite beverages include Mythos Beer, retsina (a Greek wine of acquired taste) and raki, a very strong distilled spirit first made popular in Crete. Some small vineyards on the island produce good local wines. Little is left available for export. This being the case, your visit to Kos is a perfect opportunity to taste a new vintage not easily available elsewhere.

SHOPPING

Kos Town is popular with tourists. Along the waterfront and up the backstreets there are numerous shops offering souvenirs and a wide assortment of tourist related items.

LOCAL CURRENCY

The unit of currency in is the Euro. All Euro notes and coins are legal tender in all countries of the EU. Most stores accept major credit cards and debit cards. ATM’s are commonly available. Local banks are the best location to convert your currency to Euros.

POST OFFICE AND TELEPHONE

The postal service in Greece is known as ELTA. There is a local Post Office located #12 Vassileos Pavlou.

Dial the following access numbers to use a personal calling card:

AT&T: 00.800.1311

MCI: 00.800.1211

TOURIST INFORMATION

A Tourist Information Center is located on Akti Koundouriou, next to the Town Hall.

TRANSPORTATION

EU driving licenses are accepted for car rentals. All other visitors may be required to show an International Driving License. Taxis are metered and have fixed rates which should be posted. They are reasonably priced especially when compared to many other EU countries.

USEFUL WORDS AND PHRASES

The Greek translation used here is spelled phonetically.

Hello - Yia sou
How are you? - Ti kanis
I'm fine - Ime kala
Please - Parakalo
Thank you - Efharisto
Yes - Ne
No - Ohi
Good-bye - Yia sou