

HISTORY OF MYKONOS

When exploring the history of Mykonos it is difficult to find an accurate beginning as its development is richly entwined with fact and legend dating back thousands of years. If we consider its place in ancient Greek mythology it is said both Hercules and Poseidon had a hand in destroying some of the Giants that opposed Zeus on this very island. Later, as the story goes, the island was named in honor of Apollo's grandson Mykons. During these ancient times, Mykonos, due to its proximity to Delos, which was then highly populated, became very important as a supply island. The short 2-kilometer distance between the islands was frequently traveled. For religious reasons it was said that no one should be allowed to be born or die on Delos. If this were true and this culture center so sacred, it may suggest that Mykonos had its roots as a vacation island long before modern times.



From an archeological point of view the Ionians were found to have settled on Mykonos in the early part of the 11th century BC but recent discoveries uncovered remnants from the Neolithic Kares tribe dating back to as far as 3000BC.

As the island of Delos began to develop as a sacred center, Mykonos was swept along with the influences of the different people who would come to control the region in the years to come. The Phoenicians, Macedonians and Athenians left their mark but it was not until the coming of Alexander the Great the fate of Mykonos took a turn for the better by becoming a commercial center for agriculture and maritime trade. High quality clay deposits also improved the island's importance, as ceramic containers were the best means of preserving and exporting goods during this ancient time.

Due to its geographic location as a crossroads for shipping and its close proximity to Delos, the island's future continued to flourish reaching a state of enormous wealth during the time of Roman occupation and the reign of Augustus Caesar.

During the Middle Ages Mykonos fell under the rule of the Venetians and in the years that followed found themselves to be victimized by the Saracens and latter the Turks who dominated the area from the 14th century. At this time the slave trade was common and thousands of islanders were abducted. The Greek War of Independence, which ended with its liberation from the Turks in 1830, spawned the Mykonian heroine Manto Mavroyenous who rallied the island's people and defeated a Turkish onslaught in 1822.



Starting as early as ancient times, the cycladic islands as well as the rest of the Mediterranean sea had become famous as a natural breeding ground for piracy. The island of Mykonos received its fair share of buccaneer influence, which lasted right up until the beginning of the 19th century.

With the coming of steamships also came the first signs of modern day tourism. World War II quickly put an end to this as Mykonos while experiencing German occupation suffered greatly through starvation. It took until the mid 50's for tourism to rise again. Due to the islands unique architecture, relative seclusion and hospitality it soon became a haven for the rich and famous.

Today Mykonos enjoys a success unparalleled in its history by having become one of the worlds most famous vacation islands

HISTORY OF DELOS

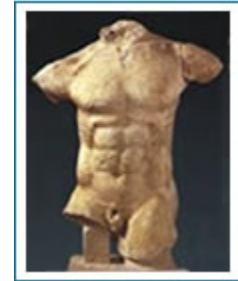
The history of Delos is rich as it contains the most varied collection of ruins in all of Greece.

Dating back to 3000BC, Neolithic dwellings prove the arrival of prehistoric settlers but the real story has its beginnings from around 1500BC. As recorded in the mythology of ancient Greece, Delos was believed to be the birthplace of Apollo the son of Zeus. The Mycenaean's of that time were first to recognize the island as a place of worship but it was the coming of the Ionians in 1100 BC where major development began. In order to acquire spiritual and political status various Ionian leagues began to compete by building elaborate temples and shrines to Apollo and other related gods. The Athenians being superior in their contributions, in 425BC decreed a purification of the island. All graves were removed and it became law that no one would be allowed to die or be born on Apollo's island.



As populations grew throughout the whole eastern Mediterranean, commercial trade also increased. Near the end of the fourth century BC the Macedonians were in control and because of Delos' geographically central location, turned the island slowly into an important trade and commercial center. The Romans were next to follow and it was during their reign the population grew, made up not only of Greeks and Italians but also Phoenicians, Syrians, Egyptians, Palestinians and Jews. Delos is a small island, which covers an area of approximately 5 square kilometers. At this time in history it was estimated to have had a population of 25000 people.

The decline of Delos happened gradually through the first century BC and into the first century AD. Rome began to concentrate its attention on Rhodes as its eastern commercial port and the religious beliefs of ancient times slowly gave way to those of its varied inhabitants. Pillaging of the island began as early as the eight century AD but the real devastation of its buildings took place through the reign of the Ottoman Empire. The abundant supply of marble was crushed and used as building material and the bronze cramps that once held the ancient structures together were removed to aid in the increasing demand for metal.



What remains of Delos' history can be seen today, mainly through the efforts of the French School of Archaeology whose excavations of the site began in 1873. In digging through the vast collection of archaic ruins the story of the island began to unfold. Today, Delos has been internationally recognized for its importance as one of the most famous centers of ancient times.

One of the advantages of visiting Mykonos is to be able to experience a temporary leap back into history. The island of Delos, one of the most famous archeological sites of Greece is only a short boat trip away. Daily excursions set off for the harbor of what was once a great sacred and commercial center with ruins dating back to over five thousand years.