

# Comeback Kos

The Dodecanese island is sometimes overlooked in favour of other Greek getaways, but **Alice Barnes-Brown** discovers how it is regaining its popularity

**A**s famous for its buzzing nightlife as for being the birthplace of the father of medicine, Hippocrates, Kos is on the cusp of a comeback. Home to ancient archaeological sites, a medieval castle and beautiful beaches, it has as many fascinating attractions as Rhodes or Santorini, yet sees fewer British visitors.

Once a staple destination of the 18-30s market, Kos has seen tourism slow in the wake of a devastating earthquake in 2017 and negative headlines relating to the ongoing refugee crisis. The island has also been slightly slower to bounce back from the pandemic than its Hellenic rivals – but that may be about to change. TravelSupermarket's bookings for Kos from January to May are 69% up on the same period last year. And with a spate of spruced-up hotels, could the island's fortunes be turning at last?

## TAKING FLIGHT

After blowing hot and cold on its Heathrow to Kos route over the past few years, British Airways reinstated the service on May 18. The weekly

Saturday flights will run until September 28, providing British travellers with another London gateway.

Plus, as part of Jet2.com's biggest-ever Greece programme, this year the airline is operating a new Liverpool route and an extra service each week from Manchester, and has extended its Edinburgh to Kos route into October.

## SEASONAL DELIGHTS

The summer season for Kos begins in April, a fraction earlier than for other Greek islands. The climate is certainly conducive to shoulder-season breaks, with temperatures in the low-20s in April, October and November.

Adult-only hotel Oku Kos is making the most of the longer travel window with new packages: in the shoulder seasons, guests can book wellness-oriented deals that include a Revive and Indulge Escape. The package features two Hippocrates-inspired spa treatments (think mixed-pressure massages and Greek olive oil scrubs), a guided hike to Mount Dikeos plus a private beach yoga or meditation session. ➤

PICTURE: Cyprian/Grecofish/Kos Imperial

# DESTINATIONS

## GREECE & CYPRUS | KOS

### ASK THE expert



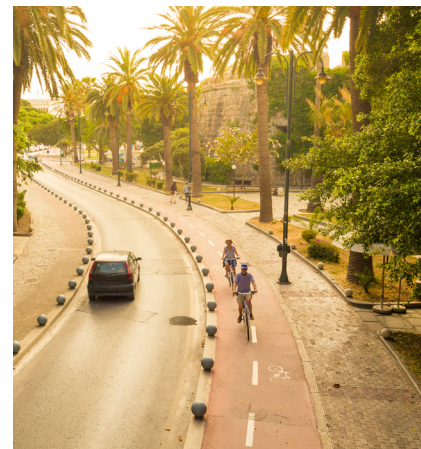
**Emilia Berni**  
head of marketing,  
Olympic Holidays

“Our Kos and Kalymnos Island Hop is a sought-after itinerary this year. Kos is great for families, teeming with historical and cultural attractions, as well as great beaches for watersports and windsurfing enthusiasts. It’s less than an hour to Kalymnos – and the two islands complement each other perfectly. Kos can be reached from airports across the UK, with the new BA route convenient for those keen to fly from Heathrow. Accommodation is plentiful, with something to suit all budgets, from small properties oozing local charm all the way through to five-star luxury.”



**CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:** Grecotel Kos Imperial; bike path leading to Neratzia Castle; suite with private pool at Oku Kos; a local bar in Kos Town

PICTURES: Shutterstock/Kadagan, Cegli; Georg Roske



### REDESIGNED RESORTS

Grecotel’s recent renovation of its Kos Imperial hotel includes two new pool bars and an upgrade of its minimalist rooms with bamboo furniture – adding to the resort’s tropical feel. The hotel has also joined Grecotel’s LuxME collection, which will add new seafood and sparkling-wine restaurant Lobsteria across its properties this summer.

In Kos Town, the Kos Divine Hotel and Suites has been given a fresh look for 2024, with a new rooftop bar gazing over the marina’s twinkling lights and floor-to-ceiling windows in all the rooms – perfect for admiring orange Kos sunsets.

Some renovations are designed to attract families to Kos. In the quiet beach resort of Mastichari, the family-focused Ammos Luxury Resort has had a comprehensive redesign, giving its rooms, lobby, restaurant and pool area a muted refresh that’ll appeal to both kids and grown-ups.

Marmari, the next resort town along the coast, known for its 1.25-mile sandy beach and strip of waterfront shops and tavernas, is also seeing some family-friendly upgrades. The E-Geo Easy Living Resort, which has 20 hectares of lush gardens, opened in May 2023, with separate areas for

families and adults. This year, there’s new family accommodation, featuring swim-up and balcony rooms that offer access to the shared pool below.

### ON THE WATER

A popular port of call for lines including Holland America, MSC Cruises, Celestyal, Azamara, Emerald and Seabourn, Kos is about to see another cruise brand lay anchor: the new Four Seasons Yachts. From April 2026, the Greek Isles featuring Göcek and Kos itinerary will stop off on the island for a day. As they sail into port, clients will pass the crumbling walls of Neratzia Castle, built by the Knights of St John in the 15th century. Once ashore, they can explore the Byzantine-Ottoman old town, travel back in time at the Roman odeon and restored Pompeii-like villa, or sit under a plane tree at the spot where Hippocrates is said to have taught his medical students – all within a 10-minute walk of the dock.

### BIKE HAVEN

Kos’s reputation for being bike-friendly is longstanding: between 1912 and 1943, when Italian soldiers occupied the Dodecanese, they

brought their bikes with them – a practical way of getting around the island’s largely flat hinterlands. The locals adopted the habit, and today, there are about 6,500 bikes available to rent. There’s even a dedicated five-mile cycle path that runs from Kos town to the Psalidi birdwatching wetlands.

A 2.5-mile extension to the little resort of Agios Fokas is also in the works, which would mean visitors could cycle from a range of resorts – including Grecotel, Tui and Mitsis properties – directly into town without needing to venture onto the main roads. The Greek government is also making moves for Kos to become the first Greek island to be part of the EuroVelo long-distance cycling network. The wheels of fortune are most definitely spinning in Kos. **TW**

### BOOK IT

**Cyplon Holidays** sells seven nights’ half-board at the Grecotel LuxME Kos Imperial from £1,355 per person, based on two sharing a Garden View room. The price includes flights from Stansted on June 17, private return transfers and luggage. [cyplon.co.uk](https://www.cyplon.co.uk)