

“A Knights' Island” in the Discover Collection of Ramblers Worldwide Holidays, Grade 3 (leisurely) - April 2025 - Alison, Norma, Shelagh

Rhodes has a rich cultural history with influences from ancient Greek, Persian, Byzantine, Knights of St John (Hospitalliers), Jewish & Ottoman Turkish civilisations. After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Italy occupied Rhodes, along with the other islands of the Dodecanese, from 1912 to 1943. Later, the island was taken over by Germany during World War II, and then by the British. Finally, in 1947, Rhodes became part of Greece.

The focus of this holiday was leisurely walking plus ample time for sightseeing. Daily walks were between 3 to 5 miles, with occasional ascents of up to 200m, although some walks required climbing steep steps. Sturdy walking shoes were adequate, plus occasional use of poles.

We were 18 in the group, all very friendly, plus our leader, Paul Nye, who was there with his wife, Venetia. Some may remember them when they were members of Wycombe Ramblers, before relocating to Clevedon, near Bristol. Paul was a reassuring and well organised leader, amply supported by Venetia. We were based in Rhodes Town at the Best Western Plaza Hotel. Rooms were comfortable and well equipped, although the location was at times noisy. Meals were taken in the buffet restaurant, plus in local restaurants on four evenings. Overall the food & service was good, except in one restaurant where the chef had failed to appear, and we had to wait the best part of two hours for our meals!

On the first morning a local guide, Irene, took us around Rhodes Town and into the medieval walled city, which is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It was a fascinating tour, with 'information overload' but it gave us an overview. Lunch in a local restaurant, followed by a walk around the ancient ramparts and around the headland completed our orientation of the town.

The next day we took a coach to visit Lindos, located on the Bay of St Paul, on the opposite side of the island. The small & attractive town is dominated by the Acropolis, said to have been constructed by the ancient Greeks. It is worth the climb to see the spectacular views and appreciate the history of the site.

On another day we visited the Acropolis of Rhodes, a large site, which has only been partially excavated but which gives a fascinating look into past civilisations, as did our visits to the monastery at Filerimos, the castle at Kritinias and the ancient site of Kamiros.

We also enjoyed a relaxing boat trip to the island of Symi, with its colourful harbour. In the past Symi was an important centre for the construction of boats and for sponge fishing. Tourism is now the main industry, as with the rest of Rhodes.

On our last morning we had time to visit the Jewish Museum, with its evocative and emotional history, and also the Archaeological Museum, housed in the former hospital of the Knights of St John, with its impressive rooms and peaceful garden.

The weather was warm, sunny & mostly dry, except for a spectacular deluge whilst we were visiting Lindos, and rain as we were departing. Overall, Rhodes did not disappoint!

Alison Hales, Norma Fazey & Shelagh Wells