

How to Choose the Best Santorini Holiday Rentals for Your Stay

Finding the Right Base for Your Santorini Trip

Every traveler who lands on Santorini quickly realizes that where you stay shapes the entire experience. The island has a way of rewarding those who pick their accommodation thoughtfully. After several trips and conversations with local hosts, I have come to see that the best Santorini holiday rentals are not always the most expensive ones. They are the ones that match how you actually want to spend your days.

I once made the mistake of booking a room in a quiet village thinking I would enjoy the peace. What I did not account for was that the last bus left at nine and taxis were scarce. That trip taught me to look beyond the photos and consider logistics. Whether you are planning a honeymoon, a family getaway, or a solo adventure, the island offers a wide range of options. But navigating them takes a bit of local knowledge.

Understanding the Main Villages

Santorini is not a single town. It is a collection of distinct settlements, each with its own character. The two most famous are Oia and Fira. Oia draws crowds for its iconic sunset views and narrow marble streets lined with blue-domed churches. It is stunning, but it can feel crowded during peak hours. If you want to step out of your rental and straight into that postcard scene, Oia is where you should look. However, be prepared for higher prices and noise in the evening.

Fira is the island's capital and main transport hub. It has a livelier atmosphere with more restaurants, shops, and nightlife. The caldera views from Fira are just as dramatic, especially from the edge where the cliff drops straight into the Aegean Sea. Many [Santorini holiday rentals](#) here are built into the cliffside, offering private terraces that feel like they hang over the water. If you prefer easy access to buses, taxis, and ferry information, Fira is a smart base.

For those who want a quieter stay with equally impressive views, Imerovigli is a strong contender. It sits on the highest point of the caldera rim, between Fira and Oia. The sunsets here are less crowded, and the footpath connecting the villages is one of the best walks on the island. The Fira to Oia hike passes through Imerovigli, so you can easily walk into either town and then take a bus back. Rentals here tend to be more spacious and slightly more affordable than those in Oia.



Caldera Views vs. Beach Access

One of the first decisions you need to make is whether you want a caldera view or easy access to the beach. You can rarely have both in the same rental because the caldera side is steep and rocky, while the beaches are on the eastern and southern coasts. The volcanic beaches of Perissa and Kamari are popular for good reason. The black sand and pebbles give the shoreline a unique feel, and the water is clear and calm. If your idea of a holiday involves swimming, sunbathing, and tavernas steps from the sand, look for rentals in those areas.

On the caldera side, the experience is more about the view. Sitting on a terrace watching the sun sink into the sea while the whitewashed buildings glow in the fading light is unforgettable. Many rentals in Oia, Fira, and Imerovigli offer private hot tubs or plunge pools that make that moment even better. The trade-off is that you will likely need to take a bus or drive to reach the beach. Santorini local buses are reliable and cheap, but they can be crowded in July and August. Renting an ATV or a small car gives you more freedom, though parking in the main villages can be tricky.

Booking Platforms and Direct Options

When I started looking for Santorini holiday rentals, I instinctively opened Booking.com and Airbnb. Those platforms are convenient and offer a wide selection. But over time I have learned

that some of the best deals come from booking directly with the property or through a curated collection that offers live availability and competitive rates. Direct bookings often include perks like airport transfers or a welcome bottle of local wine. Santorini Airport is small and can get busy, so having a driver meet you makes a big difference.



Platforms like VRBO and Expedia also list many properties, but the search filters can be overwhelming. I recommend narrowing your search by village first, then by amenities. If you are traveling with a group, a villa with a kitchen and multiple bedrooms often works out cheaper than booking separate hotel rooms. Just watch out for hidden cleaning fees and security deposits. Always read the cancellation policy carefully, especially during the shoulder seasons when weather can be unpredictable.

Wineries and Sunset Cruises

Santorini wineries are a highlight that many visitors overlook when choosing a rental. The volcanic soil produces distinctive wines, particularly the crisp Assyrtiko. Several wineries offer tastings with views of the vineyards and the sea. If you enjoy wine, consider staying somewhere with easy access to the wine roads on the eastern side of the island. A short drive from Perissa or Kamari will take you to some of the best wineries.

Sunset cruises are another popular activity. These trips typically depart from the old port in Fira or from smaller docks near Oia. Santorini catamarans take you around the caldera, past the hot springs and the volcano. If you book a cruise, check whether your rental is close to a port or if the company offers pickup. Some cruises include dinner and drinks, making for a memorable

evening. Just be aware that the wind can pick up in the afternoon, so bring a light jacket even in summer.

Ancient Akrotiri and Archaeological Sites

History buffs will want to visit Akrotiri, the Minoan settlement buried by volcanic ash around 1600 BCE. It is often called the Pompeii of the Aegean, and the site is remarkably well preserved. The covered walkways allow you to see buildings, frescoes, and drainage systems that are thousands of years old. Akrotiri is located on the southern coast, so if ancient history is a priority, look for rentals in the south or central part of the island. The village of Akrotiri itself has a few tavernas and quiet hotels, though it is less developed than the caldera towns.



Combining a morning at the archaeological site with an afternoon at the nearby volcanic beaches makes for a balanced day. The Red Beach and the White Beach are both close to Akrotiri, though access can require a short hike or a boat ride. If you are staying in Perissa or Kamari, you can take a bus to Akrotiri in about thirty minutes.

Practical Tips for a Smooth Stay

- Book early for July and August. The best Santorini holiday rentals get reserved months in advance. If you are flexible with dates, late May and September offer milder

weather and fewer crowds.

- Check if your rental includes airport or port transfer. Santorini Airport is small, and taxis can be limited during peak hours. Many properties arrange transfers for a reasonable fee.
- Pack light and bring comfortable shoes. The caldera paths have many steps, and you will be walking more than you expect. A wheeled suitcase is a liability on the marble streets of Oia.
- Learn the bus schedule. Santorini local buses run frequently between the main towns and beaches, but the last bus often leaves before midnight. Having a backup plan for late evenings is wise.

Final Thoughts

Choosing where to stay on Santorini is about matching the village and the rental type to your travel style. If you want iconic views and don't mind the crowds, Oia or Fira will deliver. If you prefer quiet evenings with a panoramic terrace, Imerovigli is a gem. And if the beach is your priority, Perissa and Kamari offer comfort and value. The key is to think about how you will spend your days and then let that guide your choice. With a little planning, the island will reward you with memories that last far longer than the flight home.