



## **News from the Greek island of Rhodes**

**29 June 2009**

Rhodes is the largest of the Dodecanese islands and enjoys hot summers and mild winters. Here is the latest news from the island.

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### **1. Rhodes awarded more Blue Flag Beaches than any other European island**

Rhodes has the cleanest beaches in the European Union with more Blue Flag awards than any other island. 33 Rhodian beaches have been awarded the international Blue Flag status for excelling in safety, amenities, cleanliness and environmental standards.

Included in the list of Blue Flag beaches in Rhodes are ten in Faliraki, two in Lardos, and three in Ladiko.

The Blue Flag Award is a voluntary eco-label program run by Denmark's Foundation for Environmental Education. The foundation grades beaches around the world based on a certain criteria such as water quality, infrastructure, services and environmental activities.

The Blue Flag Award is the highest a beach can be given and currently 3,300 Blue Flag beaches around the world have this. Greece is also ranked second in the world with 424, behind Spain with 493.

For more information visit [www.blueflag.org](http://www.blueflag.org)

### **2. Tourism numbers to Rhodes increase despite the economic turndown**

Despite the economic turndown and holidaymakers having to think more carefully about holidays, Rhodes has seen an increase of 26.4% in tourism arrivals in the first four months of 2009.

This emerges as Spain has seen a decrease of 11.9% and Portugal a decrease in 22% in tourism arrivals. The same report conducted by the Institute of Touristic

Research and Forecasts (ITEP) also states that Greece has seen a 7.3% decrease based on the available figures.

The decline in tourism arrivals has been put down to the economic recession and the strong Euro against the pound.

According to the website [www.youtravel.com](http://www.youtravel.com), Rhodes and Crete are enjoying a 27% increase in last minute holiday bookings compared to this time last year.

### **3. Scuba diving and snorkelling in Rhodes**

The waters around Rhodes Island are crystal clear with an abundance of marine life. Over 30 different species of fish and plants have been identified in Kalithea Bay.

Kalithea Bay is the only legal dive site around the island. This law was passed by the archaeological department to protect the underwater archaeological sites.

Although this is the only dive area in Rhodes, there are some interesting features to explore such as The Mushroom; Blue Hole and Crystal Fish Alley.

The Mushroom is a large rock with many entrances and exits for divers to swim all the way through. There are also many natural sponges growing on the underside of it. The Blue Hole is a small cave which looks dark from the outside, but once divers swim in they will experience daylight above their heads. It is possible to surface in the Blue Hole. Crystal Fish Alley is an exceptionally clear stretch of water where schools of tiny fish swim and it is possible to see young barracuda in search of prey.

Octopus breed in Kalithea Bay between May and September. If divers are lucky they will see young ones swimming around the bay.

There are a number of dive centres on the island and many of the boats can be found in Mandraki Harbour. The local law in Rhodes states that divers must be between the ages of 12 – 60 and accompanied by certified diving instructors or have their PADI certificate.

For more information about Rhodes visit [www.rodosisland.gr](http://www.rodosisland.gr)

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