

# Best Things we did on our Honeymoon on Santorini, Greece

by Dan Levesque on July 08, 2019



Life doesn't get much better than this: sipping Greek wine, eating bread and olives, and soaking in the views atop the cliffs of a volcanic island. Behind that beard is the unabashed joy of a newly married man. If this is a preview of things to come, then willingly signing my life over to wedlock may be the best decision I've ever made.



*A view of buildings perched precariously atop the cliffs of Santorini.*

But it's easy to forget while on a hedonist orgy in the Aegean sea that we're perched dangerously close to a currently dormant but still technically active volcano. This volcano, in particular, has a record of ending at least one known civilization: the Minoans. 3,600 years ago, one of the largest volcanic eruptions in recorded history went down on this exact spot, devastating the region and causing turmoil around the Mediterranean.

The resulting earthquake caused a tsunami that slammed into the island of Crete, 150km to the South. It's thought to be one of the primary causes for the collapse of the Minoan civilization—a flourishing proto-empire based on Crete, whose art and culture descended from the ancient Egyptians. The ancient Greek culture was then heavily influenced by remnants (survivors) of the Minoan civilization, and the original Greek form of writing is based off of the Minoan written language (which, in turn, is a derivative of Egyptian hieroglyphics).



The eruption and tsunami that took down the Minoans are thought to be the basis for the Myth of Atlantis related by Plato some 1,000 years later (although Plato himself placed these events at 9,000 years before his time, so he certainly could have been talking about some other cataclysm). So yeah, Santorini is a cool place to visit if you're interested in learning about civilization-ending cataclysms while on vacation.



*That central mass rising up out of the sea, right next to that cruise ship, is the center of the volcano.*

With a long history of volcanic eruptions, you can see the layers from different eruptions dating back tens of thousands of years embedded in these 300 meter high cliffs overlooking the sea. This makes it a great place for a honeymoon. What better way to celebrate eternal love than by pondering the fragility of our existence from atop a volcano that, not so long ago, wiped out an entire civilization?

Adding to this historical backdrop, the people of Santorini have decided to build their homes and buildings precariously close to the rim of this ancient volcano, which adds to the magic of this place and makes Santorini unlike any other island we've visited. Whether you're coming for a honeymoon or just to get away on vacation, here are some of the best things to do on Santorini while you're here:

## 1. Hike the rim of the Caldera.

There's a system of footpaths and trails that all link up together and cover a distance of about 10km along the rim of the Santorini caldera. Starting in the main town of Fira, near the middle of the island, you can walk along the cliffs all the way over to Oia, on the north side of the island.



*Janice walking down that long and lonely road from Fira to Oia.*

It's a unique trek with some of the best sea-side cliffs you'll see anywhere, made all the more special by the buildings perched precariously on the cliff's edge and the fact that you're walking along the rim of a gigantic volcano in the sea (yeah, I'm going to keep mentioning this!).

Part of the way is a little outcropping that you can walk out to, but it does involve actually climbing a small section of rock wall in order to get on top. So don't go there if you're not confident in your ability to climb, because it is a little bit sketchy. Among the dozens of



people walking out to the outcrop at the same time I did it, only two other people climbed up to the top of the cliff.



*A nice little pit-stop on a rock outcrop away from the rim of the caldera.*

As you continue along this footpath, it goes from cobblestone streets and staircases through Santorini's little towns to an eventual dirt footpath that continues on towards the north of the island.

Long-distance hiking/walking in the midday heat is a great activity for any couple, so don't pass this one up. Make sure to stay hydrated, and be prepared for a mixture of dry heat in direct sunlight and extremely strong, persistent winds—enough to test anyone's will.



*Nearing the end of our trek along the caldera: you can see Oia from a distance.*

Since we started in Fira, we were walking through cobbled streets and a town for the first half and it was easy to get snacks or beverages whenever we liked. But the section nearer to Oia as you move north gets pretty desolate and deserted, so it's a good idea to be prepared for some exposure to the elements and bring extra water with you.

## **2. Taste Greek Wines.**

Santorini has a unique type of grape that's specially adapted to grow in volcanic soil: Assyrtiko. It has a strong minerality taste to it, and it's not like any other wine I've had anywhere else. I wasn't that into wine in general prior to this trip, but delving deep into the wine tasting and wine experience on Santorini and in Greece has given me a new appreciation for winemakers and all that they do.





*Husbands are great at capturing candid photos of their wives after a few wines.*

The best winery we visited on Santorini was the Argyros Estates Winery. This is where we first learned about the unique way of growing the assyrtiko grapes in volcanic soil—because the layers of ash are full of minerals but have few microbes when compared to regular soil, this results in a very different sort of grape.

Growers on Santorini also have a very unique way of stressing the vines by starving them of water (somehow, stressing the grapes causes them to be more flavourful): because the volcanic soil doesn't hold or contain much moisture, the roots of the grape vines can't reach down to absorb more water. This ends up giving the grapes a more intense flavour, and results in some interesting-looking grape vines that are withered and brown as opposed to green.



*Estate Argyros on Santorini: the best wines in town!*

The experience we had at Argyros was super interesting, and worthwhile for anyone to check out whether you're interested in winemaking or not.

The next best winery we went to was the Venetsanos Winery, which is beautifully perched above cliffs overlooking the ocean. The wine was better at Argyros (and the wine tour was amazing), but the wine tasting at Venetsanos was still great, and the views here beat everywhere else.

Santo Winery might be the most popular one on Santorini, but we wouldn't recommend it. We went here to watch the sunset one evening, and we weren't at all impressed with the wines or the overall experience. After some great wine-tasting experiences at Argyros and Venetsanos, we went here last and the wine was somewhat lackluster in comparison. I would skip this one and hit Argyros or Venetsanos instead.



If you're not into wine, there's also the Santorini Brewing Company that has some good beer options. You don't have to go to the actual brewery to get it, as most of the restaurants on Santorini seem to have this beer available (the "yellow donkey" is probably the most popular).

### **3. Take in some history.**

Prior to and since the volcanic eruption 3,600 years ago, Santorini has had a long history of habitation by human civilizations (whether the Minoans, Greeks, or Romans). There's a range of ancient ruins on the island, dated to both before and after the volcanic eruption.



*Ancient Thera, perched atop the cliffs on Santorini looking south over the Aegean sea, towards Crete.*

The Akrotiri ruins are a well-preserved example of the presence of the Minoan civilization on the island in pre-history. Some sections of these ruins date back to the fifth millennium BC (almost 7,000 years), and the evidence shows that this settlement was relatively

prosperous up until the eruption, at which time it was covered in ash and buried until modern times.

Because they were buried in ash for so long, the ruins themselves are in relatively good condition despite pre-dating the volcanic eruption by thousands of years. While the age of the ruins is impressive in itself, we didn't really love the presentation—archeologists still don't know much about this settlement, and the site is still actively being excavated. Still an interesting place to check out, though.



*The sprawling ruins of Ancient Thera are totally worth checking out.*

One set of ruins that's absolutely worth checking out is Ancient Thera. Following the mass evacuation of humans from Santorini in 1,600 B.C., the island was re-settled about 500 years later by the ancient Greeks (at this point, the island probably wasn't recognized as the basis of the Atlantis myth). A huge city complex was constructed atop a 360-meter high mountain overlooking the sea, and the ruins of that city are still there and can be



visited today (it was later abandoned around the 8th century AD, and the ruins have just sat here ever since).



*Modern Santorini can be seen behind the ruins.*

These ruins are truly impressive for what they are, and you can also catch some amazing views of Santorini in the background. I ran up here early one morning and was the only person exploring these ruins for about 30 minutes, and that was quite an experience—I felt like a modern Indiana Jones looking to break into a tomb and steal some priceless artifacts.

#### **4. Catch some sunsets.**

Santorini is a uniquely beautiful island, which lends itself to some equally beautiful sunsets. Nothing better than some good wine, good snacks, and a nice spot to enjoy the sunset over the Aegean with your special someone.

There are also plenty of accommodations on the island that feature hot tubs overlooking the sea, and this is another great way to catch a beautiful sunset from the comfort of your villa. Grab a bottle of wine, some glasses, throw on your bathing suits (or not), and experience the magic.



*Getting married is sort of like sailing off into the sunset—at least, it was until the honeymoon ended.*

Going with the metaphor angle, there's also a lot to learn from the history of past cataclysms that upended ancient peoples. Marriage is about weathering storms and hardships, and building on the ruins of the past to make a better future. Santorini is a model of that: an island paradise in the middle of the Aegean Sea that's seen its fair share of trauma.