

Greece

171 MAPS
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ISLAND HOPPING CHAPTER
FOR EASY ROUTE PLANNING

Sleeping

Few of Fira's sleeping options are cheap, and even budget places like their prices in July and August. Domatia touts at the port reach impressive heights of hysteria in their bids for attention. Some claim their rooms are in town, when they're actually a long way out; ask to see a map showing the exact location. If you're looking for a caldera view, expect to pay at least double the prices of elsewhere. Many hotels in Fira, especially on the caldera rim, cannot be reached by vehicle. If you have heavy luggage, this is worth remembering, especially as there may be several flights of steps leading to and from your accommodation. Most budget and midrange places offer free transfer to port or airport and will porter your luggage to and from your accommodation. Some top-end places may charge up to €15 for transfers.

BUDGET

Santorini Camping (☎ 22860 22944; www.santorini-camping.gr; camp sites per adult/child/tent €10/6/5; (P) (M) (R)) Located on the eastern outskirts of town, this camping ground has some shade and decent facilities. There's a self-service restaurant, minimarket and pool. It's 400m east of Plateia Theotokopoulou. There are two-person bungalows also with air-con (€70), with one equipped for disabled use.

Villa Roussa (☎ 22860 23220; www.villaroussa.gr; Dikigala; s/d €55/75; (P) (M) (R)) You don't have a caldera view but this small hotel is right at the heart of town and is hard to beat for value with its bright and immaculate rooms. It even has a swimming pool.

Villa San Giorgio (☎ 22860 23516; www.sangiorgio-villa.gr; s/d/tr €60/70/85; (M) (R)) Not a scenic location but very close to the centre of Fira and an excellent option with its decent rooms and friendly owners.

Hotel Sofia (☎ 22860 22802; firostefani; s/d €60/75; (M) (R)) These fresh, comfy rooms at the heart of Firostefani are a pleasant alternative to the bustle of Fira. Fira's centre is about 1.5km south, along a lovely caldera-edge walkway. Breakfast is €8.

Maria's Rooms (☎ 22850 25143, 6973254461; Agiou Mina; d €70; (M)) A handful of charming rooms open onto a shared terrace that has unbeatable caldera and sunset views. Rooms are small but immaculate, and blissfully peaceful.

MIDRANGE

Apartments Gaby (☎ 22860 22057; Nomikou; d €65-95; tr €110, apt €120; (M)) The rooms on the series of roof terraces at this excellent place guarantee sunset views, and there's a quiet and reassuring local feel that transcends Fira's surface gloss. Gaby is just beyond the Petros M Nomikos Conference Centre on the caldera-edge path where it reaches Firostefani.

Loizos Apartments (☎ 22860 24046; www.loizos.gr; s €75, d €85-95, tr/apt €110/140; (P) (M) (R)) Recently refurbished and with friendly, professional service, Loizos is one of the best places in Fira. It's in a quiet cul-de-sac, yet has the advantage of vehicular access and is only minutes from the centre of town and the caldera edge. Rooms range from standard to deluxe and all are bright, clean and comfortable. Those on the front upper floor have a panoramic view towards Kamari and the sea. Breakfast is €7. The same owners have cheaper accommodation (single/double €55/65) at Messaria, 2.5km southeast of Fira.

Hotel Ketí (☎ 22860 22324; www.hotelketi.gr; Agiou Mina; d €90-120, tr/ste €117/140; (M) (R)) Recently refurbished, Hotel Ketí is one of the smaller 'sunset view' hotels in a peaceful caldera niche. Its attractive traditional rooms are carved into the cliffs. Half of the rooms have Jacuzzis.

Our pick: Aroma Suites (☎ 22860 24112; www.aromasuites.gr; Agiou Mina; s €120, d €140-160; (M) (R)) In an excellent location at the quieter end of the caldera edge, and more accessible than similar places, this boutique hotel has charming service to match its overall ambience. Stylish, modern facilities enhance traditional caldera interiors, such as in the honeymoon suite: a classic Fira cave chamber, complete with Jacuzzi.

Also recommended:

Pelican Hotel (☎ 22860 23113; www.pelican.gr; Danezi; s/d/tr incl breakfast €70/80/100; (M) (R)) There's no caldera view, but rooms are comfy and well appointed at this longstanding hotel only metres from the centre of town.

Nonis (☎ 22860 24112; s/d €120/140) Run by the owners of Aroma Suites, Noni's has similar rooms with terrace Jacuzzis and superb caldera views.

TOP END

Hotel Atlantis (☎ 22860 22232; www.atlantishotel.gr; Mitropoleos; s/d incl breakfast €195-300; (P) (M) (R)) The Atlantis is a handsome old building that overlooks the southern end of Ypapantis with dignity. It's full of cool, relaxing lounges

and terraces, and the bright and airy bedrooms in the front have caldera views. The price range indicates views and window or balcony options.

Mill Houses (☎ 22860 27117; www.millhouses.gr; Firostefani; ste incl breakfast €210-410; (M) (R)) Located on the side of the caldera at Firostefani, these superb studios and suites are full of light and Cycladic colour. The creative decor and stylish furnishings go with first-class facilities and service. A sunset view is inevitable.

Porto Fira Suites (☎ 22860 22849; www.portofira.gr; Agiou Mina; 2-/3-/4-person ste incl breakfast €274/336/376; (M) (R) (P)) This top-rated Fira hotel merges tradition with luxury and modern conveniences. Rooms are individually furnished and have huge stone-based beds and Jacuzzis. There's a cafe-bar and restaurant and breakfasts are lush affairs.

Strass Residences (☎ 22860 33765; www.thestrass.com; Firostefani; ste incl breakfast €280-420; (M) (R)) They even manage palm trees round the pool at this exclusive little enclave of three luxury studios, all in glorious white. It feels as if the rest of the world is miles away, but Fira is just down the road.

Eating

Tourist-trap eateries, often with overpriced, indifferent food, are still an unfortunate feature of summertime Fira. In some places singles, and even families with young children, may find themselves unwelcome in the face of pushy owners desperate to keep tables full and their turnover brisk. However, there are excellent exceptions.

BUDGET

There are numerous fast-food outlets and cafes in Fira. Plateia Theotokopoulou has a few cafe-bars where the terraces are great for seeing all human life pass by.

Vythos (☎ 22860 22285) A local favourite, located at the start of the *plateia*.

Mylos Cafe (☎ 22860 25640; firostefani; (M) (R)) On the caldera edge in Firostefani, this stylish and relaxing venue is located in a converted windmill and is the ideal place for relaxing drinks and light snacks. It has a unique circular internet area (per hour €3.50) on the top floor and the cafe is a wi-fi hotspot.

Piccolino (☎ 22860 22595; Danezi; snacks €1-2.30) A snack bar and takeaway that dishes out a terrific range of sandwiches, wraps and other snacks, as well as hot and cold drinks.

NRG (☎ 22860 24997; Erythrou Stavrou; dishes €2.20-6.20) Still one of the best places to stop for a snack at the heart of Fira, this popular little crêperie offers crêpes, sandwiches, tortillas and an ever-popular Indian curry (€5), as well as a range of ice cream, coffee and smoothies.

Nikolas (☎ 22860 24550; Erythrou Stavrou; dishes €6-9) The traditional Nikolas just keeps on flying the flag for the village taverna, at the heart of Fira. No-nonsense service dishes out grilled calamari, cuttlefish in a wine sauce and beef stew with onions.

Ouzeri (☎ 6945849921; Fabrika Shopping Centre; dishes €6.50-13.50) Fish dishes are especially good at this central *mezedhopoleio* and include prawn *saganaki* and a seafood platter of mixed fish. Starters such as artichoke *saganaki* ring the changes, as do meat dishes that include *youtetsi* (veal in tomato sauce with pasta) and pork fillet in a mustard sauce. Vegetarians can enjoy Dakos salads and a variety of nonmeat starters.

You'll also find several *gyros* stands in and around Fira's main square.

MIDRANGE

Lithos (☎ 22860 24421; Agiou Mina; mains €7-19.50) Amid a swath of eateries on the caldera edge, Lithos stands out for its well-prepared dishes and attentive service. Choose from persuasive starters such as fava with cheese and cherry tomatoes. Salads are crisp and fresh and mains cover poultry, meat, fish and shellfish dishes.

Zafora (☎ 22860 23203; crn Nomikou & M Nomikou; mains €8.50-22.50) Sturdy Greek classics come with stunning caldera views at this big restaurant near the cable-car station. The pork tenderloin marinated in red wine, ginger, honey and soy sauce is a favourite and there are fish dishes, pasta and crêpes also on offer and breakfasts at €4.50 to €8.50.

Ampelos (☎ 22860 25554; Fabrika Shopping Centre; mains €10-25) There's plenty of space in this central Fira restaurant with its 2nd-floor terrace with a view. Try the grilled shrimp in a red pepper sauce with rice or the mussels *saganaki* or settle for a selection of such starters as stuffed mushrooms with dill, garlic and parsley in white wine and the speciality pie of green onion, dill, pine nuts and Parmesan cheese. There's a pleasing house wine or excellent Santorini and mainland reds and whites for up to €50 or so a bottle.