

Aegean Dental Conference 2024

Kastellorizo, Greece

1st – 4th July, 2024

Information (from a local!) for Attendees

Kastellorizo (“Kas-tell-o-rizo”), Castellorizo, Meyisti, Megisti, Meis, are all names for this island. We tend to refer to it as Kassie (pronounced “Kazzie”) for short. The permanent population is around 350 people but there is also a military garrison on the island that swells the numbers from time to time. During the summer months, Tourists raise the numbers on the island to around a thousand at any time.

A good website for general information is the Friends of Kastellorizo website at www.kastellorizo.com
On this website you will find transport details for getting to Kassie, as well as other links for weather, customs of the island, a photo gallery etc. It is also worth adding Kastellorizo Friends to your Instagram feed, to get “into the mood” before your visit!



Getting to the island (and leaving)

Kassie is best reached via Athens or Rhodes, though the more adventurous may seek to come via Turkey. I would suggest that the best way to come to the island is via ferry. The ferry is actually more like a small cruise ship operated by Blue Star Ferries, Dodekanisos Seaways and SAOS Ferries. These large vessels also take transport vehicles. They can be boarded from Athens or from Rhodes.

If travelling from Athens, the Blue Star Ferry is boarded from Piraeus (the port of Athens) and it takes approximately 23 hours to get to Kassie. So if you come from Athens, it is suggested that you book a “Lux” cabin as it is an afternoon departure from Piraeus and you do not arrive on Kastellorizo until the following day around midday. The ticket options are quite endless on the Blue Star Ferries website and can be very confusing, but at the end of the day, as long as you have a cabin and a bed for the overnight



stint, you’ll be ok. There are restaurants and cafes on board, and overall it can be a simple and relaxing trip. Details on buying tickets for an overnight ferry from Athens are listed at the end of this document.

Ferries can also be boarded from Rhodes, and so another popular way to travel to Kastellorizo is to fly firstly to Rhodes, overnight there, and board a ferry to Kassie the next day. If you are coming from other places in Europe, you may be able to get a direct flight to Rhodes and it is worth spending a few days there. Rhodes is a large Greek island and its mediaeval architecture and history is of great interest. It is also a party destination for those so inclined !

The Rhodes ferry departures also vary and will either be early (around 8am) or in the afternoon (around 1pm). My best tip is to look at the Friends of Kastellorizo website as they summarise the different ferries that travel from Athens and Rhodes, and the times they depart. Then you can go to that respective Ferry’s website and checking actual dates and times and book your ticket.

On any of the ferries, there is no actual booked seat number (unless you have a cabin), and you can move freely about these large boats, enjoying drinks and refreshments, and watching the view change as you cross the Aegean on route to Kastellorizo. Arriving at Kassie by ferry is exciting and a lot of fun. The view as you arrive is very special.

Some people prefer to limit their travels to flights and so you can also travel by plane to Kastellorizo with Olympic/Aegean. These flights are only from Rhodes and take about 25 minutes. The flights are usually 6 days a week in the Summer and mostly around mid-morning.

It is worth noting that there is a small chance of flight cancellations if the weather becomes too windy as the runway on Kassie is quite short and the strong winds can make landing difficult.



Leaving Kassie is also by Ferry or by air. The more reliable departure is again the boat and it can take you to Rhodes where you can connect with flights either to Athens or other European cities. However, many people do fly off the island, and if you decide to fly out of Kassie, it is worth considering a 24-hour stopover in Rhodes as a backup, in case of cancellation of your flight.

Transfers to and from Kastellorizo are not part of the conference package and attendees need to make their own arrangements for travel to and from Kassie.

Accommodation

Kassie has two hotels, several Pensions and many houses available to rent, but they tend to fill quickly in the months leading up to summer. The Conference Registration fee includes 3 nights in a standard Double Room (in on Monday 1st, out on Thursday 4th July) but this is very much on a first come basis. You can add additional nights if you wish to stay longer. Please let us know and we will facilitate this. When the standard rooms have filled, we will endeavor to place delegates in the next best accommodation options – prioritizing Airconditioning, view and location over “breakfast included” options.



You also have a choice to upgrade your accommodation to a Pension or rented house (small additional cost depending on the venue). If you wish to bring your family, this might be a nice means to accommodate additional people.



Family Friendly

The Conference Registration fees are applicable to Dentists and their spouses. The Accompanying Person Fee is for a spouse and affords the same meals and excursions, but not the CPD program (or Certificate). If you are bringing children, then please let us know and we will arrange alternate accommodation to house your family. There may be a small additional cost for the alternate accommodation and also to include some of the excursions (pending how well we negotiate with the local proprietors), but this is likely to be around a few hundred dollars only.



Kassie is a parent's paradise as kids can roam around the village freely and safely while their parents relax and enjoy some down time. You needn't worry about your children getting lost or fear strangers on Kastellorizo. There are many safe places to swim, and most have a vantage point that serves drinks and food for the parents !

Weather

Summer in Greece can be very hot (but at least the humidity is not high). It rarely rains in Greece in Summer and it is normal to see no clouds at all in the sky above Kastellorizo. The usual precautions are therefore needed so please use sunscreen and drink plenty of water.

Evenings though can sometimes be a bit cooler and a light cardigan or a pashmina could be needed.



Activities

Besides the Academic Program, swimming, snorkeling, walks, fishing, sunbaking and exploring the island and its ruins, are the major pastimes other than relaxing at the local cafes and restaurants. The walks are very good but it is important to wear good



walking shoes. Shorts are fine unless you wish to go “off track” in which case lightweight long pants would be a good idea too as there are low briar-type plants. Snorkeling in the crystal clear Aegean waters is a must and many sea turtles abound. If you don’t bring your own equipment, you can buy cheaper gear on the island. At night time, Mythos, Retsina, Ouzo and Greek dancing are all part of the fun.



Most importantly, do not wake late and miss the included trip to the famous “Blue Cave” (Parastas Tripa). This grotto is one of the best in the world, and the adventure getting in is part of the excitement.



Language

Although Kastellorizo is a remote Greek island, most of its shopkeepers and residents speak some English. Another point of interest is that the Australian accent is prevalent on the island. It is not unusual to walk past a group of people sitting at one of the many tavernas and hear them discussing, the latest rugby or footy results in a strong Aussie accent. This is because the island had a mass migration after the First World War, and most came to Australia settling in Perth, Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Darwin. It is their descendants that visit and stay on the island today.

Visiting Turkey

The town of Kas in Turkey is only 30 minutes away by Turkish Ferry. These boats depart Kassie late morning and return late afternoon. It is a nice side trip to see the local Turkish shops, markets and restaurants. Although close, this trip still involves crossing an international border and so passports are needed for the journey. If you do not hold an Australian passport, then please ensure your passport allows for multiple entries into countries, as if you leave on this trip, you will be leaving Greece and arriving in Turkey. When you return just a few hours later, you will be entering Greece for the second time and Immigration will stop you from entering if you do not have a passport with a multi-entry visa.



If you want to make this trip, you can speak to the local travel agent (Papoutsis travel) and they will arrange tickets for you.

Kas offers many sights including many small bazars and other good shopping for leather and Turkish souvenirs. If you like to haggle, then this is your place. Worth doing is the optional trip to the ancient relics in Myra and the real home of Santa Claus (the cathedral of St Nicholas). These are just over an hours drive from Kas by private transfer.

Other General Information

There is one ATM on Kassie and one bank (The National Bank of Greece). There are a couple of grocery shops, a bakery, a travel agency, lots of places that sell souvenirs and clothing and more than a dozen restaurants and bars. There is a small hospital including a dental clinic. If the Dentist is in attendance, we may be able to arrange a small tour of the facility. If you have materials or instruments you no longer use, consider bringing them and donating them to this little clinic.

The island seems to thrive on a cash economy so you will need cash (Euros) to pay for your other meals and incidentals. Hotels take credit cards. Some meals are included in the conference package and when you are eating out at other times, you will find that the cost of meals is very reasonable. However, should you choose whole grilled fish or large prawns, expect to pay quite a bit for these. It is always best

to ask the price beforehand when ordering this kind of seafood. Calamari, “little shrimp” (a must-try), and Octopus are always good, fresh and cheap.

Finally, BYO insect repellent as this can sometimes be harder to buy when you arrive, although the grocery stores have citronella candles. Once you do arrive, we will show you where you can buy some surf/reef shoes (for about \$15) These are very useful when swimming as the rocks can be sharp and sometimes there are sea urchins on the seabed.



Tips on Booking Blue Star Ferry Cabins

Ferryies that go from Athens all the way to Kastellorizo do not leave every day, so you do have to check this on the website as it will vary from year to year too. But if you do choose to travel to Kastellorizo that way, here are some tips.

The Blue Star website describes the size of the cabin by how many beds/berths are in the room, followed by how many people will be in the room. For example, a ticket that says “4 berth as 3 berth”, would mean the room is designed to have 2 x bunk beds for 4 people, but they will sell it to 3 people leaving 1 bed spare instead, if that suits you better. Of course, you can also purchase a “4berth as 4berth” and fill all the beds with 4 travelers. A 2 berth as 1 berth would mean you are purchasing the double room just for yourself. It’ll then say “in” or “out” and this describes whether the cabin has a window to see out or not. The ferry makes quite a few stops at various picturesque islands on the way to Kastellorizo. One of the islands it stops at is Rhodes and so the ferry can also be boarded from Rhodes.

Boat timetables are often not listed until Spring (March), however they usually follow the pattern of the previous year’s timetable and you can find them on Blue Star ferries website www.bluestarferries.gr

Onsite Coordinator

Once you have registered for the course, we will send you the contact details for our onsite Course Coordinator. She will act as a local contact for you in advance – to help answer any questions you have about planning your trip) and also for when you arrive at Kastellorizo, and need some local assistance.