

GT

**30
ICONS**
30 YEARS OF
GAY TIMES

**EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEWS**

Barbra Streisand
Sir Ian McKellen
Joan Rivers
Tony Blair
Bette Midler
Russell T Davies
Annie Lennox >
Conchita Wurst
Lord Michael Cashman
Mark Gatiss
Eric McCormack and
Leslie Jordan
James Sutton
Jimmy Somerville
Holly Johnson
Boy George
Julian Clary
Andy Bell
John Waters on Divine



1984* SPECIAL COLLECTABLE 30TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION! *2014

M

Mykonos is that guy you hate.

He's got it all: looks, charm, elegance, poise, class... and every single post on his Instagram is a flawless, perfectly calculated yet effortless thirst trap.

Passing over Athens to cross the Aegean Sea on the flight in is a glorious tease in itself. Crystal blue waters glisten below, and sun-drenched islands dotted in all directions offer a glimpse of the typical Greek experience – pure blanched houses, brashly white in the sunlight, tiny crosses of minute Orthodox churches, and alternate wide beaches and intimate coves.

At 40 square miles, Mykonos is about the size of Inner London, and sits in the South Aegean, just north of big hitters such as Santorini and Naxos islands. But despite its relatively small size, Mykonos is a varied package of extreme style and glamour alongside more rustic traditional Greek fare.

Mykonos Town, the island's beating heart, is a chic network of interweaving streets and alleys, ducking under stairs to higher level apartments and running threads to and from the seafront. Each turn offers another array of stunning white-fronted jewellery shops glittering with custom-made (and often made-in-store) gold and silver creations, while other stores spread out beautiful lines of cool linen shirts out front, enticing you into breezy, hip interiors plush with high-class goods from Bermudas to espadrilles via panama hats and more traditional Greek tunics.

Known as Little Venice, the charm of this area transforms completely by night.

While not quite at the degenerate level of Ibiza, Zante, or similar hedonistic

destinations, Mykonos is an island that knows how to have a good time. In contrast to the spewing early-20s masses of other destinations, Mykonos' bars are more high-class, catering to a slightly older clientele more likely to order a bottle of champagne than a large batch of Jägerbombs.

Bao's bar on the seafront is a cut above the rest, but other good options include Caprice, Galleraki, and Semeli. And, of course, Mykonos has its healthy share of gay bars and clubs pumping out the tunes we crave in the seditious environments we love. Again, things run a little more elegantly than elsewhere – and while drinks prices will often reflect this, the experience more than compensates. Jackie O', overlooking the old port of Mykonos Town, is a fantastic intimate space with cheery, fabulously camp bartenders, and a design that's at once traditionally Greek and fortunately modern. Other gay bars include Porta and Babylon, and during the peak summer season these bars stay open – often heavingly, sweatily so – until long after the break of day. While much of the crowd is comprised of more genteel gay travellers from the UK, Germany, and the like, there's a local flavour too as seasonal workers at Mykonos' hotels pack in with native Mykonians to keep the temperature up as the night grinds on.

But there's more to Mykonos than its main town and port. To escape the, at times, synthetic glitz of the touristic hub, head up into the island's hills to Ano Mera, a small village on the eastern half of Mykonos. A fresh-produce on the picturesque main square sells local fare – including the island's signature salty, spicy cheese, Kopanisti Mykonou, while the 18th century Monastery of Panagia Tourliani provides an insight into Greek Orthodox customs, with a gorgeous marble bell tower and fastidious carvings. The village comes to life in the evening as the tavernas in the main square fill up.



ABOVE
KENSHO HOTEL
MYKONOS

Don't come too early, though – serious Greeks don't sit down to eat until long after 8pm. We ate at Taverna Vangelis, which provides an exhaustive spread of Greek salads, tender and succulent meats, astonishingly good traditional fish soup – with white fish heads and juicy fat shrimps dissected at the table and dropped into the soup bowl – and a never-ending supply of boisterously full-bodied Greek wines.

In the south-west of the island sits the gorgeous Ornos Bay, which envelops the quaint village of Ornos

and its beautiful beach. We stayed at Kensho Boutique Hotel & Suites, a sumptuous addition to the island that only fully launched this year. Kensho itself is a Japanese zen term, where 'ken' means seeing and 'sho' means nature, and soothing, meticulous, intelligent design throughout pays homage to that foundation.

Each of the 35 rooms and suites is individually designed by an A-list cast of interior designers including Paola Navone, Kenneth Cobonpue, and Foscarini, and each has



a unique twist while staying true to the hotel's overarching design vision of modern relaxation with a twist of many traditional Greek and Mykonian materials. Almost all have private Jacuzzis or plunge pools, and all come with sumptuous beds and luxury Hermes toiletries worthy of a small heist at the end of a stay. Service is flawless, combining old-world deference with a hint of modern informality and individuality – and the bar's expert mixologist Panos is as much as a knowledgeable and



GREECE

Kensho Hotel, Mykonos

WORDS *jack may*

amicable conversationalist as he is a phenomenal drinks creator, and ample justification for a visit.

On the food front, chef George Stylianoudakis, whose international career includes a stint at the Michelin-starred Le Manoir outside Oxford, is the master of all things gastronomic. Under his supervisions, Kensho's stylish open kitchens produce astounding tasting menus and à la carte creations that combine 'just like grandma used to make' touches from his native Crete with flashes of profoundly modern originality, and are fully deserving of the international awards for which they've been nominated. His work can be enjoyed under the deft supervision of the attentive waiters in the tastefully-designed restaurant, or under the more private auspices of the intensely romantic roof terrace with its view out over Ornos Bay and the Aegean. Kensho's spa provides expert massages on a level playing field with any of the finest salons in London, and we enjoyed a full-body aromatherapy message roughly akin to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Mykonos is a high-class destination that hasn't lost its traditional down-to-earth Greek touches. With a smattering of varied beaches around its ragged coast offering romantic sunsets or thrill-seeking water sports adventures, the island has a cool-headed but vibrant atmosphere of possibility. From its pulsing gay bars to the delicate relaxation of top-end hotels like Kensho, Mykonos is a diverse offering, and an undervalued gem for the discerning traveller. ●

Flights are available from London to Mykonos through [easyjet](http://easyjet.com), easyjet.com. A Zen room at Kenshō Boutique Hotel and Suites starts from £405 per room per night, based on two people sharing, while a Deluxe room with external jacuzzi starts from £520 per room per night. Both include a welcome fruit basket and bottle of Prosecco on arrival. kenshomykonos.com. [@kenshomykonos](https://www.instagram.com/kenshomykonos)