



Greek Islands Swimming Adventure: Rhodes and Symi

13th to 21st September 2018

Information Brochure and Program (v1)

In **September 2018** Otter Aquatics, in conjunction with Strel Swimming Adventures, will be running a week-long Greek island swimming adventure to Rhodes and Symi Islands.



Pedi Bay Symi Island, our Greek island home for a week

This information brochure provides the following information:

-  Accommodation and meals on Rhodes
-  A little about Rhodes
-  A little about Symi
-  Our swimming holiday
-  Program
-  Other trip information
-  Prices and registration
-  Getting there and back

Every day we will swim in and around the various bays and inlets of Symi Island. To give you an idea of the amount of swimming involved, we will do about 2km in the morning, have lunch on board our escort boat and, after lunch, swim another two kilometres – or thereabouts. The swims are not competitive (they are intended to be pleasurable!), there is no time pressure and you can sit out any swim – or abbreviate it – and ride in the escort boat if you want.

Our chief guide will be Borut Strel, the founder of Strel Swimming Adventures and the son of legendary marathon swimmer and 'big river man' Martin Strel.

Typical temperatures for September are 26 degrees in the water and 29 degrees in the air. Keep in mind that these temperatures are indicative only and may change slightly.

But first there is the medieval World Heritage-listed city of Rhodes for us to explore. The island of Rhodes is close to Symi and our group will be spending a couple of days there to experience this ancient part of Greek history and culture. Our group will gather in the foyer of our hotel in Rhodes at **6pm on Thursday 13th September 2018** for a welcome drink and to meet our fellow travellers for the start of what will be a week-long adventure to remember. We will then spend Friday 14th September and part of Saturday 15th September exploring and experiencing this ancient city.

Accommodation and meals on Rhodes

Details of our hotel in Rhodes will be advised shortly. I will attempt to get a hotel near Mandraki Harbour. Breakfasts will be included but lunches and dinners in Rhodes will be at our own expense.

A little about Rhodes

Rhodes was part of the Byzantine Empire from the 1st to the 12th centuries. From then until the 14th Century it came under the control of the Knights Hospitalier during the Crusades. Then it became part of the Ottoman Empire with the fall of Constantinople (now Istanbul) to the Turkish Ottomans in the 16th Century. In the 20th Century Rhodes at first came under the rule of Italy, then Germany occupied it in 1943. The Germans surrendered to the British in 1945 who then occupied the region for the next five years. It was ceded to Greece in 1947.

Rhodes' population is about 115,000. The predominant religion/culture is Greek Orthodox with minorities of Roman Catholics, Turkish Muslim and Jewish. Most of Rhodes' large pre-WW2 Jewish population was murdered by the occupying Germans during the war. There is a Jewish memorial in Rhodes city.

The predominant industry is tourism. After Crete, Rhodes is the most visited tourist place in Greece.

The Colossus of Rhodes, one of the Wonders of the Ancient World, was a statue of the Greek titan-god of the sun Helios, erected in the city of Rhodes in 280 BCE to celebrate Rhodes' victory over Cyprus. According to most contemporary descriptions, the Colossus stood approximately 70 cubits, or 33 metres – higher than the Statue of Liberty. It was destroyed during an earthquake in 22 BCE and never re-built. There are tentative plans to build a new Colossus at Rhodes Harbour, although the actual location of the original remains in dispute.



A little about Symi

Symi has been inhabited since ancient Greek times. It has changed hands many times since then following the vicissitudes of war between the Ottomans, the Romans and others in antiquity and, in modern times, between Turkey, Greece, Italy, Germany and the British for a short while after WW2. Now, of course, it is part of the Dodecanese chain of islands of Greece.



Symi Island

The area of Symi is 58 square kilometres of mostly mountainous terrain. Its nearest mainland neighbours are the Datça and Bozburun peninsulas in nearby Turkey. Its interior is dotted with small valleys and its coastline alternates between rocky cliffs and beaches and isolated coves. Its main town, located on the northeast coast consists of the lower town around the harbour, typically referred to as Yialos (or Gialos) and the upper town called Horio or Ano Symi.

The island's permanent population is about 2,500, most of whom are Greek Orthodox but there are minorities of Turkish Muslims and Roman Catholics. The main historical industries were shipbuilding and sponge diving, but these days it is tourism. With the increased income brought by tourism, many old buildings left destitute by various invaders have now been restored.



Our swimming holiday

On Saturday 15th September, we will take a ferry from Rhodes to Symi. That evening we will meet up with others in the Strel group at for a safety briefing followed by dinner. From there we follow Strel's program (see below) until about midday on Friday 21st September when we depart Symi for Rhodes and go our separate ways.

Our swimming holiday will be fully guided with comprehensive safety escort (three boats, two swimming guides, one local boat pilot) as well as coaching and stroke analysis. Each guest receives a Strel silicone swim hat and a water bottle. Should you require other swimming gear (e.g. wetsuit, fins, rash vest, pull buoy), you should bring them with you.

Accommodation and meals on Symi

We will be staying at Pedi Beach Hotel in the small village of Pedi on Symi Island, just a few kilometres from the main harbour town and ferry terminal of Gialos. The hotel is built in traditional style; it is locally owned and modern (it has wifi) and it is right on the beach. All breakfasts and two dinners (welcome and farewell) are included and provided at the hotel. All lunches are also included and prepared by our Greek boat crew. Other dinners are at our own cost and may be taken in the hotel, at one of the many tavernas in the village of Pedi or in the main town. Alcohol is not permitted during the day.



Pedi Beach Hotel

Hotel contact information

Pedi Beach Hotel, Symi 85600, Greece
 Tel: +30 2246071870
 Fax: +30 2246071982
 email: info@pedibeachhotel.gr
<http://www.pedibeachhotel.gr/>

Program

(This was written more than a year out from our trip so some details may change.)

Saturday 15th September

We meet at 6.30pm at our hotel in Pedi for the trip briefing. We will go through the week's plan in detail after which a welcome dinner is provided at the hotel.

Sunday 16th September

Before breakfast on the hotel's terrace we walk 20m onto the beach for a short acclimatisation swim. Following breakfast, we take our first boat ride on a comfortable Greek boat to St. George's (Agios Georgios) bay. A dramatic rocky cliff at the back of this bay makes it a perfect spot to start our first official 2km swim towards Nanou Bay. We follow the high cliffs of Symi on the eastern side. Lunch is on the boat at Nanou Bay. After our lunches have settled down we film you for your stroke analysis. Later on we analyse your stroke at the hotel. Our second 2.5km swim is from Nanou bay to Marathounda bay. We follow crystal clear water towards the Marathounda village. Return back to Pedi village.

Monday 17th September

Today we head north for an island hopping adventure. Our 45 minute boat drive takes us to Plati and Hondros islands where we start our first crossing swim to the larger Nimos

Island. Nimos Island is an uninhabited island with several secluded bays. We swim about 3km all the way until we reach the north-west cape of Makria. Lunch spot at Taviri's sheltered bay. After our lunch we can take part in snorkelling. For the second swim we follow the coast of Nimos Island from our lunch spot to the little Xilo islet. This route is usually well sheltered for the afternoon swimming. Boat drive back to Pedi.



Tuesday 18th September

Today we turn south towards Seskli Island. After about one hour boat journey we start swimming on the eastern side of Seskli towards Artikonisi Island and then onwards towards Skomisa Bay. Here we have a chance to explore the natural beauty of Seskli Island and get a great view back to Symi. After the walk we start our afternoon coastal swim from Skomisa Bay towards the western side of Seskli until we reach Troumpeto Island. Boat drive back to Pedi.

Wednesday 19th September

We start our day at 8.30am, slightly earlier than usual, as we head for Diavates Island on the western side of Symi Island. The beautiful 1.5 hr boat journey takes us via Dipari channel, passing the Fokospila blue cave until we reach the Diavetes archipelago. Diavetes is a stunning archipelago of small to mid size uninhabited islands on the west coast of Symi. We start our 2.8km morning swim at Megalonisi and swim towards Gialessino Island until we finally reach Cape Koupi. Today's lunch spot is at Skoumisa bay (Agios Emilianos). After we enjoy our tasty Greek lunch on-board we take a chance and walk up to the monastery to take in the stunning views of the area where we just swam. Afternoon coastal 2km swim from Skoumisa Bay towards Toli Bay. Boat journey back. We arrive to the hotel around 5pm. Dinner out at Gialos town.



Thursday 20th September

Today we do our longest swim (3.5km) from Diapori crossing towards Nimporios (Emborio) village. This area offers a well sheltered mountainous region and calm waters. We spend lunch time at the traditional fishing village of Nimporios. Before our afternoon swim we walk from Nimporios to Gialos town where we get picked up by boat. Afternoon 2km swim takes us from the stunning mountainous island of Agia towards Pedi bay, our hotel base. Return to hotel.

Friday 21st September

Our final morning is reserved for a Pedi Bay loop swim in front of our hotel. This area offers incredible valley views of the bay. Our trip finishes at around 11am. In the afternoon, we will take a ferry back to Rhodes.

Other trip information

Passports. You require a full passport to enter Greece. Please check whether you require a visa. Most nationalities, including EU, US, Canadian, Australian and New Zealand citizens, do not require a visa to enter Greece but please check before you travel.

Travel Insurance. This is essential and we will ask you for a copy of your policy. Non-competitive swimming is covered in most travel insurance policies, but you should double check your own policy document.

Vaccinations. There are no specific vaccinations required for Greece, but you should ensure that your tetanus and polio vaccinations are up to date.

Currency. The local currency is Euro. Symi Island has an ATM so you can withdraw money there. The hotel will also exchange money up to a limited amount. Bear in mind that most local places – shops, tavernas – prefer cash and not cards.

Wetsuit, fins, rash vests, pull buoys

We have limited swimming gear available on each trip, so please bring your own if you require one for yourself.

Walking

The walking on the trip is easy and it is on recognised paths. In order to enjoy your walks please bring comfortable light walking shoes and suitable clothes for summer temperatures. Walking distances are Agios Emilianos Monastery: 1.5km, Nimporios – Yialos: 2.5 km.

Cancellation policy

As this trip is conducted under a special arrangement with Strel Swimming Adventures, no cancellations will be possible. Substitutes, however, will be accepted right up to the start of the trip.

Power supplies in Greece

Power in Greece is 220V 50Hz, so your Australian appliances will be compatible. However, Australians will need a Type F adaptor – this is the standard European two round pin system (often called a Shuko plug, an abbreviation of the German *Schutzkontakt* meaning ‘protection contact’ – if you need that much information).

Contacts

I will be unlikely to have a local mobile phone (but I may change my mind on this; in which case I will let you know). Otherwise, my Australian mobile and email address will all be fine: +61 438 652 696, mark@otteraquatics.com.au.

If we happen to split up and you can't contact me, call Strel Swimming Adventures at + 44 78 58 2525 86 (UK) or email at info@strelswimming.com.

Smart Traveller

I recommend that Australian travellers complete the information asked for at www.smarttraveller.gov.au so that the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade can provide you with up-to-date travel advisories on the countries you will be visiting as well as facilitating Australian diplomatic missions to provide consular assistance if required.

What you will have to provide yourself

In addition to normal items, you will need to provide the following:

-  Travel to and from Rhodes
-  Swimming togs, goggles and any other swim gear you require
-  Jumper/fleece/jacket
-  Towel
-  Sun hat, sun screen and sun glasses
-  Small daypack
-  Walking shoes and sandals/aqua shoes
-  Sufficient funds to cover all evening meals (except two) as well as souvenirs and incidentals. An average dinner (including a glass of wine) costs around 15-20 Euro. A local market is nearby.

What Otter Aquatics/Strel Swimming Adventures will provide

-  Welcome drinks in Rhodes on the evening of Saturday 15th September
-  Two nights accommodation in Rhodes: Saturday 15th and Sunday 16th September
-  Ferry transport from Rhodes to Symi on the afternoon of Monday 17th September and return to Rhodes on Sunday 23rd September
-  Six nights accommodation at Pedi Beach Hotel, Symi, including breakfasts
-  Fully guided swimming tour, including lunches
-  A welcome and a farewell dinner in Symi
-  Otter Aquatics' t-shirt, backpack/dilly bag, cap and swimming cap.

Swimming awareness

Your safety is of utmost importance to us. In the event of adverse weather conditions at any of our swimming locations, we may need to adapt our itinerary. Our team always includes local guides who know great places to swim, so rest assured you won't be missing out! Swimming in the open sea amongst natural wildlife is a unique experience, but you may come across certain marine life such as jellyfish, sea turtles, coral and sea urchins from time to time. There are very few jellyfish along the Turkish southern coast and so the risk of any unfortunate encounters with them is low, and we will always show you the safest areas to swim. If you are stung by a jellyfish and are unable to carry on swimming, you will never be far from an escort boat where one of the guiding team will be able to treat the affected area. If you suffer from anaphylaxis or any other allergic reactions it is important to inform us at the time of booking.

Prices and registration

Price. The price will be approximately A\$3,000 per person on a twin/double share basis. There will be a supplement of approximately A\$500 for single accommodation. **This will be confirmed in late September 2017.**

Deposit. A 50% deposit will be required by **31st December 2017**. The balance will be required by **31st May 2018**.

Registration and indemnity form. We will send you a registration and indemnity form when you express interest returnable with the payment of your deposit. While Otter Aquatics and Strel Swimming Adventures have adequate insurance, you will be asked to confirm that you undertake the activities at your own risk and that you accept responsibility for any injuries you may suffer in the course of the tour.

Getting there and back

There are flights into Rhodes from a number of parts of Europe and Turkey but I imagine that most people will prefer to fly in via Athens. There are also ferries from a number of ports in Greece, Italy and Turkey

Rhodes international airport (<http://www.rhodes-airport.org>) is about a 25-30 minute drive (15 km) away from the main Rhodes town and Mandraki harbour. There are plenty of buses or taxis available. The bus cost is about €2.20 for a one way journey. A taxi fare is about €25-30. You can book a taxi in advance at <http://www.rhodes-taxi.gr>

See over for maps of Rhodes and Symi islands

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The Aegean Sea

