



redemption of Mykonos, which several people have forsaken for this place. To accommodate them large villas have been put up by leading architects and designers, hidden away behind walls or treelines off dirt roads in remote locations within a short walk of isolated beaches.

Alexandra Skaltsogianni was one of the first to do this. She saw the promontory of Malaria Miti from a boat more than 20 years ago and imagined herself living here. So she bought a field and got to work, collecting cabinets in antique shops and pebbles on the beach to inlay into the floor. 'I built this for myself but could only be in it for a few weeks per year. I thought, "They let their homes in France when they're not there – why not on Paros?" Some shipowners had the same idea. I think they want their investments on solid ground. That changed everything,' she told me. 'A dustman I know got millions for land he'd never used. One farmer said he'd never sell because he couldn't understand or possibly need such amounts of money. When I started, people thought you must be hard up if you rented out your house. Now it's fashionable.' She went on to build 10 more properties, most recently the eco-sensitive Secret Garden House, inserted into the side of a hill to give it what she calls an inside-out effect.

'The Greece of my grandparents is largely gone,' said Christoforos before we parted. 'Though you can still see glimpses of it. The islands have evolved with the arrival of visitors. First, tavernas. Then on Paros we had dubs. Now with the villas we have people who enjoy a nice tuna carpaccio, and we have created the restaurants that provide excellent versions of this. Locals have become more professional, and this perhaps contradicts the old, spontaneous hospitality. But the barnum face and feminine nature of Paros remain strong and evident. I feel them whenever I've been away and come back.' 📍

Above, Thalassemos beach restaurant in Aliki on the south coast. Opposite from top: island mountain roads; harbourfront in Naoussa.

WHERE TO STAY

I chose the remote and splendid **Maria 3**, part of a shipowner's small collection in Malaria Miti, which has olive trees, a pool and beautiful views of adjacent Antiparos. Along with others, it's available from **Serenidipity Greek Villas** (serenidipitygreekvillas.com). **Parilio**, set in low farmland by Kolerithes beach, is simply and elegantly designed, with a pool where guests clearly love to hang out and what some say is the best hotel restaurant in Greece (doubles from about €200; pariliohotelparos.com). For those who prefer the relaxed shores of the east, the best option is **Summer Senses** (doubles from about €130; summersenses.gr), which overlooks Pounta beach. **Secret Garden House**, also known as Paros SG, and similar properties can be booked via Five Star Greece (fivestargreece.com).

WHERE TO EAT

Mario, on the Naoussa harbourside, is wonderful – it would be a misfortune to visit Paros and not try its fish roe or prawn skewers and vegetables from owner Mario Tasiopina's organic farm. In the tranquil cove of Xifara, a few miles from Naoussa, **Siparos** is an ambitious, imaginative place run by a brother-and-sister team; highlights include grouper ceviche and linguine with seafood. The most traditional tavernas can be identified by their year-round opening, as is the case with **Talismanis** in Prodhromos. In Aliki, head to **Agkairia** bakery at the northern end of town for fresh bread and **Hello Mango** next door for breakfast. **Halatis**, in Pso Lixadi, is good for fish after time spent at some of the eastern beaches.

GETTING AROUND

Paros Hikes organises walking tours with Christoforos Korovezis (paros-hikes.com). **Petra Farm** (petrafarm.com) can arrange visits, and for those who want to get out onto the water, **GT Island Hopping** (facebook.com/gt-islandhopping) will plan an itinerary, perhaps to Poligres then lunch on Sifnos. Hire a car or scooter at **Chaniotis Paros Rentals** (parosrentals.com). TIG Agion Airlines (agionair.com) flies to Paros from the UK via Athens. For more information on visiting the island, go to discovergreece.com.