

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO
LESSER-KNOWN

GREEK ISLANDS



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Yassou!

Greece is one of the most popular travel and holiday destinations for tourists worldwide. Places like Thassos, the Olympic Riviera, or Halkidiki have become true Balkan tourist territories for Romanians, Bulgarians, and Serbians. Once you arrive, you hear the homeland's language spoken at every turn. Other Greek islands are very popular for international wanderers: Lefkada, Corfu, Zakynthos, Rhodes, Crete... and then the cosmopolitan Santorini and Mykonos are invaded by hoards of tourists in high season.

But what do we do if we want to get to a quieter Greece? Or what do we do if we've visited pretty much everything that's very 'commercial' and want new places, perhaps not so exploited and taken over by the on-the-beaten path tourists? I wrote here about a foray into northern Greece, which is related to the country's superb mountainous area.

But in this book, I've selected 10 lesser-known Greek islands, showing their main sights, best beaches, best hotels and restaurants, and how to get there. The selection includes examples from several archipelagos because, as we know, the diversity of Greece's islands makes them all the more beautiful and... magnetic. You will therefore have a preview as a travel suggestion.

Enjoy and... book a flight for a Greek island!



STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE
TO LESSER-KNOWN

GREEK ISLANDS

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ELAFONISOS


A little piece of Peloponnese heaven



Elafonisos island / Photo: bennymarty

Located between Peloponnese and the island of Kythira, **Elafonisos** is a small island of only 19 square kilometers, whose beautiful beaches attract many visitors during the summer months. However, if you choose to visit in spring, autumn, or even winter, you will notice that the population on Elafonisos does not exceed 500-600 people.

In fact, the population of Elafonisos is mostly fishermen. About 60% of the locals are in this occupation, with each of the older generation owning a fishing boat.



The history of Elafonisos begins in the Neolithic period (6000-3500 BC), when an exceptional prehistoric civilization flourished here, traces of which can be seen today in Pavlopetri, the underwater city. After that, the historical route of Elafonisos and the surrounding area is associated with the Peloponnesian War (431-404 BC) and those who occupied the island: the Athenians, Romans, Byzantines, pirates, Venetians, etc.

Elafonisos may not have the spectacular beauty of its 'cousins' in the Cyclades archipelago. Still, the island is certainly surrounded by the most 'exotic' turquoise waters and offers some of the finest beaches in Greece.

The port town, which bears the island's name (and its only settlement), is reminiscent of a more Spartan version of Aegina. Many Athenians come to spend weekends here, with boats docked because, obviously, taxes here are lower than on the mainland.

So what are the best things to see on Elafonisos island?

WHAT TO SEE AND DO IN ELAFONISOS



PAVLOPETRI

When you don't feel like lying on the beach, and if you're a history buff, you can visit the ruins of an ancient city at the **Pavlopetri** archaeological site, dating back to the 3rd century BC. The name Pavlopetri comes from the association of the names of the two apostles and martyrs, Paul and Peter, who are known to have traveled to distant lands during the first century AD. The city is believed to have been swallowed up by the waves of the sea sometime around 1000 BC.

Discovered in 1967 by Nicholas Flemming, this ancient Greek city is known as the oldest 'lost city' underwater in the Mediterranean and one of the oldest in the world. The water has preserved the buildings, roads, and squares of Pavlopetri quite well, and there is even a cemetery with 60 tombs on its north-eastern side.

In historical context, but somewhat more recently, it is worth mentioning that the island of Elafonisos was a base for pirates in the Mediterranean in the 16th and 17th centuries, as the Strait of Elafonisos was an important strategic route for the ships of the time. Today, this strait has lost no importance, with dozens of ships passing through every day.

KATO NISI



On Elafonisos, there is an ancient castle – in the **Kato Nisi** area – called Pyrgos ton Meladon (Melas family castle), a two-storey building on the highest point of the island, built for defensive purposes in the late 19th century. Today, the property is converted into a farm. Still, tourists are encouraged to visit Pyrgos, admire the beautiful views, including the Laconic Bay, taste the delicious dishes, and listen to the owners' stories about the castle.

HOW TO GET TO ELAFONISOS

The nearest airport is in Kalamata, and the closest ports are in Neapolis and Pounta.

Once at Kalamata airport or Athens airport, the best option is to rent a car. From Pounta, the ferry takes you to Elafonisos in 10 minutes. The distance from Athens to Pounta is 328 km. Please note: on Elafonisos island there is no possibility to rent a car.

AGIOS SPYRIDON

Another highlight of the island is the church of Agios Spyridon, built on a strip of land that connects to a bridge spanning the calm waters.

It is the main church of Elafonisos and was built in 1858 in honor of St Spyridon the Sailor, whose name is celebrated on 8-9 July.





PANAGIA BEACH

Panagia is another popular beach in Elafonisos, located on the western side and framed by the magnificent scenery of turquoise waters, golden sand, and Kedros trees. It is a calm beach with tranquil waters and easy access (3.5 km from the village of Elafonisos, on a paved road). Plus, if you linger until the evening hours, you can see the remarkable sunset over the Mani mountains. The beach got its name from the small Panagia Katonisiotissa church nearby. Numerous restaurants and accommodations border the beach.

SARAKINIKO BEACH



The most famous beaches of Elafonisos island are Simos, Panagia, and Sarakiniko.



Simos Beach / Photo: verve231

SIMOS BEACH

It is located in the south-eastern part of the island, in the Leuki area, between two small peninsulas. With emerald waters and golden sands, Simos promises unforgettable moments of relaxation. Fragkos Bay is sheltered from the waves, so the waters lapping the beach are calm and suitable for families with children.

Simos beach is complemented by many impressive dunes and the Kedros forest, extending to nearby Sarakiniko beach. Simos has all the necessary tourist infrastructure to satisfy every tourist. Being 4.5 km from the village of Elafonisos, the beach can be reached by car on a paved road. In summer, you can also take a boat from the old port of Elafonisos.

Also known as Megali Paralia (Big Beach) and taking its name from the Saracens, the pirates and corsairs who once lurked here waiting for ships to plunder, Sarakiniko Beach is today one of the most beautiful stretches of sand on the island of Elafonisos. Turquoise waters, fine sand, dunes and trees bordering it – these are the characteristics of the place, along with the fact that you can practice many water sports here, that the beach is 1 kilometer long and that the Elafonisos campsite is located on the western side.

THE BEST HOTELS IN ELAFONISOS

Photo: booking.com



ELEMENT HOTEL***

Booking.com score: 9,1

Element Hotel is a 6-minute walk from the beach. Featuring WiFi and a terrace, visitors can relax sitting at the rooftop bar with views. Free private parking.



BERDOUSSIS HOTEL**

Booking.com score: 9,2

Located 200 meters from the port of Elafonisos, Berdoussis Hotel features tastefully decorated rooms, free WiFi, and a bar, well-appointed air-conditioned rooms. Breakfast can be taken at the hotel, and taverns and mini-markets are nearby (200 m). Simos Beach is 3 km away.



ELAFONISOS DIAMOND RESORT ***

Booking.com score: 8,1

The 3-star resort consists of 7 buildings and is a 4-minute walk from Panagia Beach. It's a relatively new hotel with modern rooms overlooking the sea. Private parking, bar, and barbecue area.

THE BEST RESTAURANTS IN ELAFONISOS



Sailing Cafe

A restaurant located in Elafonissos harbor spoils its guests with excellent pizza pies.

Trakena

Also located in the harbor and known mainly for souvlaki and gyros, tourists think this is the best place in Elafonisos to eat these dishes.

Aronis Fish Tavern

This family-run tavern at the end of Kontonogi beach serves quality, fishy food. The fish are caught by the Aronis family themselves, who then prepare fish soup, stuffed squid, spaghetti with prawns or lobster, etc.

Aronis Fish Tavern / Photo: elafonisos.inspacetime.gr

KYTHIRA

Aphrodite's fragrance in the Ionian Sea



Avlemonas, Kythira island /
Photo: Antonis Bertsias

Kythira is a lesser-known Greek island in the southern Peloponnese, halfway between the Mani peninsula and the island of Crete.

Although it's not included in many tourist guides that focus on Greece, Kythira is a little paradise worth visiting if you want to avoid the noisy tourist crowds and aren't interested in the nightlife. In other words, Kythira is for those who want to explore almost unspoiled natural landscapes, to discover relics, castles, monasteries, and traditional Greek villages. And yet, Kythira is known, from some mythological sources, as the birthplace of the goddess Aphrodite in Greek mythology.

The Venetians who ruled it during the Middle Ages strongly influenced Kythira's architecture. In fact, on a hill near the capital of Chora is a medieval castle dating back to the Venetian era, from where you can enjoy superb views of the Aegean Sea. This is also a great place to watch the sunset.



WHAT TO SEE AND DO IN KYTHIRA

Being a not very big, but very quiet island, in **Kythira** you don't have much to do apart from relaxing on a beach, in the sun, or hanging out at a table in a taverna, like a real Greek. But if you're an active person, you can always go hiking, as Kythira's trails will take you to small settlements, deserted beaches or hills with beautiful views.

The most touristy places in Kythira are **Avlemonas**, **Kapsali**, **Diakofti**, plus the local beaches, monasteries, and even ghost villages, abandoned for many years. Let's see the main touristic objectives of Kythira island.

CHORA

Chora, the capital of Kythira, is a typical Greek village, with white houses and narrow streets stretching up to the castle on the hill – the latter dating from the time of the British occupation. A stroll through the narrow streets of Chora introduces you to the few beautiful Orthodox churches and picturesque gardens of the village. In the village's quiet central square are the town hall, several banks, and souvenir shops.

HOW TO GET TO KYTHIRA

Kythira Island has an airport and is therefore served by flights from Athens. However, you can also reach Kythira by ferry from the ports of Neapolis and Gytheio (in the Peloponnese) or from Kissamos – a port on the island of Crete.



Chora, seen from the Castle /
Photo: Deposit Photos



Kythira Castle /
Photo: Deposit Photos

THE CASTLE OF CHORA

The **castle of Chora**, the capital of Kythira, is the first place you'll probably consider visiting. "The 'Fortezza' was built like a Byzantine fortress in the 13th century, then built by the Venetians in 1503, and is also nicknamed the 'Eye of Crete', because from here you could easily see all the ships passing to and from Crete. When you visit the restored castle, you will see the former cells where prisoners were imprisoned, the tunnel, and the old aqueduct pools. The view towards Kapsali is fabulous.



Kapsali village in Kythira /
Photo: DepositPhotos

KAPSALI

Kapsali is probably the busiest tourist spot in Kythira, with the village teeming with cafes, tavernas, bars, plus a harbor. It is perhaps the only place on the island where the notion of nightlife comes to life, and Kapsali is not without some romance either.



Avlemonas /
Photo: Jekaterina Voronina

AVLEMONAS

Avlemonas is said to be the most beautiful village in Kythira. Located on the eastern side of the island, Avlemonas has excellent exposure, being set in a scenery of azure waters and picturesque coves. The Cycladic architecture, narrow streets, Venetian fortress, and more give this village a unique atmosphere.

DIAKOFTI



Diakofti /
Photo: Georgios Kouvelis

Diakofti is an area that has grown in importance since the construction of the island's main port in 1995. The original few houses have expanded, and today it is a busy little village where you can stay. Nearby is Chousti Cave, an important archaeological site.

OTHER PLACES TO SEE IN KYTHIRA

St Sophia Cave – 20km west of Chora, a cave with stalagmites inside which is a chapel dedicated to St Sophia (it is said that the saint's disinterred body was found here).

Stone bridges – there are two beautiful stone bridges left over from the British occupation (they were part of the defence system). The largest is in the village of Livadi – built in 1826. It is 110 meters long and has 13 arches. Legend has it that

Paleochora Castle – one of the most important archaeological sites, was once the Byzantine capital of the island of Kythira and was built by the inhabitants of Monemvasia in the 12th century.

THE BEST BEACHES IN KYTHIRA

The most popular beaches in Kythira are Kapsali and Agia Pelagia, and the least populated are Lykodimou, Melidoni, and Chalkos

KAPSALI BEACH

Near the picturesque village of Kapsali are two similar coves. In the larger one is **Kapsali Beach**, bordered by restaurants and cafes. The atmosphere is cosmopolitan, and tourists are amazed by the beautiful scenery, which includes the bizarrely shaped Avgo island. Aphrodite, the goddess of love and desire, is said to have been born here, in a shell.



MELIDONI BEACH

Clear waters, pebbly sand, plus a gorgeous view of the island. This cove is on the island's southwest side, accessible by car via a country road from Drymona. That's **Melidoni Beach**, where there's also a taverna where parties are held day and night.



CHALKOS BEACH

Chalkos is one of the most beautiful beaches in Kythira. Located 8 km southeast of Chora, this pebbly beach with turquoise waters is well organized, with tavernas and generous parking.



AGIA PELAIA BEACH

Agia Pelagia lies 26 km northeast of Chora, stretching along a 400-meter stretch of sand. It is, however, a mixed beach – sand/pebble – perfect for families with children, offering plenty of facilities and tending to get crowded during the peak summer season.

THE BEST HOTELS IN KYTHIRA



FILOXENIA APARTMENTS ***

Booking.com score: 8,9

Filoxenia Apartments are within a 2-minute walk of Agia Pelagia Beach (150 meters). They feature an outdoor pool and sun loungers, free Wi-Fi and are surrounded by a garden. Each apartment is equipped with a kitchenette.



KYTHIRA GOLDEN RESORT ****

Booking.com score: 9,5

Just 200 meters from Diakofti Beach, Kythira Golden Resort features an outdoor pool, snack bar, fitness room, and free Wi-Fi access. The elegant rooms, decorated in pleasant pastels, have sea views.



STELLA'S HOUSES ***

Booking.com score: 9,9

A hotel in Agia Pelagia, 3 minutes from the beach. All rooms have a kitchenette and living room, and breakfast is available each morning at reception.

THE BEST RESTAURANTS IN KYTHIRA



Psomoladea restaurant / Photo: greeka.com

Familia

An authentic restaurant where every dish is made with heart. The seasonal menu reflects Greek and Kytherian gastronomic heritage.

Psomoladea

Created by two friends from Kythera, who joined forces to offer the world good food in the village of Avlemonas, in a 400-year-old building where a tavern has always operated.

Kaleris

Open for more than three decades in the village of Agia Pelagia in Kythira, Kaleris restaurant has transformed from a fish tavern into a "classic" offering traditional food and fish and seafood dishes.



ITHACA

A vacation in Odysseus' kingdom



Ithaca Island / Photo: Deposit Photos

When we say *Ithaca*, Homer's *Odyssey* immediately comes to mind. Where Odysseus, the hero of the Trojan War, returns home after ten years of battles and adventures among monsters, cyclops, and mermaids to his beloved Penelope, who is waiting in his kingdom, the island of Ithaca. Where is Ithaca? In the Ionian Sea, near a much more touristy island – Kefalonia. You could even say that Ithaca is a smaller, quieter replica of Kefalonia.

Legend aside, Ithaca is an island inhabited since the 2nd century BC, initially ruled by Mycenaeans. During the Hellenistic period and the Middle Ages, Ithaca's population declined sharply under Venetian rule, and the war with the Turks left the island virtually uninhabited. Today, however, Ithaca is a picturesque island with a relaxed atmosphere. Ithaca offers secluded beaches and mountain villages steeped in stories and legends for visitors.

Small but very attractive, Ithaca offers visitors the classic elements of a Greek island: beautiful beaches – Filiatro, Gidaki, Sarakiniko – and picturesque villages such as Vathy and Kioni.

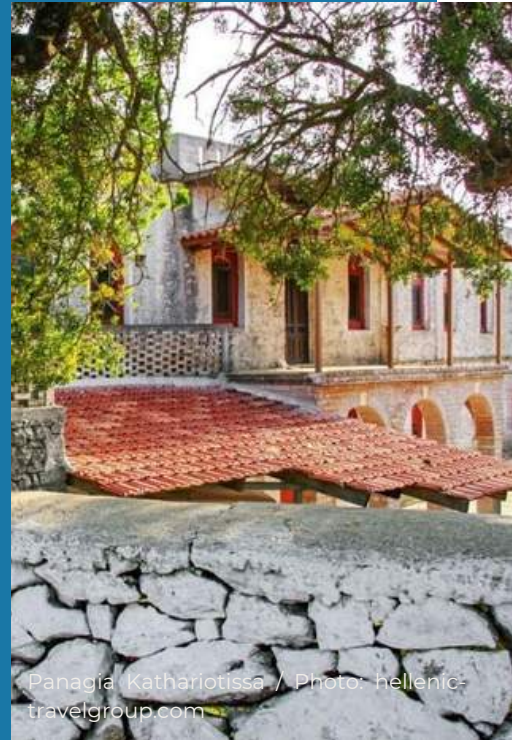


WHAT TO SEE AND DO IN ITHACA

There are a few interesting places to visit in Ithaca when the sun feels too hot and you're bored of sitting on the sand.



Entrance in the Cave of the Nymphs / Photo: mygreekheart.com



Panagia Kathariotissa / Photo: hellenic-travelgroup.com

PANAGIA KATHARIOTISSA MONASTERY

To visit it you basically have to get to the middle of the island. **Kathariotissa Monastery** is situated at an altitude of 600m, the location offering beautiful views of the island and especially the capital Vathi. It is not known exactly when the monastery was built, but it certainly existed in 1530 and was rebuilt in 1696. The island's inhabitants believe that the icon of the Virgin Mary inside the monastery was painted by the apostle Luke and is a miracle worker.

THE CAVE OF THE NYMPHS

According to the legends of Greek mythology, the **Cave of the Nymphs** was the place where Odysseus supposedly hid the gifts he received from the inhabitants of the island of Scheria on his return to Ithaca. The cave would have had two entrances, one for the gods the other for the ordinary people. Nowadays, you can't enter the cave, but it's an experience to watch its entrance given the many legends that feature it.



KIONI

Kioni is a traditional Ionian village with a picturesque little harbor where boats crowd in the summer. This village was once the base for pirates who wreaked havoc in the eastern Mediterranean. And Kioni's three deserted mills symbolize its glorious past.



Vathy Bay / Photo: photo_stella

VATHY

Vathy is the capital of Ithaca island. Located in the southern part of the island, this village is built around a splendid bay. Among the things you can do in Vathy is visit the archaeological museum, which houses many of the artifacts discovered on the island, and admire the paintings depicting Jesus Elkomenos by the famous El Greco, which are in the church of Agios Nikolaos de Xenon.

Those who love museums should stop by the Folklore and Nautical Museum, where they will discover traditional island clothing, embroidery, musical instruments, and tools from the past and photographs from after the earthquake that destroyed the island in 1953. There are many restaurants, bars, cafés, and souvenir shops in the harbor, along with a statue of Odysseus.

THE BEST BEACHES IN ITHACA

Known for being lapped by turquoise waters and bordered by lush vegetation, Ithaca's beaches, like everywhere else, fall into two broad categories – secluded beaches and popular, well-landscaped beaches. Ithaca's most beautiful beaches are:



Filiatro Beach / Photo: Vasilis Protopapas

FILIATRO BEACH

Those looking for a beach near the capital city of Vathy will end up at Filiatro, just 3 kilometers away. A pebbly stretch of sand with calm waters, ideal for families with children. Set in a beautiful bay, Filiatro welcomes you with a friendly atmosphere, parking spaces, sun loungers, umbrellas, and bars.



Gidaki / Photo: Vasilis Protopapas

GIDAKI BEACH

Gidaki is a quiet beach on the east coast of Ithaca, accessible only by boat. Visitors can embark from Vathy harbor and arrive at this secluded, pebbly beach framed by white rocks and lush vegetation. The beach has no sun loungers and umbrellas, but there is a café open during the summer months.



Sarakiniko / Constantinos Illopoulos

SARAKINIKO BEACH

Crystal-clear waters and two pebbly coves – a classic image of a Greek island, encompassing Sarakiniko Beach, surrounded by the landscape of olive and cypress groves reflected in the blue-green water. Sarakiniko is another quiet beach in Ithaca, also defined by the small harbor of fishermen who leave at dawn to bring in the 'catch' found on the local tavernas' tables.

HOW TO GET TO ITHACA

There is no airport on the island of Ithaca, the nearest being in Kefalonia. From here (Sami port), you can take the ferry to Ithaca (in Pisaetos), the crossing takes about 20 minutes. If you are in Athens, you can drive to Patras (210 km), then take the ferry to Ithaca from Patras port (3.5 – 4 hours). If you're in Lefkada, you can take the ferry from Nidri in summer, arriving in Frikes.

OTHER BEACHES

Other beaches to visit in your vacation in Thaca are Skinos Bay beach, Marmaka beach, Agios Ioannis beach, Dexa beach, Polis beach, Aetos beach, Pisaetos beach, Rachi beach, Minimata beach, Loutsas beach

THE BEST HOTELS IN ITHACA



FAMILIA ***

Booking.com score: 9,6

Hotel Familia is located in the capital of Vathi, about 1.3 km from Loutsa Beach and 1.4 km from Dexa Beach. Free internet, air-conditioned rooms, terrace. Breakfast is included in the price. Nearby are the harbor, Folklore and Nautical Museum, Archaeological Museum.



HOTEL OMIRIKON ***

Booking.com score: 8,3

Located in Vathi, less than 1 km from Loutsa Beach and a 15-minute walk from Minimata Beach, Hotel Omirikon welcomes guests with a shared lounge and terrace, free internet, and a small swimming pool.



MENTOR HOTEL ***

Booking.com score: 8,3

Located in Vathi harbor, the capital of Ithaca Island, Mentor Hotel is about 15 minutes from the beach and just a few minutes from the village center. It features a roof garden, a cafe bar, and beautiful sea views.

THE BEST RESTAURANTS IN ITHACA



Kanenas

An organic menu that supports local producers. Kanenas is located in Stavros. The olive oil comes from its own olive grove, and dishes obviously include seafood and lamb.

Ageri

Located in Frikes harbor, Ageri is a restaurant 'with a view' of both the sea and the mountains. It serves traditional Greek dishes, meat, and seafood but interpreted somewhat modernly.

Yefuri

The ingredients here are simple and fresh, with most dishes including home-grown vegetables. Yefuri is located in the village of Platritrias.

ANTIPAROS

A visit to Cinderella of the Cyclades



Antiparos Island / Photo: Deposit Photos

We all know of Paros, the island in the Cyclades archipelago, perhaps not as much promoted as the famous “sisters” Santorini and Mykonos but sufficiently visited and adored by tourists. Well, a short ferry ride from Paros, just ten minutes away, is **Antiparos**. It’s a little gem, not very well known, but on the list of favorites among the world’s celebrities, if we think that Tom Hanks himself often visits it, calling it “home” when it comes to holidays.

Antiparos is sought after mainly for its beautiful beaches, many of which are close to the capital of the same name. But those who wish to explore its territory in more detail will be in for some nice surprises. These include the Venetian castle and the Antiparos cave. Let’s see which are the most beautiful tourist attractions of Antiparos Island, in Greece.



Alley on Chora / Foto: Deposit Photos

Photo: Deposit Photos

WHAT TO SEE AND DO IN ANTIPAROS

The winding streets of **Antiparos (Chora)**, the capital of Antiparos Island, instantly turn into Instagrammable places, filled with charming cafes, tavernas and boutiques. Once you've familiarised yourself with them and want something else, head to Kastro, the castle on the hill. Kastro is an old Venetian castle, largely in ruins, but with a circular tower left to watch over the town and its surroundings.

The castle is a typical example of a fortified building from the Cyclades area, 13th-16th century period. It was built in 1440, when the Venetian Giovanni Loredano married Maria Sommaripa of Antiparos. Scholars say it is the most interesting medieval structure in the Aegean.



Kastro Antiparos / Photo: Jannick Tessier

KASTRO

The original version of the castle had a main tower in the center, with houses built around it. The base of that tower can still be seen today. The houses were built as a continuous block, their outer walls (3 meters thick) also forming the castle's defensive wall. The only entrance was on the south side, near the Antiparos square – a Gothic-style entrance that has survived to the present day. As a matter of fact, the filming of the 1960 film *Madalena*, a famous Greek musical, took place here.



Parikia, in the old center of Antiparos / Photo: Andrey Khrobostov

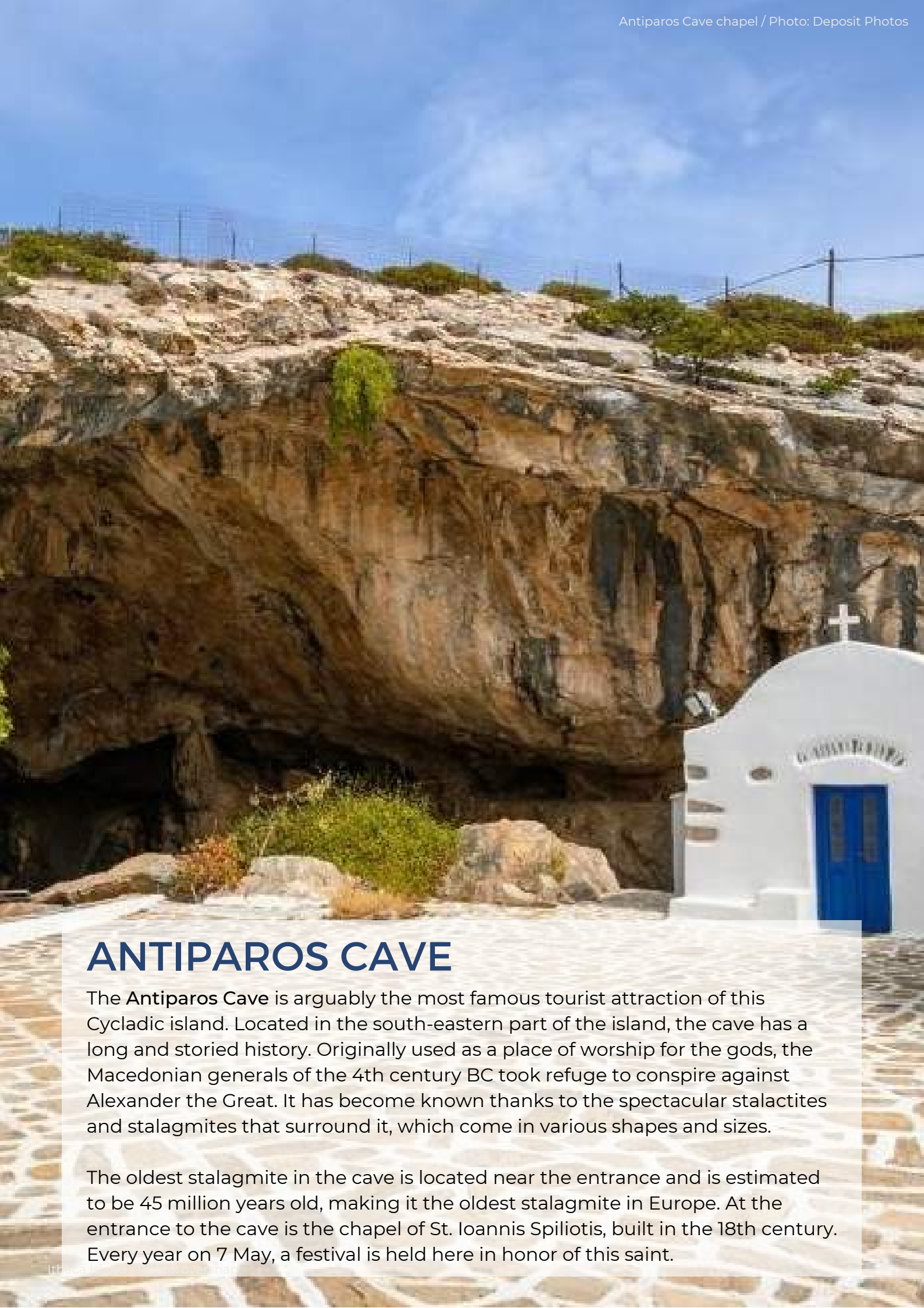
DESPOTIKO ISLAND



One of the things you can do when in Antiparos is to visit the beautiful nearby **Despotiko Island**, where there is an archaeological site from the Archaic period. Here you'll discover a Doric temple, the ruins of at least 12 buildings, figurines, and inscriptions related to the god Apollo. The finds are well preserved, so Despotiko is a fascinating place for those interested in Ancient Greek history.

HOW TO GET TO ANTIPAROS

As there is no airport on Antiparos, the only way to get to this tiny island is by ferry, taken from neighboring Paros. In summer, there are regular trips, and the distance takes 10-15 minutes. If you're driving, you'll need to take the ferry from the port of Pounta. If not, you can also take it from Parikia. Obviously, you can get to Paros by plane or ferry.



ANTIPAROS CAVE

The **Antiparos Cave** is arguably the most famous tourist attraction of this Cycladic island. Located in the south-eastern part of the island, the cave has a long and storied history. Originally used as a place of worship for the gods, the Macedonian generals of the 4th century BC took refuge to conspire against Alexander the Great. It has become known thanks to the spectacular stalactites and stalagmites that surround it, which come in various shapes and sizes.

The oldest stalagmite in the cave is located near the entrance and is estimated to be 45 million years old, making it the oldest stalagmite in Europe. At the entrance to the cave is the chapel of St. Ioannis Spiliotis, built in the 18th century. Every year on 7 May, a festival is held here in honor of this saint.

THE BEST BEACHES IN ANTIPAROS

A holiday in Antiparos is primarily about the beaches. Among the beaches of this small island, Panagia, Psaralyki, and Glifa stand out



Psaraliki Beach / Photo: antiparos.com

PSARALIKI BEACH

There are two beaches with the same name, about 1 km from Chora. The beaches are shaded by trees growing right on the sand and are well equipped with umbrellas and sun loungers. Other facilities (on Psaraliki II) include a spacious tavern with plenty of seating and two clubs, open until the morning. Psaraliki beaches are usually very crowded.

Other beautiful beaches on Antiparos island that you can visit during your holiday here are: Camping beach, Agios Spiridonas beach, Livadia beach, Vathis Volos beach, Sifneikos beach, Soros beach.



Panagia Beach / Photo: Constantinos Iliopoulos

PANAGIA BEACH

Located 3km from the capital, Panagia is a perfect beach for bathing and enjoys a peaceful atmosphere, making it a good alternative for those looking to escape the crowds at the two Psaraliki beaches. There is also a taverna on this beach where you can eat excellent Greek food. Sometimes you may even be lucky enough to find Panagia deserted.

GLIFA BEACH

Located in the south of the island, Glifa is a generally quiet beach, ideal for families with children. Situated in a rural area, Glifa is quite long (6 km), with the coastline of the neighboring island of Paros visible from the sand. There are trees offering shade in the hot afternoon hours on its southern side.



Glifa Beach / Photo: Constantinos Iliopoulos

THE BEST HOTELS IN ANTIPAROS



HOTEL MANTALENA **

Booking.com score: 8,9

Hotel Mantalena is located in the capital of Antiparos, two minutes from the beach, and offers spacious, Cycladic-style rooms. Free internet access, a quiet location near the central square. Parking nearby is also free.



ARTEMIS HOTEL **

Booking.com score: 9,2

Artemis is another hotel in Antiparos, located just a minute away from Agios Spiridonas Beach and 10 minutes from Psaraliki Beach. The hotel has free Wi-Fi and a snack bar featuring typical Cycladic architecture.



KASTRO ANTIPAROS ****

Booking.com score: 9,4

Featuring an outdoor pool and a beautiful terrace, Kastro Antiparos is a 5-minute walk from Psaraliki Beach and just 250 meters from Antiparos Central Square and the Venetian Castle. Balconies overlooking the Aegean Sea, kitchenette, and free internet.

THE BEST RESTAURANTS IN ANTIPAROS



Kalokeri

Kalokeri is a restaurant in the capital of Antiparos, famous for the way local ingredients are prepared. According to TripAdvisor, light food, excellent salads, and seafood are its signature.

Yam

For years, it was the first cocktail bar in Antiparos. The place to relax, eat, drink and listen to good music, being served by friends. Yam is also a place where various activities, exhibitions, and private events are held.

Argo

A family business, which also includes a few rooms that can be rented during the season. The restaurant is set in a beautiful garden, and the owners boast that the dishes on the menu are made to secret recipes.



A scenic view of a coastal town, likely in Greece, featuring white-washed buildings and traditional windmills. The town is built on a hillside, with a prominent church visible on the peak. In the foreground, two large, white, cylindrical windmills with dark wooden sails are prominent. The sky is clear and blue, and the overall atmosphere is bright and sunny.

Serifos Island is certainly not a highly developed island in terms of tourism, but it impresses with its natural beauty, with unspoiled hills, fertile valleys, and bays sheltering secluded and deserted beaches. Added to all this is the architecture of the capital Chora, with its bars and tavernas, where you will find the authentic Greek spirit.

HISTORY OF SERIFOS

Let's look into the depths of mythology. We discover that the island of Serifos was inhabited by Cyclops, who is said to have built some of the monuments on its territory, such as the White Tower and the walls of the Liomandras fortress. What's more, Serifos is the site of another legend: Akrisios, king of Argos, learned from an oracle that his nephew would be responsible for his downfall, so he locked Danae, his daughter, in the palace. Despite the precaution, Zeus, who was in love with Danae, left her pregnant after she took the form of golden rain. After Danae gave birth to a son, Perseus, Akrisios put the mother and her child in a chest and threw it into the sea.

The crate washed up on the shores of the island of Serifos and was found by King Polydektis, who in turn fell in love with Danae. Wishing to escape Danae's son Perseus, Polydektis sent him to confront Medusa, the legendary creature who transforms people into rocks just by looking at them. With the help of the goddess Athena and a bronze shield sent by her, Perseus killed the monster, returned with Medusa's head, and turned Polydektis to stone. This happened at the very wedding the king arranged with Danae, despite her resistance. In fact, all the attendees were turned to stone, including King Akrisios, thus fulfilling the oracle's prophecy.

Leaving aside this interesting moment in mythology, the actual history of Serifos island records the presence of Cretan tribes in prehistoric times, followed by the Phoenicians and Mycenaeans. In the 7th-6th centuries BC, the Ionians were using iron from Serifos, attempting to become a commercial and political force in the area. During the Persian Wars, Serifos was part of the Athenian Alliance, and the island continued to be active into the Hellenistic era.

Years of Roman rule followed, then in the Byzantine Era, the island was used as a place of exile for those against the Romans. It then flourished in the Venetian period, when slaves were brought to work in the iron mines, and declined in the period of Ottoman rule. Serifos took part in the Greek Revolution and was liberated in 1830, along with the other islands of the Cyclades archipelago.

WHAT TO SEE AND DO IN SERIFOS

Serifos is an island that has managed to keep its personality and authenticity intact. It's an island where no planes land or cruise ships dock, which doesn't have the craziness of its Cycladic 'sisters' Santorini or Mykonos. Still, tourists don't hesitate to visit because it has a special charm. What can you do and see in Serifos?



The Upper Chora / Photo: Deposit Photos



Panno Piazza. / Photo: Deposit Photos

CHORA, THE CAPITAL

Chora is the capital and main town of Serifos, which stretches like an amphitheater, its white houses like giant cubes on the slopes of a hill right in the harbor area. In Venetian times, the Chora of Serifos was protected by a fortification against pirate attacks from the Mediterranean. These walls can still be seen today, and beautiful panoramic photographs can be taken from the paths that run past them.

Chora is divided into two areas – Upper Chora (Ano Chora) and Lower Chora (Kato Chora). Still, you don't need a map to explore this town whose cobbled streets are lined with shops selling handicrafts and baked goods, where there are small markets with quiet cafes or interesting Orthodox churches (speaking of churches, there are over 115 in Serifos!). Ano Chora is the more interesting neighborhood, perhaps also because of the scenery it offers. Kato Chora connects the capital with Livadi, the main port of Serifos.

HOW TO GET TO SERIFOS

Serifos is not on the usual tourist routes, so it does not have an airport. The only way to get to Serifos is by ferry. It can be taken from the port of Piraeus (Athens) and, depending on the type of ferry, the journey varies between two and four hours. Ferry trips are also available from neighboring islands – Sifnos, Milos, Naxos, and Paros. During the summer season, the trips are daily and 3-4 times a week in the off-season.



WINDMILLS OF SERIFOS

Not necessarily that there's anything extraordinary to see at these windmills, but if you have a cute Instagram account, or if you want to be left with the memory of some great photos, the eight windmills are the perfect setting. Especially as the mills have been fully restored, one of them converted into a home, allowing you to visit.



Church of St. Constantine / Photo: milangonda

Pano Piazza is the central square of Chora, dominated by the neoclassical Town Hall building and the church of St Athanasios. When visiting the town, you can stop here on a terrace for a glass of ouzo or tsipouro, then do a quick shopping session – local crafts, handmade jewelry, souvenirs.

The Church of St Constantine (Agios Konstantinos), right at the top of the hill at an altitude of 251m, is the highest point in Chora, which is obviously why you get the best views from here. Small and painted white, the chapel was renovated in 1928.

If you like museums, you can visit two such institutions in Chora: the **Museum of Archaeology** (where Greek and Roman antiquities – parts of temples, funerary columns, statues – are exhibited) and the **Museum of Folklore** (which shows the life of Serifos in the past).

TAXIARCHES MONASTERY

Located in the northern part of Serifos, near the village of Galani. It is a monastery of monks, built in 1572, dedicated to Saints Michael and Gabriel. Throughout the ages, it has owned much land and housed many treasures, which is why it has often been in the sights of pirates. It has interesting architecture, looking more like a fortress, with a fortified wall to protect it from attack. Inside, the walls are painted by Emmanuel Skordilis, showing the archangels fighting the dragon.

THE BEST BEACHES IN SERIFOS

Serifos has been blessed by the gods with beautiful beaches. If you find yourself on this island, don't miss the beaches of Agios Sostis, Ganema, and Psili Ammos.

GANEMA BEACH

Ganema is located in the southern part of Serifos island, in the bay of Koutalas. It is one of the largest beaches in Serifos, with white pebbles on one side and sand on the other. It is accessible by car and is bordered by trees. The sea is shallow at the shore, and the water is calm, making Ganema suitable for families with children.



PSILI AMMOS BEACH

In 2003, Psili Ammos was awarded the title of Europe's best beach and is one of the most sought-after stretches of sand on the island of Serifos. It is a golden (fine) sandy beach, bathed by calm waters and served by cafes and restaurants. It lies 8 km northwest of Chora.

AGIOS SOSTIS BEACH

Agios Sostis is said to be one of the most beautiful beaches in Serifos. It is a sandy beach located on the island's east coast (6 km from Livadi) and named after the church located next to it on a hill. In a nutshell, Agios Sostis is for those who love peace and quiet but don't like isolation.



OTHER BEACHES IN SERIFOS

Other beaches to relax in Serifos island of Greece are: Vagia beach, Megalo Livadi beach, Livadi beach, Koutalas beach, Lia beach, Livadakia beach.

THE BEST HOTELS IN SERIFOS



HOTEL NAIAS **

Booking.com score: 9,2

Hotel Naias is located in the seaside village of Livadi, on the southeast coast of Serifos island. It is surrounded by a beautiful garden and offers views of the bay. Open all year round, the hotel has plenty of facilities for all requirements. Distance to the beach: 2 minutes.



COCO-MAT ECO ****

Booking.com score: 9

Located 11 km from Livadi harbor, on Vagia beach, Coco-Mat Eco Residences is a complex of 13 renovated former miners' houses with a special ecological concept. The apartments are equipped with COCO-MAT furniture, and the linens and pillows are made of natural materials.



SERIFOS PALACE ***

Booking.com score: 8,6

Built in an amphitheater-style layout in picturesque Livadakia, 80 meters from the sea, Serifos Palace offers maisonette-style accommodation and fully equipped apartments. In addition to the Livadakia establishment, there are several newly built apartments in Livadi.

THE BEST RESTAURANTS IN SERIFOS



To Bakakaki Restaurant / Photo: e-kyklades.gr

Metalleio

For the ultimate dining experience, you need to head to Metalleio (in Livadi), the best restaurant on the island of Serifos. Here you'll see how the hosts combine nature with local gastronomy and Greek culture.

To Bakakaki

A restaurant started with a love for meat, which wants to look like an old-fashioned place, bringing vintage elements of classic tavernas into the present. The entire menu is dedicated to "carnivores".

Plakes

Located in the capital of Chora, Plakes has a rich menu, with the rabbit dish being the standout. The place has a special atmosphere and offers fabulous views in Upper Chora.



LEMNOS

A visit to god Hephaestus' home



Lemnos Island / Photo: nplion

Ithaca Island / Photo: Deposit Photos

Lemnos (or Limnos, as it is also called) is an island in the northern Aegean Sea, between the Halkidiki peninsula and the coast of Turkey (or between Thassos and Lesbos, depending on how you want to look at it), which could be defined as somewhat atypical compared to other Greek islands. The unique landscape of Lemnos, with its green hills and vineyards, bays upon bays, and dozens of beautiful beaches, sand dunes, and other bizarre geological formations, invites visitors to explore its alluring nature, traditional villages, and archaeological sites that bear witness to a civilization with a centuries-old history.



Boats in Myrina Port / Photo: brunette

Looking into mythology, Lemnos is the home of the Amazons and Hephaestus, the god of fire and volcanoes. It was here that Hephaestus had his blacksmith's workshop, and one of the towns on Lemnos, Ifestia, was named in his honor. Legend has it that Hephaestus came to Lemnos after being thrown off Mount Olympus by his parents, Hera and Zeus, who couldn't bear to have such an ugly child. Hephaestus fell on the island, broke his leg, and was left lame, but the locals nursed him back to health and taught him the art of blacksmithing.



Lemnos island / Photo: joakimbkk

Another legend associates the island of Lemnos with Philoctetes, son of Peante, king of Meliboea, an ancient hero who was abandoned here during the Athenian expedition against Troy. He was bitten on the leg by a snake (another version says he had a wound from a blood-soaked arrow shot by Heracles) so the Athenians leaders had to leave him on the desolate island of Lemnos, where Philoctetes survived for ten years, thanks

to Heracles' bird-killing arrows.

Last but not least, Lemnos is said to have been one of the places inhabited by the famous female warriors called Amazons. Another legend says that when Jason and his Argonauts stopped over in Lemnos on their way to search for golden wool, they were warmly welcomed by the Amazons and their queen, Hypsipyle, with whom Jason had twin sons.



Lemnos Castle / Photo: fotofritz16



Myrina, Lemnos / Photo: JSSIII



In the Myrina port / Photo: Deposit Photos

WHAT TO SEE AND DO IN LEMNOS

MYRINA

Myrina is the capital of Lemnos and its main town. And the castle at the highest point of the city is the most visited tourist attraction on the island. It was built by the Byzantine emperor Andronikos I Komninos (1118-1885) on the site of ancient walls. The Venetians continued to build it after they occupied Lemnos.

The walk up to the castle may seem tiring, but you'll certainly forget about the effort quickly once you take in the breathtaking scenery once you reach the top. In addition to the castle, visitors can admire the ruins of a Turkish mosque, several other houses and some of the Dama deer that populate the place, descendants of those donated by the municipality of Rhodes in 1968.



Myrina / Photo: brunette

Otherwise, visitors to Myrina will be pleasantly impressed by the neoclassical-style houses or the Ottoman buildings, the narrow streets leading to the small harbor. Many restaurants and cafés in the port and various shops sell souvenirs and handicrafts, ceramics, pasta, wine, and beekeeping products.



The sand dunes of Lemnos / Photo: nplion

SAND DUNES NEAR GOMATI

The desertified Ammothines region offers a landscape unlike anywhere else in Greece: sand dunes and rich vegetation.

Ammothines is located in the northern part of the island, and the 70,000 square meter area is reached by a country road from the village of Katalakkos. It's a good place for landscape photography, as well as a hike to nearby Gomati beach.



CHURCH OF KAKAVIOTISSA

The small chapel of Panagia Kakaviotissa, near the village of Thanos, is worth a visit because it is housed inside a cave on the summit of Mount Kakavos (improperly called 'mountain', though). It was built in 1416 and served as a shelter for monks and pilgrims fleeing Ottoman raids. The chapel can be reached by car from Myrina, then a short walk along a country road, the recommendation being to come at evening time to admire the dramatic scenery at sunset.

Poliochni / Photo: ale3andro (Wikipedia)



POLIOCHNI

Some specialists consider Poliochni to be the oldest settlement in Europe. Archaeologists have uncovered a series of four chronologically different settlements built on top of each other. The oldest, Blue Poliochni, dates back some 6000 years. It was followed by the Green, Red, and Yellow Poliochni, the last of which was destroyed around 2100 BC during Homer's Trojan period. They were named after the colors of the houses.

Poliochni is thought to have been a wealthy settlement, with archaeological excavations revealing many clues. It was surrounded by 5 meter high walls, which had openings for archers. As Lemnos is the site of the legendary Amazons, it is assumed that these 'windows' were where the female warriors stood waiting for their attackers.



Hephaestia / Photo: pravlīs.gr

HEPHAISTIA AND THE MYSTERIES OF CABIRIS

The ruins of **Hephaestia** are remnants of an ancient city that flourished during the 5th and 4th centuries BC. The god Hephaestus was the protector of this city, and as a result, he was highly revered here. To the north of Cape Chloe, you will discover the sanctuary of the Cabirs, also dedicated to Hephaestus. According to legend, the Cabirs were his twin children, and the sanctuary was the scene of the Cabir mysteries.



Taxiarches church in Moudros / Photo: Deposit Photos

MOUDROS VILLAGE

Moudros is a port on the eastern side of Lemnos, known for its excellent seafood dishes, brought in every morning by fishermen scouring the Aegean depths. At the same time, Moudros is a splendid settlement that you can visit at your leisure, enjoying every step you take among the white houses, visiting the ruins of the castle on the hill, and admiring the churches of Taxiarches and Evagelistria.

CAPE FALAKRO



Falakro Cape / Photo: fotofritz16

At **Cape Falakro**, visitors discover a stunning phenomenon that features geological formations that appeared millions of years ago. Hot lava from a volcano flowed overland and 'froze' as soon as it contacted the seawater. The resulting image of these reddish rocks is a delight.

HOW TO GET TO LEMNOS

The island of Lemnos has an airport where several daily flights land from Athens, Thessaloniki, Lesbos, and Ikaria. If you don't come by plane, you can choose a ferry, either from Piraeus and Lavrion or from islands such as Lesbos, Fourni, Ikaria, Chios, Samos, Patmos, etc. From northern Greece, ferries to Lemnos leave from Thessaloniki and Kavala. However, you should check their frequency, as this is not daily.



Agios Ioannis Beach / Photo: fotofritz16

AGIOS IOANNIS BEACH

Agios Ioannis is a small beach 6 km north of Myrina, near the village of Kaspakas. It has sand, a charming heart shape, and the bay in which it lies is framed by huge volcanic rocks. The beach is well laid out, and in addition to umbrellas and sun loungers, there are several bars and a taverna with a seafood menu.

Other beautiful beaches to visit in your Lemnos holiday are: Nevgatis beach, Thanos beach, Zematas beach, Keros beach, Gomati beach, Fanari beach, Kokkina beach, Avlonas beach, Myrina beach.

THE BEST BEACHES IN LEMNOS

Lemnos is an island also known for its many beaches. Virtually everywhere you go towards the sea, you'll find a beach, sandy or pebbly. Each one is different and with varying degrees of landscaping. The best beaches in Lemnos are Plati, Riha Nera, Agios Ioannis.



Plati Beach / Photo: skypixel.com (JOY aerial filming)

PLATI BEACH

Bars, tavernas, cafes, water sports facilities, sun loungers, and umbrellas make Plati one of the most extensive and best-organized beaches. It's 700m long, which means that there's room for everyone during the peak summer months. The beach is also a great place to stroll around in the evening when you're looking for a place to have dinner. It is located in the village of the same name, 2km from the capital Myrina.



Riha Nera Beach / Photo: skypixel.com (JOY aerial filming)

RIHA NERA BEACH

Situated near Romaikos Yialos, the beautiful bay in the capital of Myrina, Riha Nera (in translation – 'still waters') is one of the most popular beaches in Lemnos and a very cosmopolitan one, suitable for all age groups, especially children. It is also one of the best places in Lemnos to watch the sunset.

THE BEST HOTELS IN LEMNOS



VAROS VILLAGE BOUTIQUE HOTEL ****

Booking.com score: 8,8

Located a 12-minute walk from the beach, in a central area of the restored village of Varos, the complex features a swimming pool, bar, restaurant, and fitness room. Rooms are elegantly and modernly decorated, and the Veranda restaurant serves traditional Greek dishes.



ETHALEIA HOTEL ***

Booking.com score: 9,8

Ethaleia is a charming hotel set on a small hill, from where you get great views of the bay of Moudros. A quiet location, very close to two good beaches: Fanaraki the small and the large and the sites of Poliochni and Hephaestia. Comfortable and clean rooms, furnished in antique style, friendly staff.



AFRODITE HOTEL APARTMENTS **

Booking.com score: 9,2

Located just 50 meters from Riha Nera Beach and a 5-minute walk from Romeikos Gialos, Afrodite Apartments has a kitchenette. Generally, they have all the amenities you'd want for a self-catering stay. The center and harbor of Myrina are 250 meters away.

THE BEST RESTAURANTS IN LEMNOS



Opos Palia

A family-run Greek restaurant with good food and reasonable prices, attentive staff, and a quiet ambiance in a setting reminiscent of old Greek movies. In the village of Thanos.

Grammofono

Located in the capital Myrina, not far from the seafront, Grammofono has a less commercial and more authentic atmosphere. A rich menu with dishes that are less common for Greek islands, such as tabbouleh or portobello saute.

Taverna Man-Tella

In the heart of the quiet village of Sardes, a taverna 'grown' since the early 90s with the idea of showing the world the rich gastronomic heritage of Lemnos.


KARPATHOS

The dream place where the gods escape



Somewhere in the Aegean Sea, between Crete and Rhodes, part of the Dodecanese archipelago, lies the **Karpathos Island**. With a population of around 7000, which can increase in summer by 3-4 times due to the return home of former locals, plus growing numbers of tourists, Karpathos is the second-largest island of this southern Aegean archipelago.

High mountains (maximum altitude Kali Limni – 1215 m), picture-postcard scenery, traditional villages, turquoise beaches, and a rich history are the elements that briefly characterize Karpathos. But in the general characterization, one cannot forget the locals, who know how to enjoy life, honoring their traditions and organizing beautiful festivals throughout the year.



There are 12 villages on the island of Karpathos, some in the mountains, others near the sea, all marked by remarkable hospitality, where family-run tavernas are ready to offer visitors delicious local dishes. Christian and Byzantine churches dot the island, and tourists are drawn to landscapes that vary from region to region.

Karpathos' history is rooted in mythology. According to legend, pirates here loved their homeland so much that they went to Mount Olympus to kidnap the gods and bring them to Karpathos. Their plan succeeded, and the 'victims' were taken to a mountain village called Olympos, which still exists today.

We don't know whether the gods remained in Karpathos or not, but it is known that this island is one of the least commercial of the Greek islands. A quick drive through some of the villages transports you back in time, the overall impression being that you are in a place of contrasts. Mainly – or mainly – generated by the two predominant landforms: mountain and sea. In fact, the island's history is marked to a large extent by the pirates' deeds, as its personality has been defined more by its mountainous structure.

WHAT TO SEE AND DO IN KARPATHOS

With so many contrasts in front of you – from rugged mountains to serene beaches – the holiday opportunities unfold without much difficulty. Of course, Karpathos is an island for those who love nature and sporting activities. For example, the south-eastern part of the island is haunted by constant winds, making the Afiartis area a sought-after spot for surfers and kite surfers.

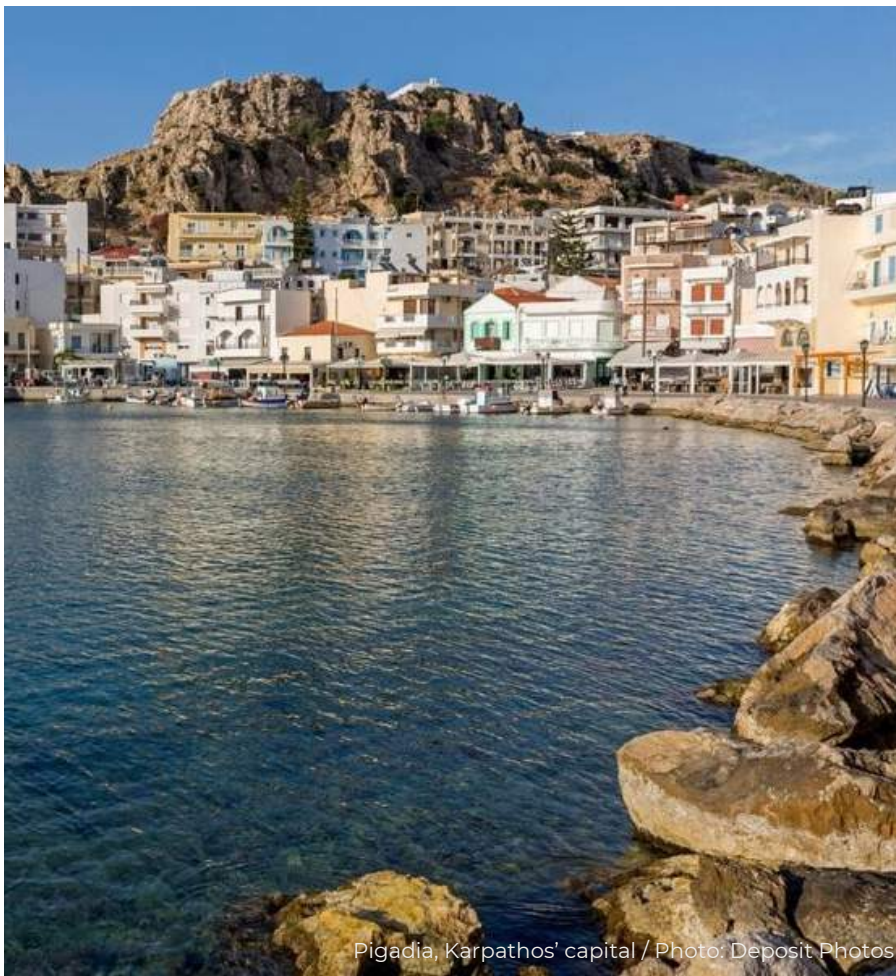
The north is a protected area, with Saria and Astakidonia internationally

recognized for their biodiversity. Karpathos is also an important stopover for migratory birds on their way from Africa to Europe. It has almost 480 km of hiking trails, ten of which are specially dedicated to birdwatchers.

All in all, Karpathos is not a crowded island, with tourists trampling over each other and crowding the beaches, as on other, more famous islands. Karpathos is relatively new to the circuit and still boasts an almost unnatural quiet in summer.



Karpathos Apella beach / Photo: FreeArtist



PIGADIA

Pigadia is the capital of Karpathos. It is built on the site of one of the ancient towns here, Poseidio (or Posi), which worshipped Poseidon, the sea god. There are still parts left of the old settlement and the Cyclops wall that defended it, but today Pigadia is a town that offers locals and tourists all the facilities they could need.

Cafes and taverns stretching down to the sea, right next to the fishing boats, offer the possibility to taste the local gastronomy. Not far from the center, tourists can enjoy clean and well-equipped beaches like Vronti, Agios Nikolaos, Ammoopi, or Kyra Panagia.

A stroll through the narrow streets of Pigadia takes you to the Orthodox church of Agia Fotini, built on the ruins of the Dioscuri sanctuary, or to the chapel of Agia Kyriaki, 2.5 km to the west, where there are spectacular views of the sea and the forest. Every morning from the port of Pigadia, you can buy excursions to unique beaches such as Kato Lakos, Kyra Panagia, Apella, and others, as well as to Diafani, from where you can visit the village of Olympos.

POSEIDON'S CAVE



One of the natural attractions of Karpathos is the Poseidon Cave in Miloi, which in ancient times was used as a shrine to the sea god Poseidon or Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty. Shepherds on the island also used the cave as a shelter.

HOW TO GET TO KARPATHOS

The island of Karpathos has an airport where domestic flights land from the capital Athens. The flight takes about an hour, and the airport is 14 km from the capital Pigadia.

Alternatively, Karpathos can be reached by ferry – either from the Athenian port of Piraeus (three times a week, the trip takes 18-21 hours), or from the nearby islands of Santorini, Milos, Rhodes, Anafi, or Crete. From Rhodes, for example, the ferry trip takes 5 hours.

OLYMPOS VILLAGE

Olympos is the most beautiful tourist attraction in Karpathos – from the first moment you get there, its image impresses. The village is “thrown” compactly on the crest of a hill surrounded by higher mountains and, thanks to this location, all the houses have magnificent views of the sea, which is why many call Olympos “the balcony of the Aegean”.

Two steep alleys reach the brightly painted houses, and the unique countryside is complemented by the presence of windmills and the church steeple. In Olympos, the locals wear traditional costumes and have a unique language, which those who know Greek will “spot” immediately.



Panagia Church in Olympos / Photo: Anyarnia



Olympos village of Karpathos / Photo: Deposit Photos



Olympos village / Photo: Kilinson

A visit to Olympos is like a visit to an open-air folklore museum. Attractions in this mountain village include the 16th-century church of Panagia, the flour mill, the museum of artist Vasilis Hadjivassili, the monastery of Chrisovalantou, and the ancient site of Vrykous, with remains dating back to the 4th century.



Blue Square in Olympos / Photo: cunfek

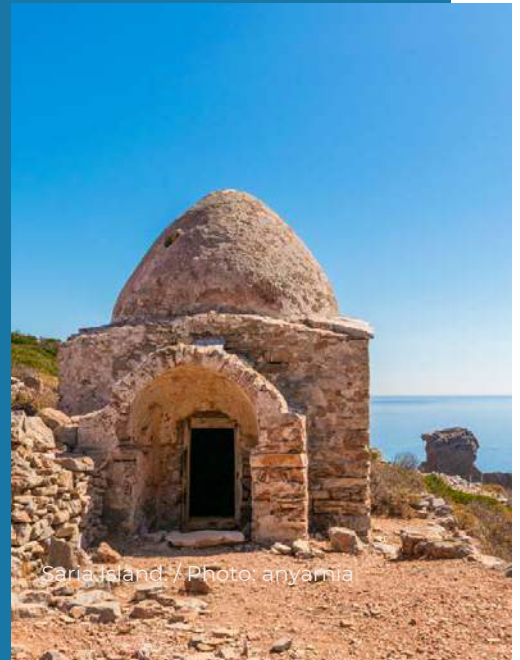


Olympos alley / Photo: Kilinson

SARIA ISLAND

The small island of **Saria** lies in the extreme north of Karpathos, separated from its mother island by a narrow strait. It is thought that in ancient times the two islands were linked, but at some point separated following a strong earthquake. Excavations have revealed a kingdom in Saria, most likely in the ancient city of Nisyros. In fact, its ruins reveal a temple dedicated to the god Apollo.

Saria is worth visiting for its white sandy beaches, lapped by clear waters and bordered by steep cliffs, caves, and raging torrents. It's not an inhabited island – only a few shepherds herd their flocks on its cliffs – but tourists can get here thanks to tours by boats in Pigadia.



MENETES VILLAGE

Menetes is another village on Karpathos island that will delight Instagram fans. Basically, Menetes is the largest village on the island, with colorful houses arranged in amphitheatres on the slopes of Mount Prophet Elijah. The architectural style is similar to Olympos, and the main highlight is the Panagia Church, built of wood on the impressive Sacred Rock. From the churchyard, you can see the whole village and, in the distance, a view that includes the capital of Pygmy.

In Menetes, some rustic taverns and cafes complete the visitor experience with a gastronomic one to match. Just outside the village is the church of Agios Mamas, with its unique architecture and frescoes dating back to the 14th century. Also, in Menetes you can visit the Folklore Museum, with archaeological, ceramic, and sculpture collections.

OTHER VILLAGES IN KARPATHOS

As said above, there are 12 villages on the island of Karpathos, and somehow all of them are worth visiting for their beauty. So if you rent a car (and you'd better) and drive around the island, don't forget to pass through Diafani (small fishing village, practically Olympos' port), Mesochori (mountain village in the centre of the island, 34 km from the capital), Arkasa (coastal village, 16 km from Pigadia, dotted with important historical monuments), Finiki (north of Arkasa), Aperi (one of the largest villages, former capital of the island) and Spoa (another mountain village, where you can admire both sunrise and sunset).

FESTIVALS IN KARPATHOS

The traditions of Karpathos are reflected in the fairs, celebrations, and festivals held throughout the island throughout the year. The principal feature of these festivals is that the wine served to visitors is made by the churches.

The main festivals in Karpathos are the Assumption of the Virgin Mary (15 August, St Mary's Day. In Olympos in particular, this feast is considered extremely important), the feast of St Ioannis (28 August, a festival held in the village of Vourkounda), the feast of St Sophia (17 September, an important day because many women in Karpathos are named after this saint), the Tsambouna festival ('bagpipe festival', held every summer in Olympos and Pigadia).

THE BEST BEACHES IN KARPATHOS

The beaches of Karpathos are varied but, at the same time, are suitable for all age groups. The most beautiful beaches in Karpathos are Apella, Kyra Panagia, and Damatria.

APELLA BEACH

Located 18 km north of the capital of Pigadia, Apella beach, one of the most beautiful beaches of the Aegean, is part of a picturesque landscape in a cove where the seawater is extremely clean. Apella is a sandy beach 20 km north of Pigadia, easily reached by car or scooter. The water lapping its shores is very clear and calm, and the conditions for snorkeling and diving are perfect.



KYRA PANAGIA BEACH

In 2003, Psili Ammos was awarded the title of Europe's best beach and is one of the most sought-after stretches of sand on the island of Serifos. It is a golden (fine) sandy beach, bathed by calm waters and served by cafes and restaurants. It lies 8 km northwest of Chora.



ACHATA BEACH

Achata is a tranquil pebbly and sandy beach near Agia Panagia beach, a few kilometers north of Pigadia. The easily accessible beach by car stretches into a bay surrounded by vegetation-covered cliffs. There's a small taverna but no accommodation nearby.



OTHER BEACHES IN KARPATHOS

If the above three beaches don't satisfy you, look for these: Diakoftis beach, Amoopi beach, Damatria beach, Lefkos beach, Agios Minas beach, Agios Nicolaos beach, Vananda beach.

THE BEST HOTELS IN KARPATHOS



ALKIONI HOTEL ***

Booking.com score: 9,3

A hotel built with the idea of resembling the features of a traditional house, but in a modern and comfortable spirit. Rooms are 50 sqm in size, and from the balcony, guests have views of the Aegean Sea, the small nearby harbor, and the beach. In Foinikion.



LEMON TREE HOUSE ***

Booking.com score: 9,5

Air-conditioned accommodation in a historic 19th-century building 200 metres from Pigadia Harbour. Rooms have kitchenettes and free internet.



IRINI HOTEL ****

Booking.com score: 8,8

Located on the beach, Hotel Irini has a swimming pool, fitness room, and children's playground. Rooms have a balcony, air conditioning, and free internet. Some rooms have mountain views, others – sea views.

THE BEST RESTAURANTS IN KARPATHOS



Edem Garden Restaurant

The best taverna in Olympus offers Greek food, with goodies on the menu such as Macarounes (pasta sautéed in onion sauce with goat cheese, Stephato (goat stew, marinated in tomato sauce), and Loukoumades (doughnuts soaked in honey).

Ratatouille Cocktail Restaurant

A restaurant in Pigadia's capital, with a modern kitchen serving dishes much appreciated by tourists who are promised a unique gastronomic experience. Local ingredients and an impressive wine list.

Kedros

Located in Finiki, Kedros welcomes its customers with delicious traditional Greek dishes and smiling service. If you're coming in high season, the recommendation is to make a reservation.



A vibrant scene in Aegina Island, Greece, featuring a large, ornate church with a red dome and a bell tower in the background. In the foreground, several colorful fishing boats, including a prominent teal and red one, are docked in the harbor. The water is calm, and the sky is blue with scattered clouds.

Situated in the middle of the Argo-Saronic Gulf, just 27 km from the port of Piraeus, **Aegina Island** is one of the favorite destinations of Athenians. A rich history dating back to the 4th millennium BC, idyllic scenery – picturesque villages and beautiful beaches – and interesting gastronomy attract visitors to this island in the Saronic archipelago.

The island was originally called Inoni (or Inopa/Inopia). The later name, Aegina, comes from one of the 50 daughters of the river god Asopus, who became nymphs after being kidnapped by the gods. To avoid Hera, Zeus transformed himself into an eagle and took Aegina, with whom he had fallen in love, to the uninhabited island of Inoni. The fruit of the passion between the god of gods and Aegina was a boy – Aeakos, the island's first king. He asked his father to give him subjects, so Zeus turned the ants on the island into humans. The first inhabitants of Aegina were called myrmidons, from the Greek word 'myrmigi' – ant.

Aegina flourished between the 8th and 5th centuries BC, when it was the first city to mint coins and when the island's fleet was in control of the entire eastern Mediterranean, its greatest moment of glory being when it helped defeat the Persians at the Battle of Salamis (480 BC). Another important moment came after the 1821 revolution against the Ottomans when Aegina was briefly designated the first modern capital of Greece (1827). This lasted only two years, with the capital being transferred to Nafplion in 1829, but Aegina continued to be a focal point of Greek social, political, financial, and commercial life

Aegina Town / Photo: Deposit Photos



WHAT TO SEE AND DO IN AEGINA



Photo: Attila Csipe



Ekklesia Isodia Theotokou Church in Aegina / Photo: zoom-zoom



Myrina, Lemnos / Photo: JSSIII

Photo: zoom-zoom



Markellos tower / Photo: newsfocus1

AEGINA TOWN

The island's capital, **Aegina**, is a town that reviews the history of the place it was built on. Strolling through the town's narrow streets takes you through the Venetian era, after which the main 'story' of the wartime with the Ottomans is the superb Markellos Tower, built in the late 17th and early 18th centuries for defensive purposes. A short distance from the harbor is the Sanctuary of Apollo, dating from the 6th century BC.

Near the tower are the so-called Kopodistrian buildings (which include the Orphanage, the Governor's House, and the Eunardios School) – all dating from the early 19th century, when Ioannis Kapodistrias was the man who briefly designated Aegina as the country's capital. History buffs can learn more by visiting the Museum of History and Folklore and the Museum of Archaeology.



APHAIA TEMPLE

The **Temple of Aphaia** was dedicated to the goddess of the same name and sits on top of a hill on the island of Aegina, specifically in Agia Marina. It is one of the architectural wonders of Ancient Greece. It was erected in 480 BC, and 25 of the original 32 Doric columns have been preserved to the present day with the help of restorations.

The temple was built on the ruins of another temple built in 570 BC and destroyed in a fire in 510 BC. The prosperity generated by the maritime boom on the island of Aegina in the 6th and 5th centuries BC was the main reason for the construction of the Aphaia Temple.

Initially, it was thought that the temple had been dedicated to Jupiter Panhellenius and attributed to Athens.

Later a relic was discovered containing an inscription that the temple was built in honor of the goddess Aphaia (or Aphea). She was a stunningly beautiful Cretan woman who a fisherman rescued from Aegina after escaping an unhappy marriage in Crete. He believed the woman to be a deity and dedicated a shrine to her on top of a hill in Agia Marina. Aphaia was elevated to goddesshood by the goddess Artemis herself and is known as the 'goddess of fishnets'.

SANCTUARY OF APOLLO

The **Sanctuary of Apollo Delfinios** sits on a small hill near the town of Aegina and is one of the first things you notice when you arrive at the port. It's the only thing left of the Temple of Apollo (also called Kolona), which was built in the 6th century BC, the mountain of the same name being an important religious center of the area. It's worth visiting for the ruins themselves and because it's set in a beautiful natural environment, with olive trees and wildflowers growing among the stones. The view of the harbor is a special one.



AEGINA, PISTACHIO ISLAND

If you like **pistachios**, then you've come to pistachio heaven! Aegina is the island where pistachios are everywhere and in all forms: fresh, roasted (salted or unsalted), in dishes, sprinkled on breakfast, in pesto, or ice cream. A stop at the historic Aiakeion patisserie-café in the Old Town is a must if you want to try one of the best pistachio desserts and buy pistachio products.

Another recommendation along the same lines is Mourtzis, behind the fish market, where you'll find local produce and can't leave without the famous *fistikato* – pistachio paste au gratin with caramel, topped with... pistachios and syrup.



Aegina Pistachio / Photo: siete_vidas



Moni island / Photo: Shansche

MONI ISLAND



Photo: DimaBerkut

A 10-minute boat ride from Aegina, **Moni islet** is a great idea for a day trip to enjoy the turquoise waters surrounding it and the rich vegetation that covers it. On the northern coast, Moni has small beaches where you can sit in the sun and swim in calm water.

Moni is not an inhabited island, but here you may be lucky enough to see a few deer, kri-kri goats brought from Crete, and falcons. A hike through the pine forests takes you to a German observation post from World War II, when the Germans used this island to defend the port of Piraeus from Allied attacks.



Agios Nektarios Monastery / Photo: Panos Karapanagiotis

PALEOCHORA



Paleochora / Photo: Panos Karapanagiotis

Speaking of **Paleochora**, a town that was founded in the 9th century to protect the island from Saracen pirates and its capital until 1826, it is worth visiting for the special energy it exudes and the relics it houses. Most of them are on an easily 'conquered' hill, where there are traces of a castle built by the Venetians in 1654.

HOW TO GET TO AEGINA

Aegina is one of the most popular destinations for Athenians, with the island just an hour away from the Greek capital. There is no airport on Aegina, so it is served only by ferries, which leave daily from the port of Piraeus (30 minutes to 1 hour, depending on the boat) and from other islands of the Saronic archipelago – Agistri, Poros, or Hydra. Aegina can be visited on a day trip, but you can also spend a few days here. The best option is to rent a car (or have your own car) to get between the various points of interest on the island more quickly.

MONASTERY OF AGIOS NEKTARIOS

Orthodox monasteries dot the island of Aegina, just like any other island in Greece. The most spectacular of these is certainly **Agios Nektarios** (St Nectarios). Located near the village of Paleochora, the former capital of Aegina, Agios Nektarios was built between 1904 and 1910 on the site of a former Byzantine monastery and is one of the largest monasteries in the Balkans.

Souvala Beach / Photo: greeka.com



SOUVALA BEACH

Souvala is a small village 10km north of the port of Aegina, which itself has a harbor connected to its big 'brother' Piraeus on the mainland. In Souvala you'll find a pebbly sandy beach and tavernas, accommodation, and cafes, most of which are located by the sea. Souvala is quite crowded in summer and is a favorite with locals in particular.

OTHER BEACHES IN AEGINA

If you are not satisfied with the above beaches, you can also search for Portes beach, Perdika beach, Vagia beach.

THE BEST BEACHES IN AEGINA

Although not numerous, Aegina has beaches of all kinds, well-equipped or secluded, and most are easily accessible. The most popular is Agia Marina beach, but the northern beaches are definitely worth visiting, especially Loutra Souvalas and Vagia. However, in the south, Perdika and Marathonas are perfect for bathing.



Agia Marina Beach / Photo: Ivan Bastien

AGIA MARINA BEACH

Agia Marina is a large, well-equipped beach with sun loungers and umbrellas in the town of the same name. There are also two bars here. It offers the possibility to practice water sports, as the waters are relatively calm, making it very suitable for families. It's generally a sandy beach, but there's a pebbly section, and the water in that area is good for snorkeling and fishing.

MARATHONAS BEACH

Marathon is a picturesque fishing village, run by traditional rules, much loved by tourists. Marathonas beach, in this village, is a sandy, relatively secluded beach, quieter than others in Aegina. In fact, there are two stretches of sand, with tavernas and bars on one, while the other is well organized with sun loungers and umbrellas.



Marathonas Beach / Photo: weloveaegina.com

THE BEST HOTELS IN AEGINA



RASTONI HOTEL AEGINA ***
Booking.com score: 9,3

Rastoni is five minutes from the beach, in a quiet location in the middle of a pistachio farm, 600 meters from the capital Aegina and its harbor. The spacious rooms are colonial in style and have balconies overlooking Saronic Bay and the Sanctuary of Apollo.



ANGELA HOTEL ***
Booking.com score: 9,4

A family-run hotel with quiet rooms set among pine trees in a garden in the center of Agia Marina. Just 100 meters from the sandy beach, rooms overlook the garden and surrounding mountains. A swimming pool is just 150 meters away.



ISIDORA HOTEL **
Booking.com score: 9,4

Isidora Hotel is 500 meters from the port of Agia Marina, 2 minutes from the beach of the same name, and 2 km from Aphaia Temple. It is a family-run hotel with well-equipped rooms, each with a kitchenette. Aphaia Temple

THE BEST RESTAURANTS IN AEGINA



Remetzo restaurant / Photo: TripAdvisor

Ammos

A spectacular place whose owner does everything to make you feel great and enjoy his dishes right on the seafront, on Marathonas beach. The menu is inventive, featuring orange and radish salad, arugula, caramelized pistachios, and goat's cheese. The wine list is short but... brisk.

Thymari

The restaurant is located in Agia Marina, and those who've been there say the menu includes fancy salads, delicious desserts, and dishes for both meat lovers and seafood lovers.

Remetzo

Good food, fresh ingredients, friendly atmosphere. Owners Noti and Antonia put their own stamp on Greek gastronomy, since 2005. Try saganaki with mussels, saganaki with prawns, and octopus in wine sauce.

SYMI

The colorful world of the Dodecanese archipelago



Symi Island / Photo: Deposit Photos

From the first moment you enter **Symi harbor**, you are ‘struck’ by the kaleidoscope of colors that pour down from the hill overlooking the area. Colors are arranged on the neoclassical-style dwellings, with shades of terracotta, indigo, and ochre predominating. Symi is a small island, part of the Dodecanese archipelago, located at the node of Rhodes and chosen by tourists mainly for the beauty of its towns and villages.

Symi has an exceptional atmosphere. First of all, because there are very few cars on the island, which makes it extremely quiet, not to say romantic. Symi also offers one of the most traditional Greek cultures, integrated into a special hospitality. And for the more 'walkers', Symi can always be an excellent starting point for exploring this part of the Aegean.

Symi's economy has always been based on sailing, fishing, wine, sponge, and boat production, which is still the case today, although tourism has become the predominant industry in Symi.





HISTORY OF SYMI ISLAND

In Greek mythology, we find the island of Symi as the birthplace of the Graces, the three goddesses of charm, femininity, beauty, creativity, and fertility. Although in ancient times, the island was known as Aigli and Metapontis, its name comes from the nymph Syme. Although Pliny the Elder, and several other writers after him, thought the origin was from the word monkey, meaning ape.

In Homer's Iliad, Symi is mentioned as the territory of King Nireus, who fought in the Trojan War on the side of the Greeks. Little is known about Symi until the 14th century, but archaeological finds – including the ruins of a fortress – have revealed that it was continuously inhabited. Symi was part of the Roman Empire, then the Byzantine Empire, until the Knights of St. John conquered it in 1373.

Several centuries of prosperity followed for Symi, as the island was on an important trade route that was heavily exploited until the 19th century.

This was despite the fact that it came (along with neighboring Rhodes) under the rule of the Ottoman Empire in 1522, during which time it was called Sömbeki. It then took part in the War of Independence (1821-29) but was left outside the new Greek state, remaining Ottoman territory. Until 1912, when the Dodecanese archipelago declared its independence from the Turks and was immediately occupied by the... Italians. Symi remained under the Italian flag until 1943 when it was occupied by the Nazis. When the war ended, the island reverted to the British for a few years and then came under the Greek flag for good in 1948.

So a rich history for Symi, which has become an increasingly popular tourist destination in the years of peace, especially for Italians and British. The influx of tourists has led to the renovation of many houses – a lot of them destroyed by the bombs during the Second World War.

HOW TO GET TO SYMI

Symi Island is not served by an airport. There are ferries from Piraeus port to Symi three times a week, but the long-distance makes the journey up to 20 hours. It's most convenient to fly into Rhodes, the neighboring island, then take the ferry to Symi from there – a distance covered in about an hour and a half. Otherwise, Symi is also connected by ferry to the other surrounding islands – Patmos, Leros, Tilos, and Kalymnos.

WHAT TO SEE AND DO IN SYMI

Those inspired to choose Symi as their holiday destination will immediately notice how different this island is from the others around it. First of all, the blue-white color of the houses that tourists are used to in the Cyclades, for example, is replaced by that burst of color we talked about above, which has become a real coat of arms for Symi.



Symi Town / Photo: Deposit Photos

GIALOS AND CHORIO

The main town of Symi (which, taken as a whole, is also called Symi) is divided into two areas. The first is the port of **Gialos**, with pastel-colored houses spilling down the hill in a cavalcade of hues.

Then there's **Chorio**, or the old town, at the top, which can be reached by climbing 500 0 steps, an hourly bus, or a... donkey.



Pontikokastro Symi / Photo: Deposit Photos

In Gialos harbor, you will admire the buildings of the Police and the old Post Office, the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist (built in 1838), the House of the Widow, the fish market, the stone bridge, the statue of the little fisherman, the clock dating from 1881 and the old harbor in the Harani district. Pontikokastro is also one of the island's oldest monuments.



Padi Port, seen from Chorio / Photo: northforklight

In Chorio, on the other hand, you'll reach Kali Strata, the most beautiful and most prosperous part of the village. Spetsaria, the old pharmacy, the Chatziagapitou-Xatziioannou house, the Farmakides house (the Museum of Archaeology and Folklore) with collections including statue heads and objects from the post-Christian period, Byzantine icons, etc.) – these are all things to see and visit here.

MONASTERY OF PANORMITIS

The Monastery of Archangel Michael Panormitis is the most important religious monument in Symi, and the place of worship also has a hostel that can accommodate up to 500 people. It is not known exactly when the monastery was built, but it existed in the 15th century, according to an old manuscript. The interior is decorated with paintings from the Byzantine period, with an image of the archangel Michael appearing on one of the frescoes.

There are also two museums in the monastery courtyard. Every year on 8 November, a religious festival is held at the monastery celebrating, of course, the Holy Archangel Michael.



Monastery of Archangel Michael Panormitis / Photo: vestica



Ruins of the Venetian castle / Photo: symiholidays.gr

VENETIAN CASTLE

The Knights of Joan built the castle on the island of Symi in the 14th century; it 'shared' a wall with the Byzantine castle, the ruins of which are still visible. Situated on the highest point of Chorio, the castle was meant to protect the island against pirate raids and did its job well before falling to the Ottomans in 1522. Don't expect to see a fortress in the 'flesh', just ruins, but what makes the place worth visiting is the superb views it offers, especially from the small chapel of the Virgin Mary.

THE 12 EMPORIOS CAVES

The 12 caves are one of the most bizarre and enigmatic attractions on Symi Island. The caves are located in Nimborio, and the 12 natural domes apparently served in Byzantine times as study rooms for painting and sculpture. Another view is that they were actually used as catacombs.

THE BEST BEACHES IN SYMI

NOS BEACH

Nos is the closest beach to Ano Symi, meaning it's a 15-minute walk from the harbor and the clock tower. It's not a beach overflowing with privacy; quite the opposite. The clear, blue waters, sun loungers, bar, and nearby restaurant recommend it as an extremely popular one. Nos is also the only place on Symi Island where you can rent jet skis.



NIMBORIO BEACH

Located 3km northwest of Symi town, Nimborio beach contributes to the island's charm in spades. It's generally a quiet, pebbly beach where tourists can sit in the sun or in the shade of trees, bathing in the crystal-clear waters that surround it. Nimborio also offers relaxing morning walks.

PEDI BEACH

Just a few minutes walk from the capital, the village of Pedi is a magnet for visitors, mainly because of its beaches but also because of the remains of early Christian churches. There are several small, sandy beaches in Pedi. The main beach has sun loungers and umbrellas for hire, and there are also several tavernas.



OTHER BEACHES IN SYMI

If you are not satisfied, you can look for these beach alternatives: Gialos beach, Panormitis beach, Marathounda beach, Agia Marina beach.

THE BEST HOTELS IN SYMI



PEDI BEACH HOTEL ****

Booking.com score: 9,2

Pedi Beach Hotel is set in a quiet bay between Agia Marina and Agios Nicolaos beaches, lapped by crystal clear waters. It welcomes its guests with a warm atmosphere and well-appointed rooms with sea views. Free and spacious parking.



NIRIIDES HOTEL APARTMENTS ***

Booking.com score: 9,5

Located in Nimporios, 70 meters from the beach, the Niriides apartment complex (there are four buildings built in the island's architectural style) offers rooms with sea or garden views, featuring a kitchenette, air conditioning, and internet.



IAPETOS VILLAGE ****

Booking.com score: 8,8

Centrally located in the town of Symi, Iapetos Village is surrounded by a 500 sqm palm garden. The complex has a swimming pool, sauna and pool bar, rooms with pool or garden view, free internet. The harbor is 200 meters away, and Nos beach is 1.3 km away.

THE BEST RESTAURANTS IN SYMI



The Secret Garden restaurant / Photo: TripAdvisor

The Secret Garden

If you're hungry after wandering the capital's backstreets, you can opt for a meal at The Secret Garden. The menu is Greek and Mediterranean, the main recommendations being lamb, octopus, and squid.

Haritomeni Taverna

Haritomeni's Greek and Mediterranean menu never disappoints. Come here to try the smoked octopus, baked potatoes, and courgettes. And according to those who have visited, the wine is outstanding.

Zoe's Taverna

The best place to eat in Kali Strata. Delicious tasting Greek dishes, among which salads, fish cakes, and prawns stand out. At Zoe's you can enjoy a beautiful view while you eat. Low prices and friendly atmosphere.



SKOPELOS

Mamma mia, what a holiday!



Skopelos Island / Photo: Deposit Photos

Skopelos is an island that is blessed with pristine natural beauty and has had the good fortune to receive an unexpected marketing boost with the filming here of the musical *Mamma Mia!*. The famous film production has turned this island in the Northern Sporades archipelago into a tourist magnet.

But of course, this would not have been possible without Skopelos having its own special charm. Skopelos is a magical destination, adored both by its inhabitants and by those who choose to visit and spend their holidays here, a place where the ancient Greeks, Byzantines, Venetians, Ottomans, and pirates left their mark on various periods of history.





Stafylos Bay / Photo: Deposit Photos

HISTORY OF SKOPELOS

A rich history rooted in mythology tells of the first inhabitant of Skopelos:

Staphylus, son of the god Dionysus and Princess Ariadne of Crete. It is known that between the 5th and 6th centuries BC, the island was known as Paparethos, as engraved on silver coins from that period when trade was conducted with other city-states in the Aegean. Paparethos exported olive oil but especially high-quality wine, known for its aphrodisiac effects.

There were periods of Persian and Spartan, Roman, and Macedonian (in the Hellenistic period) rule. The name Skopelos is first mentioned in some texts from the time when the island was part of the Roman Empire – around the 2nd century BC, most likely because of the Romans stationed here (skopeloi, in Greek), but also because of the corals surrounding its coast.

Skopelos is not much mentioned in manuscripts in the Byzantine period, being considered a place of exile. The Venetians occupied it, then reincorporated into the Byzantine Empire, taken over by the Ottomans, returned to the Venetians, again conquered by the Ottomans, who plundered and depopulated it. It recovered somewhat towards the 18th-19th centuries, when a prosperous city developed on the island, with intense trade.

Skopelos experienced the beginning of its tourist development in the 1980s when the young population rediscovered the island's beauty and thus stopped migrating abroad or to the big cities of mainland Greece. What's more, many locals who had already left returned to develop tourist businesses in the summer.

HOW TO GET TO SKOPELOS

There is no airport on the island of Skopelos, the nearest being in the archipelago's neighbor, Skiathos. Alexandros Papadiamantis International Airport in Skiathos serves flights from Athens all year round (flight time from the Greek capital – about 30 minutes) and from various European locations in summer. From Skiathos, you will need to take a ferry to Skopelos.

Of course, you can also get to Skopelos directly by ferry from the port of Volos on the mainland. In summer, there are also some ferry trips from Kymi, a port on the island of Evia, and from Mantoudi, on the same island.

WHAT TO SEE AND DO IN SKOPELOS



Skopelos Town (or Chora) / Photo: Deposit Photos

SKOPELOS TOWN

The island's capital is **Skopelos** (or Chora). White, terracotta-roofed houses 'perched' on hillsides amidst charming bougainvillea bushes along cobbled alleyways (cars are not allowed in the center of Chora). It is a kind of love at first sight with the view it offers to those who approach the island by ferry.



Alley in Skopelos Town / Photo: Deposit Photos

One such alley starts from Pigadaki, above the town, and leads to the 13th-century Venetian castle built by the Gyzi family. The castle walls are quite well preserved, and the view from here impresses everyone. As all the "brave" ones will be impressed by the tavern at Kastro (the name of any Greek castle), where you can listen to old rebetiko music, the precursor of bouzouki music.

On the way back from the castle, it's impossible not to notice the significant number of churches that dot Skopelos Town – there are no less than 120 of them, the oldest dating back to the 11th century. Positive energy is brimming in this town. Other points of interest include the home of writer Pavlos Nirvanas, the Folklore Museum, the Vakratsa mansion, and the Asclepieion archaeological site in Ambeliki.

AGIOS IOANNIS MONASTERY

Those who have seen Mamma Mia! will immediately recognize this monastery where Sophie's wedding scene was filmed. Agios Ioannis was built on a cliff in the face of winds and waves. There are 198 steps to climb up to the monastery on an isthmus 100 meters above the sea. A significant effort that is forgotten once you reach the top and look out over the landscape. A small beach has formed beneath the cliff on which the monastery sits, usually very crowded in summer.



FESTIVALS IN KARPATHOS

GLOSSA VILLAGE

The village of Glossa has a distinctive settlement in northwest of Skopelos, with houses arranged in amphitheater-style just above Loutraki harbor. Glossa is the second-largest settlement on Skopelos, which fascinated the Greek writer Alexandros Papadiamantis, who called it 'the village above' in his novel *I Nostalgos*.

Glossa (whose name would translate as tongue) is located in an area full of natural springs. The villagers grow olive trees, almond trees, plum trees, and tend vineyards. Evidence of human existence dating back to the Palaeolithic has been found here. The Dance Festival is held every August, followed by Stafylofest – the wine festival – in the last week of September.



Glossa village / Photo: Gatsi



Glossa village (up) and Loutraki port (down) / Photo: Deposit Photos

AGIA VARVARA MONASTERY

6km north of Skopelos Town, near the Agios Ioannis Monastery, is the Agia Varvara Monastery, built in 1648. It is a fortified monastery, surrounded by thick walls, with a fabulous location offering exceptional sea views.

Very well preserved, the monastery of Agia Varvara is now abandoned by the monks but is worth visiting for the beauty of the landscape and the Byzantine icons and 15th-century frescoes inside.



Agia Varvara Monastery / Photo: Yvan Tessier

Panormos Beach / Photo: cunfek



PANORMOS BEACH

Panormos is a beach in the same name resort, tucked away in a cove about 12km from Skopelos Town. Despite being a small beach, Panormos has many facilities, including tavernas, a mini-market, ATM, and a water sports center. The beach is pebbly, and the clear water color is a deep blue. In the evening, from Panormos, you can watch the sunset among the pine trees.

If you are not satisfied with the ones above, you may also search for: Elios beach, Milia beach, Kastani beach, Loutraki beach, Agnondas beach, Glyfoneri beach, Adrina beach, Limnonari beach.

THE BEST BEACHES IN SKOPELOS

Known for their crystal clear waters and the 'green' landscape surrounding them, the beaches of Skopelos (there are at least 18 of them!) have this relatively rare feature – rich vegetation that stretches almost to the seashore. The most popular beaches in Skopelos are Panormos, Hovolo, and Stafylos



Stafylos Beach / Photo: cunfek

STAFYLOS BEACH

Located 4.5 km from Skopelos Town, Stafylos Beach is a mixed sand and pebble beach with umbrellas, sun loungers, and a bar in a beautiful setting. It's a very popular beach, which is why in the peak months it's always busy, with tourists coming here to enjoy the good swimming water and the surrounding hills and the natural spring nearby. Snorkeling can be practiced in good conditions on Stafylos beach.

HAVOLO BEACH

Stretching along the island's northwest coast, Hovolo is a pebbly beach set in front of impressive limestone cliffs covered with bushes of vegetation. It's not an easy beach to get to, but the effort will be rewarded as the beach's natural beauty is outstanding. Hovolo beach is not landscaped; however, it is quite crowded in summer.



Hovolo Beach / Photo: FreeArtist

THE BEST HOTELS IN SKOPELOS



ADRINA BEACH HOTEL ****

Booking.com score: 9,4

Adrina is a beautiful hotel located in Panormos Bay, a few steps from Adrina Beach. A magical combination of tourist facilities and a magical location. The hotel has a swimming pool, spa, bar, garden with barbecue, parking, etc. Also, small cottages that can accommodate 2-4 people.



SKOPELOS VILLAGE HOTEL *****

Booking.com score: 9

The complex has an ideal location, 600 m from the center of Skopelos and the harbor. In addition to exceptional sea views, Skopelos Village offers 35 rooms and apartments decorated to inspire a relaxing holiday. Two swimming pools, free internet, and free parking.

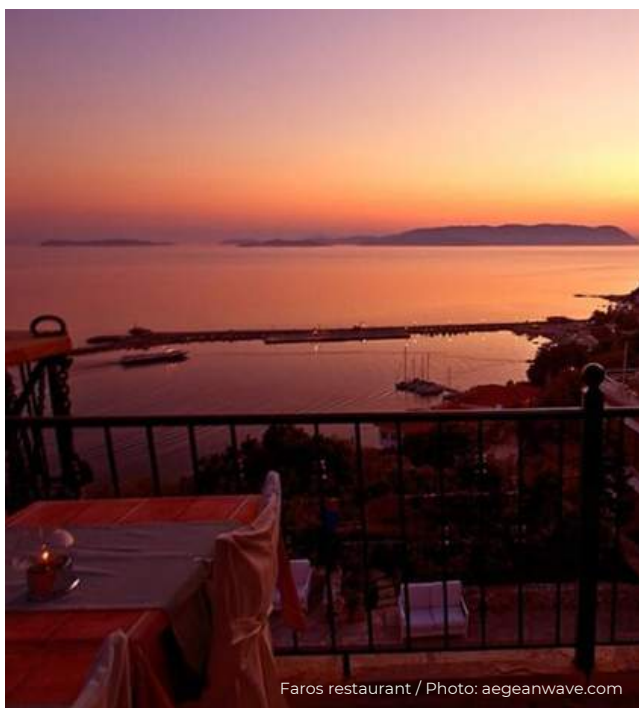


NATURA LUXURY BOUTIQUE HOTEL SKOPELOS *****

Booking.com score: 9,4

Located in Loutraki, Natura Luxury Boutique Hotel features modernly designed rooms, apartments, and studios that can accommodate 2-5 people, well-equipped, and private balconies. Some rooms even have a jacuzzi.

THE BEST RESTAURANTS IN SKOPELOS



Faros Skopelos

Located in the Aegean Wave Hotel from April to October. The menu includes many traditional Skopelos dishes, all prepared with local ingredients and tested to perfection by the hotel owner.

Manolis Tavern

A tavern that has been operating for half a century and continues to serve its guests generation after generation. Rich assortments of Greek dishes, fresh fish, and barbecue in a garden overlooking the sea.

Finikas

A good dining option in Skopelos Town, a restaurant recommended by customers who have passed through its doors and sampled its meatballs, salads, stuffed pork and fruit cake. Finikas is known as a place where the service is impeccable.

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