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the element of style

97 exotic explorations

all things summer:

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shorts-sighted
packing heat
beach reads
wine down

surviving detox

**patricia
field:**
what's in store

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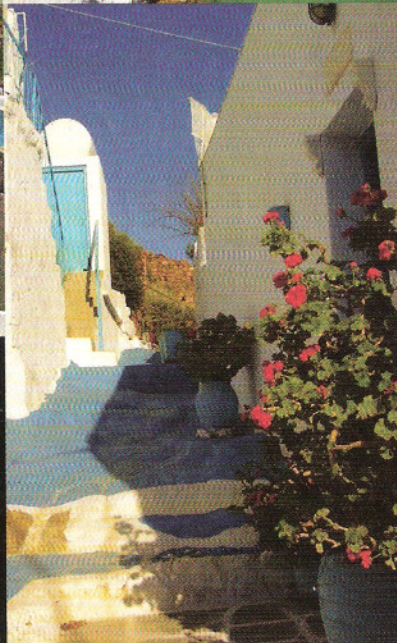
free
stuff

where the streets have no names

Discovering the winding roads and brilliant beaches
of this Greek gem.



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- Clockwise from top:
1. Rock formations in Kleftiko
 2. Beach at Sarakiniko
 3. Scenic walkway in Plaka
 4. Deserted rowboat on the shore in Firopotamos
 5. Sea kayakers take a break in Klima
 6. Taverna in Adamas



In Milos, the small horseshoe-shaped island in the Cyclades cluster in Greece, you'll find postcard-like images of the old-country keeping pace with lively beach bars, chic cafes and laid-back lounges. You'll find old couples driving slow-moving tractors down dirt roads as bikini-clad beachgoers whiz past them on neon-colored rice-rocket motorcycles. There are still no traffic lights, streets aren't clearly marked and directions are given in a series of hand gestures punctuated by landmarks. Instead of high-rise hotels and resorts, you'll find stylish villas draped in magenta bougainvilleas and well-kept traditional homes accented with folksy embroidered linens and rustic glass-paned cupboards. Near Plaka, the island's charming capital, you can even stay in one of the renovated windmills.

I began my short trip in the main port city, Adamas, with a syrupy Greek coffee at **Aktaion Café** (+30 22870.22550), shaded from the brilliant sun by a bamboo pergola. Listening to the clicking of backgammon tiles from a nearby table, I watched as tourists crammed onto a dusty green bus at the stop across the road. At the adjacent taxi stand, I scanned the sun-bleached rate map and decided on Agia Kyriaki beach.

Driving an immaculate gray Mercedes (i.e. a cab), my driver, Nikos, tried to convince me to go to a different beach because he was worried that his car would get dusty on the dirt road. Sure enough, when the asphalt ended, without a word, he rolled up my window from the driver's side. In Greece, sometimes the customer isn't always right.

While it was hard to choose between Milos' abundant beaches, Agia Kyriaki quickly became my favorite for people watching. Here Athenian hipsters play pickup games of beach volleyball and drink Gordon's Space (bottled spiked lemon soda) and frappés (potent ice coffee) all day. The beach bar hums with a summery mix of reggae classics, synthetic pop and old-school trance. These days of drinking usually end with debauched late-afternoon parties — tanned boy and girls in skimpy bathing suits running around dousing each other with beer and salt water.

That afternoon, I bumped into my local friend Christo, and before I could argue, I found myself squeezing into a battered Jeep with six strangers to catch the sunset from Plathiena Beach on the north side of the island. After the sun set, we headed back to town for showers and made a rendezvous to reconvene at the bus stop for dinner at ten at **Ergina** in Tripti (+30 22870.22524), another village near Plaka.

Beach Bumming

From small alcoves to wide sandy stretches, Milos has a myriad of beaches. The only way to see Kleftiko — its crowning beach, where you can swim in caves — is by boat. There are several boat excursions around the island. On the South Side, you'll find firiplaka. Near firiplaka, eat at **Tarantela** restaurant (+ 30 22870.31346) overlooking Provatas, where you'll find savory *meze* like fried eggplant and zucchini and *saganaki* (fried cheese drizzled with fresh lemon juice) and grilled specialties like chicken kebab with roast vegetables. Then there's Agia Kyriaki and Paliochori. After hanging out at Agia Kyriaki, go to neighboring Paliochori for lunch at one of the three beachfront tavernas, followed by an afternoon swim in the clear water of this white pebble beach. On the North Side, there's Firopotamos. Nestled in a mountain backdrop, several small white houses with brightly painted wood shutters and doors make this lagoon-like beach feel like a tiny fishing village. Last, there's Sarakiniko, where large volcanic rock formations make you feel like you're swimming in a lunar lake, especially on full moon nights.

Ergina had the same humble appearance of most Greek tavernas: stiff wood chairs with woven-straw seats, small square wood tables and flimsy clip-on tablecloths — even the dishes arrive on austere aluminum plates. Despite this stripped-down ambiance, the dishes were distinctly flavorful, with homemade specialties like *pitarakia* (cheese pies) and *domatokeftedes* (tomato patties) to the *meze* (tapas) standards, *tzatziki* (garlicky cucumber and yogurt dip) and *horiatiki* (village salad of tomatoes, cucumbers, onions, olives, bell peppers and feta cheese).

After a few carafes of Retsina (Greek wine), we were ready to head back downtown. In Adamas, we started out at **Akri** (+30 22870.22604), a laid-back lounge overlooking the harbor, where Christo was the DJ. Music-wise it's the best spot on the island but, party-wise, nearby Aragosta is better. Christo brought us delicious cocktails made with freshly squeezed peach and watermelon juice. Later, we headed over to **Aragosta** (Aragosta.gr) where the Agia Kyriaki crowd was already dancing in a tiny non-air-conditioned room. A bald guy with iridescent sunglasses on his head blew on a whistle, one of the bartenders flickered the lights and the DJ remixed belly-dancing music. We danced until dawn. **CEMILE KAVOUNTZIS**

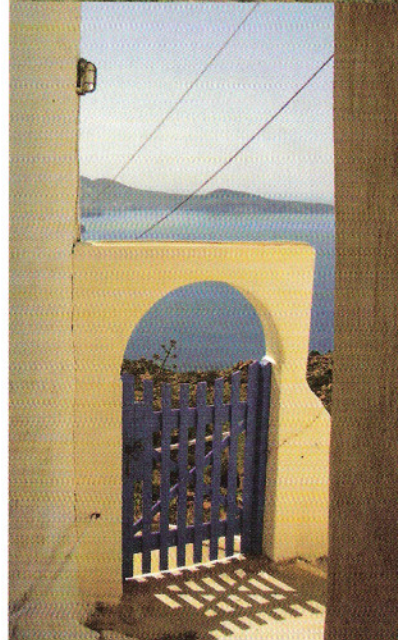
Milos 101

For help planning your trip, several local travel agencies have websites, but two of the better ones are: Milos Travel (MilosTravel.com) — where you'll find ferry schedules, plus car rental and lodging info — and Terry's Travel (TerrysMilosTravel.com), run by an ex-pat New Yorker.



Don't Leave Home Without It

Because you'll be spending most of your day frolicking on the beach with sun-drenched beauties, you'll need the appropriate bikini. **MORPHINE GENERATION's** black string bikini with the Gun Metal "M Wreath" monogram print will be sure to raise some Greek eyebrows. Get yours at MorphineGeneration.com.



- Clockwise from top:
1. Seascape view from church in Pollonia
 2. Sea kayaking in the caves of Kleftico
 3. Caves of Kleftico
 4. The Plaka
 5. Seascape view from hilltop in Tsigrado
 6. Aerial view of Adamas

