

IONIAN & AEGEAN ISLAND HOLIDAYS

EXCLUSIVE HOLIDAYS TO THE GREEK ISLANDS



FURTHER INFORMATION

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE THIS BOOK FROM THE VILLA

IN THIS BOOKLET YOU WILL FIND:

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Welcome to Villa Blue | 3 |
| About Ionian Island Holidays | 4 |
| About Villa Blue | 5 |
| Local amenities | 6 |
| Health & safety | 7 |
| Exploring Vathy | 10 |
| Exploring Ithaka | 11 |
| Top places to visit in Ithaka | 17 |
| Top beaches in Ithaka | 18 |
| Local food | 20 |
| Green living | 22 |
| Responsible & sustainable tourism | 23 |
| Greek animal welfare | 24 |
| Your next trip with us & loyalty discount | 25 |
| Your next destination | 26 |

We kindly ask that you leave the booklet at the property in a visible location, handy for the arriving guests to read and enjoy. If you have any queries regarding any of the information in the book or if there is anything else you would like to know, please do not hesitate to speak to your Representative.



WELCOME TO VILLA BLUE

Ionian Island Holidays and the property owners would like to welcome you to Villa Blue, near Vathy, Ithaka. We trust that your journey to Ithaka was a pleasant one and that everything is in order with the villa. By now your Representative will have given to you your welcome letter which will include the place and time of the welcome meeting. We recommend that you take a few moments from your holiday to attend even if you are familiar with the island and your surroundings as at this time you will be given important information regarding your stay. Please take time out to read this information booklet which has been put together with your holiday in mind and help you get the most from your stay in Ithaka. If you have any queries regarding your holiday or if there is anything else you would like to know, please do not hesitate to speak to your Representative.



ABOUT IONIAN ISLAND HOLIDAYS

We are a small independent specialist tour operator offering exclusive holidays to Greece and the islands, our properties range from villas by the sea, villas with pools, waterside apartments, apartments with swimming pools, boutique hotels, deluxe spa hotels and family run pensions. We operate entirely in Greece & more specifically the Ionian Islands of Kefalonia, Ithaka, Lefkada, Meganisi, Paxos, Corfu and to the mainland Epiros coastline. In the Aegean we feature Skopelos, Alonissos, Skiathos and the mainland Pelion Peninsula. The quintessential Greek Islands; hot sun, warm sea, shaded olive groves, historic monuments, ancient vine terraces, dramatic cliffs, the hum of cicadas and perhaps, most important of all, that timeless quality, uniquely Greek that is 'Filoxenia' or Friendship to Visitors.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

As a specialist and totally independent tour operator, we have a simple philosophy - "To provide quality holidays to the Greek Islands, backed by solid experience and a high level of customer care". Ionian Island Holidays are part of that heritage. We love our islands, and are determined that their beauty, culture and tradition should not be changed irreversibly by inappropriate development. To this end, we have encouraged the sympathetic restoration of many of the old houses and villas and to fully support all initiatives that maintain this tradition. It is equally important to us that the company should be

very much a part of and contribute to the local economy to the benefit of all the islanders.

OUR SERVICE

We believe that people who book with Ionian Island Holidays will benefit from our experience, knowledge and the personal attention that we, as a small independent tour operator, can offer. When you contact our office in London, you will be speaking to an experienced and knowledgeable team who know the islands and the accommodation intimately.



Our home in Fiskardo, Kefalonia.

ABOUT VILLA BLUE

CLEANING

Housekeeping service is provided every Tuesday and rubbish is emptied daily. If you wish to empty the rubbish yourself, you can use the small bin at the back of the house or the wheelie bin on the road by the entrance.

HOT WATER

The water is heated by an electric system which means you should have hot water at all times. If otherwise, please contact your Representative.

ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES: WASHING MACHINE/ DISHWASHER

Most of the machines are straightforward to use. You will also find manuals by the them. If you are having trouble with any of the appliances, please contact your Representative.

AIR CONDITIONING

The air conditioning is operated by remote control. The usual temperature is around 22°C. All doors and windows should be closed for air conditioning to function properly.

KEYS

The keys to your property can be found in the front door and instructions on where to leave them will be given in your departure letter. We would ask that you take good care of the keys to the property as if they are your own. In the unlikely event you were to lose the keys, please contact your Representative and you will be provided with a spare set.

However, should it be necessary to change the locks for security reasons as a result of lost keys, we reserved the right to make a charge for which you may be liable for. We would ask that you also be mindful when you are outside the property and around the pool area not to lock yourselves out. This can happen easily as the wind can slam doors very quickly. Should you get locked out, contact your representative.

Please note any extra keys are for use only in emergency - we cannot provide spare keys as a matter of course.

SWIMMING POOL

The pool is checked daily by the owner.

WATER

The property's tap water is NOT drinkable.

INTERNET

Wifi connection is free of charge. Details of passwords will be given in your welcome letter.

FIRE NOTICE

There is a fire notice located inside the front door. In the unlikely event of a fire, the gathering point is at the car park.

SAFETY DEPOSIT BOX

The safety deposit box is located in the closet of the master bedroom.

LOST PROPERTY

Please ensure all personal possessions are packed when leaving your accommodation. Whilst we will endeavour to assist when items are left, unfortunately we are unable to guarantee the return of any items which have been left unattended and will not be liable for any items lost or damaged. If we are able to locate your lost item, postage, packaging and handling fees may apply for the return of the lost items.



LOCAL AMENITIES

SHOPS

You will find plenty of clothing, jewellery, souvenir shops and other boutiques in Vathy town. During the summer season shops are open from 9.00am until late.

BANK

There are two banks located in Vathy, open Monday to Friday from 8.00am to 2.00pm.

POST OFFICE

The post office is located in Vathy square, open from 8.00am to 2.00pm, Monday to Friday.

NEAREST SUPERMARKET

There are three well-stocked supermarkets in Vathy, a 2-minute walk from the square, open from 8.00am to around 10.00pm. You will also find two butchers and two greengrocers in the area.

RESTAURANTS

You will find plenty of restaurants to choose from, behind and around the harbour in Vathy. You get a wide variety of cuisines, ranging from traditional Greek tavernas, to Italian and other European restaurants.

NEAREST PHARMACY

There are two pharmacies located in Vathy – open from 8.00am to 2.00pm and 5.00pm until late.

NEAREST DOCTOR

Ithaka's medical centre is located in Vathy and is open 24 hours. For more information please contact your representative.

NEAREST DENTIST

You will find two dentists located in Vathy. For more information please contact your representative.

BAKERY

You will find two bakeries in Vathy. One on Vathy square and another just a minute away.

POST OFFICE

The post office is located in Vathy square, open from 8.00am to 2.00pm, Monday to Friday.

PETROL STATION

There are two petrol stations located in Vathy that are open from 7.00am to 8.00pm daily.

BEACHES

Loutsas is your nearest beach, located in Vathy town. Dexia Bay is also close, at 1.2km from Vathy. A little further (2.5km from Vathy) you will also find the beautiful beach of Filiatro which has a beach bar during the summer, a restaurant with toilets and you can rent umbrellas and sunbeds.

HEALTH & SAFETY

To help ensure that your holiday will be both happy and safe, we would kindly ask that you take the time to read the following information. Part of the enjoyment of traveling abroad is experiencing a different way of life. Please remember though, that it may also mean experiencing different standards from those we are used to at home. We are continually working to raise safety standards in all of our properties and will of course do our best to ensure that your holiday is safe and trouble-free, but we do ask that you take extra care while you are away. With this in mind, we would like to highlight the following important points.

FIRE SAFETY

Other countries have different fire safety regulations and procedures. Please read carefully all safety information available in your property and in this information book. When you first arrive, please make sure you familiarise yourself with the location of the fire exits and the location of all fire extinguishers. To help avoid the risk of fire, please take particular care when cooking and using the barbecue.

IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT OF A FIRE:

- RAISE THE ALARM.
- CALL THE FIRE BRIGADE - 199.
- DO NOT PANIC Leave the building. Do not stop to take personal belongings with you.
- IF THE EXITS/STAIRS ARE BLOCKED keep the doors shut and try to get out onto a balcony for fresh air and to attract attention.
- DO NOT RE-ENTER THE BUILDING - AWAIT FOR CLEARANCE FROM THE FIRE BRIGADE.

BATHROOMS

In common with many Mediterranean countries, your bathroom will probably have a marble or tiled floor. Shower curtains are not always provided and most bathrooms do not have non-slip mats in either the bath or shower, so extra care must be taken when the floor is wet, particularly with children. Due to the size of the standard bore sewerage pipe used, Greek toilets cannot properly dispose of any paper or other

waste material. To avoid blockages, please ensure that all paper, nappies and sanitary items are placed in the bin provided, which will be emptied regularly.

GLASS PANELS/DOORS

Although most properties have safety stickers on glass doors this may not always be the case, so particular care should be taken when walking through glass patio doors, as it can be difficult to tell if they are open or closed.

SECURITY AND VALUABLES

Where available, it is generally advisable to use the safety deposit facilities, or hotel safe, at your property, particularly for valuables.

WATER

Although tap water is purified it can cause upset stomachs and so it is best to drink bottled water, which may be purchased in local shops. To avoid dehydration and the effects of the sun it is advisable to drink water, in addition to other drinks you may consume.

PLUMBING

Drainage systems in Greece are not always efficient as small bore pipes are often used. A blockage will cause considerable inconvenience and during the summer season plumbers can be hard to find. To avoid problems of this nature, please do not put any products other than a small amount of toilet paper into the toilet. A bin is provided in the bathroom for disposable nappies and other sanitary products.

RUBBISH DISPOSAL

The housekeeper will dispose of your rubbish on visits to the property. If you wish to dispose of rubbish in between visits, your Representative will advise you of the nearest disposal bin. Please keep the lid on the bin and tie any rubbish sacks up securely to stop any rodent/insect infestation.

HEALTH AND SAFETY (CONTINUED)

GAS SAFETY

If your accommodation has a gas cooker, always double check that it has been turned off properly just as you would at home. Please follow any Gas Safety instructions provided. In many cases you will find that the gas is supplied direct from a bottle - as an extra precaution, turn the supply off at the bottleneck when it is not in use. Never attempt to locate a gas leak yourself or tamper with the gas supply. If you are unsure about how any of the gas appliances operate or have any queries or concerns please ask your Representative for assistance and advice.

SMOKING MATERIALS

Please take care when discarding matches, cigarettes etc. Always use the ashtrays provided. Never throw a cigarette end carelessly within the grounds or outside, especially near trees and plants. In summer the vegetation can be tinder-dry and fires can start all too easily. Please note that it is absolutely prohibited to use any type of flammable materials inside the villa.

KEYS

Please be careful when you are outside the villa not to lock yourselves out. This can happen easily as the wind can slam doors very quickly! Should you get locked out keys are held by the housekeeper and your Representative. Please note that these extra keys are for use only in emergency - we cannot provide spare keys as a matter of course.

SUNBATHING

A healthier colour makes us all feel better, but taking too much sun can be both painful and dangerous. Build up your tan gradually by minimising your exposure during the first few days of your holiday. Remember the sun's rays are at their strongest between the hours of 11.00 to 15.00.

- Always use a sunscreen that protects against UVA and UVB (ultra violet) and has a high SPF (sun protection factor).
- Avoid midday sun, but if you have to go out, cover up with loose clothing and wear a wide brimmed hat.

- Never expose babies under six months to direct sunlight.
- Remember you can still burn in the shade, when it's cloudy or when you're swimming. Wind and water intensify the sun's effect, so while you may feel cool, you could be burning. Always re-apply sunscreen after swimming.
- Where possible, seek natural shade.

SWIMMING POOL SAFETY

You will find that many swimming pools are not designed in the same way as the UK and may have unusual features. Take care when walking around the pool, as pool surrounds are often slippery when wet. Do not use the pool if you cannot see the bottom and do not tamper with the pool filter covers, report any defects to your Representative immediately. In general, pools do not have a lifeguard so we strongly recommend that you read through this Swimming Pool Safety section.

NEVER put any liquids or chemicals into the pool yourself. The pool pump house housing the pump and filtration equipment should normally be locked and not accessible. However, if for some reason the pump house is open, perhaps for access to the "Pool Lights" switch, NEVER touch any of the equipment. Keep children out of the pump house at all times. If pool chemicals such as chlorine and acid are in the pump house, under no circumstances touch them and ask your Representative to have them removed to a safe place. Concentrated chlorine and acid will cause severe burns on contact with skin.

Please take a few minutes to read this information and familiarise yourself with the points mentioned below:

- Please note that the pool is unattended and therefore you are responsible for the safety of any children and non-swimmers in your party to act responsibly around the pool area.
- Diving is NOT permitted.



- If you are at a shared pool please consider others and be respectful of other swimmers.
- Please familiarise yourself on arrival with the depth of the pool. In particular the deep and shallow ends as well as the steepness of the slopes. Pay close attention to the depth markings.
- Shower before and after using the pool – this will help maintain good hygiene standards, keep the pool clean and functioning properly.
- Please do not swim in the pool after using suntan lotions or oils as this can damage the filter systems.
- It is your responsibility to ensure children in your party are supervised at all times when using the pool and the surrounding areas.
- Please do not run or allow children to run around the pool areas.
- Please remove all toys and swimming aids from the pool and the pool area when the pool is no longer in use and when an adult is not supervising the area.
- Please avoid using drinking glasses, bottles and anything breakable around the pool area.
- No alcohol should be consumed before or during the use of the swimming pool.
- Should the weather turn windy, please ensure any parasols are closed or where possible removed from the pool area. Please ensure they are also closed when not in use.
- Beware of slippery surfaces and raised edges in and around the pool.
- Do not tamper with the pool filter covers, pool lights or any pool equipment.

DRIVING

Driving overseas can be great fun and a good way to explore. However, conditions and procedures can differ to those we are familiar with in the UK. The rules of the road can be very different, drivers are not always obliged to stop at pedestrian crossings and you may need to look the other way when crossing the road! Please be fully aware of the local regulations regarding the "Highway Code". Information on speed limits can be obtained from the car hire company.

Never drink and drive, as it is an offence.

EXPLORING VATHY

Vathy is one of the most spectacular natural harbours in Greece. Almost invisible from the sea, its narrow fjord-like entrance, guarded by twin headlands, each with the ruins of Venetian gun emplacements, is protected by the huge bulk of Mt Neritos, the island's highest peak. Once inside the bay opens up to reveal a small town clustered around the far shore.

Although much of Vathy was devastated in the great earthquake of 1953, when many of its classic Venetian style mansions were destroyed, planning controls have ensured that the town has kept its character with well-proportioned houses, carefully painted facades and traditional roofs. It is the administrative capital and main ferry port



Vathy Bay.



Taverna in Vathy.

of Kefalonia and Patras on the mainland. The countryside in the immediate vicinity is glorious. Quiet lanes and tracks lead up the fertile valley behind the town from where newly opened footpaths can be taken to places straight out of Homer's *Odyssey*. The town itself contains fascinating alleyways and stepped paths often lined with the walls of elegant ruins, their archways and windows covered in wisteria.

On summer evenings everyone makes their way to the plate beside the harbour, the road is closed off to traffic except where children on their bicycles race ahead of their parents enjoying a traditional 'volta' or stroll before their evening meal.



Panorama of Vathy.

EXPLORING ITHAKA

Ithaka must be the most famous but least known of all the Ionian islands. Immortalised by Homer as Journey's End for Odysseus, conqueror of Troy, this small Ionian island is often overlooked by travellers in favour of its larger neighbours. Kefalonia, the biggest island in the Ionian was already a popular holiday destination long before the huge success of its own epic romantic adventure, *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* by Louis De Bernieres, but for many people Ithaka remains a mythical place, vaguely recalled from school lessons in ancient history.

Nothing could be further from the truth, for the real Ithaka possesses a combination of the natural beauty and culture of all of the Ionian islands rolled into one. Many small islands are either perfect for that away from it all holiday, but require an Odyssey to reach, or are so easily accessible that half the world and its dog seem to have discovered them! Ithaka, however, is the perfect compromise, being fortunate enough not yet to have had an airport erected and the influx of mass tourism which that usually brings, but still easily reached by a short boat ride from Kefalonia.

So what exactly is this secret allure of Ithaka? Despite the attentions and fierce debates of archaeologists and classic historians, the Odyssey remains as one of the world's greatest romantic



epics, even though it describes an age and events that vanished 3,500 years ago. Perhaps the subtle echoes of Homer's masterpiece can still be heard in the ancient palaces and the artefacts discovered within their ruined walls. Almost without exception those that have found their way to Ithaka plan to return, such is the magic of those subtle echoes!

However, Ithaka is much more than a sleepy, romantic island locked into a mythical time warp. Odysseus was only the first in a long line of Ithakian men who have sailed across the oceans of the world. This connection with foreign lands means that there is a real cosmopolitan feel to the island that blends with the islanders' natural hospitality and their spirit of independence. Once seen as Kefalonia's poor relation, Ithaka now has its own administration which allows for more control over the development of their island and recent years have seen major improvements in the infrastructure. Most homes and businesses are owned and run by the islanders themselves and whilst political differences are vigorously



Kioni village in Ithaka.

EXPLORING ITHAKA (CONTINUED)



Off the coast of Ithaka.

expressed (Ithaka is in Greece when all's said and done!) everyone agrees that the uniqueness of the island must be protected.

Between the island capital, Vathy in the South and village of Stavros in the North, there are five or six other settlements, clinging to the mountain sides or clustered around the picturesque bays of the island's east coast. Each has its own character and appeal. The years of economic emigration, which saw the island population decline from about 15,000 when British rule ended in the mid 19th Century to the present 3,000, seems to have stopped. School registers are rising, new businesses have started and low impact tourism, based on family owned apartments and traditional villas, is an important growing feature of the local economy.

One of the great joys of Ithaka, especially after crowded urban motorways and long hours trapped in a car is that the island is small enough to drive around in an hour, but big enough to wander off the beaten track and explore the network of old mule paths and shepherds' trails which are being opened up by a small but enthusiastic group of local people. Many of the trails lead to natural features straight out of Homer; "Arethusa's Spring", the "Nymphs and Eumaios Caves", "Laertes Field", all can be easily reached on foot, as well as the shapely if diminutive peak of Aetos, the Eagle, reputedly the site of the hero's palace, where Penelope waited faithfully for his return. Arguably Ithaka's finest viewpoint, with the Ithaka Channel and Kefalonia on one side and island dotted waters of the inner Ionian Sea on the other, the ascent involves

a short, sharp climb passing the impressive Cyclopan defensive walls. Other tracks wind through natural oak woodland and olive groves to old windmills, ruined Byzantine churches, their frescoes faded but still glorious and unspoilt coves.

Nightlife on the island revolves around the plateias or squares. Every village has one and throughout the summer a series of religious festivals are celebrated. These all night affairs, where the wine flows freely and songs and traditional dancing are enjoyed by the whole community, young and old, should not be missed. These "Panagiria" are not contrived tourist occasions full of Zorba wannabes and plate smashing, but merely the Greeks doing what they do best, providing hospitality and enjoying themselves! Ithaka is neither a 'grand' nor 'in' holiday destination, at least in the context of the trade writers' world of hyperbole and fashion, nor is it a small island lost in time and obsessed with an ancient myth. It has taken on board the trappings of everyday life in modern Europe, ATMs, internet cafes, satellite television, good communications and last but not least, modern plumbing! New cars are readily available to hire, road surfaces have been improved, restaurants and shops modernised, air conditioning and swimming pools have been installed, but in the process has not lost sight of its soul. It is an island where a holiday can easily become a way of life!



Sunset in Ithaka.



Vathy Town.

VATHY AND SOUTHERN ITHAKA

Vathy is most definitely not a resort; even in high season it retains the atmosphere of a small Greek port going about its business. As such, the potential for people watching and enjoying the action of the harbour-front tavernas. One of the highlights of the late evening is the arrival of the ferry from Patras on the mainland and because its such a good anchorage, a lot of big private yachts also visit through the season. You may even get to rub shoulders with the likes of Madonna, Robert De Niro, Rowan Atkinson or Paul McCartney! Some of them are regular visitors.

In the early evenings, the place to be is the main square or plateia. It's where everyone gathers and there's usually a football match in progress in the central circle, though try not to kick the ball into one of the kiosks or you'll get shouted at! There are also a couple of internet cafes here. Further round the harbour towards the marine filling station there is a good creperie where most of the kids go after dark and nearer the town centre a smart looking building with a sea water pool in front is actually a pool room. The High School which is a few streets back from the harbour, is often used for open air concerts in the summer.

Vathy is excellent for shopping. There are three banks with cash machines and foreign exchange facilities, a post office, health centre, museums



Coastal Valhi.

and a theatre. Throughout the summer, concerts, plays and events are held here or in the main plateia and in July and August there is often a street market where local wines, olives, olive oil and honey can be bought.

Around Vathy there are many coves within easy walking distance or a short drive; perhaps the best is the secluded Gidakhi beach which can be reached by a delightful stroll through pine trees and a unique tree heather forest or thirtyfive minutes by water taxi. The water taxis leave in the morning and return in the late afternoon. Gidakhi has a stunning white pebble beach, like the majority of beaches on Ithaka, with one taverna serving drinks and light traditional snack as calamari, salads and sandwiches. Other beaches worth visiting in the South are Filiatro, Minimata,



Agios Ioannis beach.

Skinos and Sarakiniko. There are also regular boat trips to the inner islands, like Atokos and Kalamos. Self-drive boats can also be hired for further exploration of the coastline.

Only two kilometres from Vathy is the Cave of Nymphs, a cave steeped in myth and history and where, legend has it the Naiads, or Water Nymphs lived, who were worshipped by the ancient Greeks. It is also believed that it was here that Odysseus hid the gifts he had brought with him from the island of the Phaeacians after his return from Troy and his two year wanderings.

Also well worth a visit is Perachori, a spectacularly situated village on the side of a mountain provides superb views across the inner Ionian Sea to the mainland hills and a number of 15th Century churches with preserved frescoes. Perachori is famous for its excellent local wine and holds a wine festival every year at the end of August.

Perachori is also the gateway to the ancient capital of the island, Paliochora or Epáno Chorio with its impressive defensive architecture, stone houses and ruined Byzantine churches. This ancient settlement remained the capital of the island until the 16th century when development began closer to the coast and Vathy began to take shape.

AGIOS IOANNIS

This tiny village on the east coast has one of the best beaches around. A recent landslide means you have to park a bit further up the road, but it's only 5 minutes down to the sea. There's a big house above the beach, owned by a millionaire, he's even got ostriches wandering around in the garden! The water is a bit cooler here which can be an advantage on a really hot summer's day. Ithaka is virtually two islands, connected by a narrow ridge with Mt Aetos at its centre. Although small, the island is diverse and there is even an amicable North/South divide amongst



Old house in Stavros.

the inhabitants, with talk of border controls and passports between the two halves! While Vathy is the cosmopolitan hub of the south, the North is very different in character, although it shares a similar mountainous interior.

STAVROS

This is the second largest village on the island and is famous for its summer fiesta which lasts for two days (non stop!). There's always a live band playing a mixture of traditional Greek songs and pop. Everyone joins in the dances and it doesn't matter if you don't know the steps. Even the old grannies boogie when they change to rock! Stavros is the central village of northern Ithaka and has a small selection of tavernas and traditional fish restaurants, shops and a bank with an ATM. There is also an excellent but very small archaeological museum where the curator speaks excellent English and will be happy to answer any queries you may have.

EXOGI

From Stavros you can drive up a twisty mountain road to this tiny hill village (whose name means the far or out place). It's a fairly sleepy little place nowadays but worth a visit for the fantastic views and the mysterious pyramids above the village. They were built by an eccentric poet who apparently also buried treasure somewhere nearby. He carved coded clues into the rocks and walls all around which, if deciphered will lead you to the hoard. No-one's managed it yet! There's also another festival here in the summer - but only for one day this time.

KIONI

This pretty village escaped most of the destruction of the earthquake of 1953 and strict planning regulations have preserved the Venetian architecture of the settlement. The tiny harbour with its cluster of waterfront tavernas and shops is still used by traditional fishing boats, as well as being a popular port of call for visiting yachts. There are little beaches all around the harbour and a bigger one on the far side, near the old windmills, called Cemetery beach. Although, don't worry, the graveyard is positioned well back from the shore! Naturally, Kioni also has a festival.

PILICATA

One kilometre north of Stavros, excavations on this hillside which is between the bays of Polis and Frikes brought to light remains of a small Bronze Age settlement. The finds unearthed there reinforce the theory that the ancient city of Ithaka lies somewhere in the vicinity.

ANOGLHI

If you feel like a bit of exercise, there's a superb old mule track, now a footpath which climbs all the way up the wooded mountainside to the village of Anoghi. The present settlement in this village dates from 16th Century but the original 13th Century village, now ruined, lies a little higher up the hill. The church here, despite its unremarkable exterior contains some of the best frescoes in the region. To gain entry to the church the village



Panorama of Kioni

EXPLORING ITHAKA (CONTINUED)



Mythical and green Ithaka.

kafenion, next to the Venetian bell tower will supply you with a key. The kafenion is also worth a visit barely having changed in a hundred years. This completely authentic meeting place was chosen as the model for the kafenion in the recent film of Captain Corelli's Mandolin.

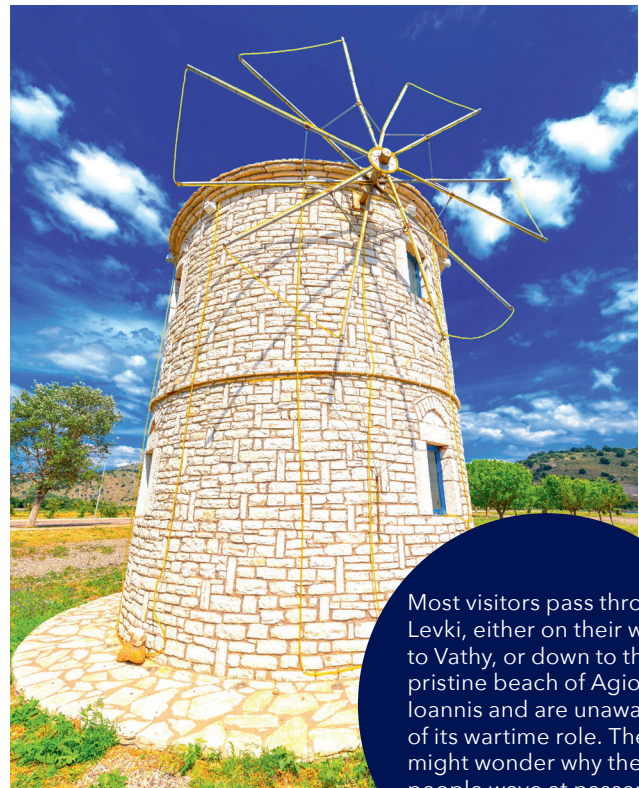
FRIKES

From Stavros, the road leads down to the sleepy waterfront village of Frikes with a choice of several tavernas, two beautifully preserved windmills and a picturesque location, the village is a popular choice with our visitors to the north of Ithaka. You can catch a daily ferry from here to Fiskardo and Vasiliki. There are boats to rent and further up the coast, only easily accessible by sea is Marmakada beach. There's a tiny island just off shore which has a chapel on it and a large flock of chickens. The farmer rows out every day to feed them and collect the eggs. The reason he keeps his hens out there is that there are many pine martens on the main island and they like nothing better than to bite off and eat a chicken's head, which doesn't help with egg laying.

LEVKI

On the opposite side of Niritos, in a spectacular location overlooking the Ithaka Channel and the mountains of Kefalonia is the village of Levki, which straddles the main road. Levki means white and each year just before Easter the inhabitants get together with their buckets of whitewash

and repaint the entire village! They are also very proud of their gardens and each plot is a riot of bougainvillea, jasmine, citrus trees and geraniums. Levki also has strong links with Britain. During the last war and following the invasion of the Ionian Islands by the Axis forces, the village was used as a base by the Greek Resistance. Outwardly it remained much as before, a sleepy settlement of farmers and smallholders quietly going about its business and therefore of little interest to the Italian and German occupiers. However, there were more than just the odd goat or sheep in the old barns and store sheds in the surrounding vineyards and olive groves. Escaped allied prisoners, shot down pilots and members of the Special Operation Executive, from all over the eastern Mediterranean, but particularly Crete, were hidden by the villagers, whilst en route back to the United Kingdom. When the village was destroyed in the great earthquake Britain gave money, labour and materials for its reconstruction, in gratitude for this unsung and highly dangerous contribution to the allied war effort. Most visitors pass through this village on their way to Vathy.



Windmill in Ithaka.

Most visitors pass through Levki, either on their way to Vathy, or down to the pristine beach of Agios Ioannis and are unaware of its wartime role. They might wonder why the old people wave at passers-by quite so enthusiastically!

TOP PLACES TO VISIT IN ITHAKA



A ruined house in the picturesque village of Kioni.

KIONI The traditional village of Kioni is located 20km north of the capital, Vathy - lying on the northeastern coast of the island. Throughout the years, since its establishment in the 16th century, the village of Kioni has seen a number of devastating earthquakes but its people have done well in protecting and preserving their hometown.

THE CAVE OF THE NYMPHS

South of Vathy, away from Aetos and left before Dexia beach, you will find the cave, also known as marble cave, with two entrances. Myth has it that one entrance was used for the mortals and the other for the Gods. Following a narrow path from the entrance, you will find a flat 7 metre wide chamber. Lit up by an

opening on the ceiling, the chamber is decorated by coloured stalactites and stalagmites. Either a torch or a flashlight would come in handy while finding your way out.

THE MONASTERY OF KATHARA

A loop road branches off above the beach at Aetos, zigzagging up to the lonely 16th century monastery of Kathara, high on the slopes of Neritos, the island's highest mountain. From the bell tower near the church, the eagle's eye view of Molos Bay and Vathy harbour far below is magical. The view across the sparkling sea to the Gulf of Corinth and the Peloponnese mountains, is one of the finest in the whole of Greece. Further on the road passes through the isolated village of Anoghi, where an unassuming small church contains a magnificent series of late 15th century frescoes.

NAVAL-FOLKLORE MUSEUM

Housed in Vathy, under a 1923 old electric power station, the museum exhibits paintings and findings that depict Ithaka's long naval history and tradition. In addition to the naval apparatuses and instruments, the museum exhibits folklore gatherings providing you with a good eye of the local everyday life of island's inhabitants throughout the 20th century.



TOP BEACHES IN ITHAKA



The beautiful Filiatro beach.

FILIATRO

At 20 minutes from Vathy, you will find Filiatro beach – one of the most popular beaches on the island, even for the locals. A family-friendly pebbly beach, where the water is warm, crystal clear and the surroundings are green – nature at its best.

AGIOS IOANNIS

One of the very few sandy beaches on the island, with turquoise waters, that is worth a visit. At 9km from Vathy, the easiest way to get there is using the steep track from Levki. The beach is surrounded by magnificent white rock cliffs and boasts crystal turquoise waters.

DEXIA BAY

Very popular among the Greeks, Dexia is one of the cleanest Greek beaches - awarded the Blue Flag. Rumour has it that Odysseus landed there

when he got back to Ithaka from his 10 year long journey. Just off Vathy, at 2km from the capital and on your way to Aetos, you will enjoy a blend of sand and pebbles giving to clear blue waters and natural shade from the trees surrounding the beach. Dexia also has a lifeguard as well as a beach bar.



Agios Ioannis beach.

AETOS BEACH

Aetos, located at 3km west of Vathy, is a pure, pretty and unspoilt beach with warm waters and a lovely atmosphere. You can see the beach from Vathy, as its not far from the capital of Ithaka, but still a peaceful and quiet shore to enjoy.

PLATIA AMMOS BEACH

Platia Ammos is Ithaka's treasure-beach. Like most beaches on the island, Platia Ammos is surrounded by beautiful trees and like Agios Ioannis its shore is sandy and the waters are turquoise. You can only access the beach on a boat from Afales bay and you will usually find yachts and boats off the coast enjoying the crystal waters and the view of the majestic sand cliff behind and over the beach.



The treasure-beach of Platia Ammos.



Pure green and blue at Aetos beach.

LOCAL FOODS

The island of Ithaka promises to offer a rich gastronomic experience with dishes made of fresh ingredients and home made pastries. Throughout the island you will find a plethora of luxurious Greek restaurants, traditional tavernas and plenty of diverse eateries offering quality international cuisine.

FETA CHEESE

Made of sheep's and goat's milk and produced in blocks, feta is the most popular Greek cheese used in lots of Greek dishes, salads and even pastries. High quality feta should have the aroma of ewe's milk, yoghurt and butter, together with a smooth and thick texture.



A refreshing block of Feta.

SPINACH PIE

The Spinach pie is the trademark delicacy of Greece. Homemade crust, filled with feta cheese and spinach.



The trademark Spinach Pie.

FLAOUNA

Mainly an Easter pastry, Flaouna is cheese filled dough with raising and sesame seeds. The making of the Flaouna, normally prepared on a Good Friday and eaten on the Sunday, is usually a family 'team effort' with the children helping their parents as sous-chefs.



Freshly baked Flaounas.

GALAKTOBOUREKO

For the majority of Greeks, Galaktoboureko is the tastiest sweet in the country. Made of home made pastry and custard filling with eggs, milk and sugar, Galaktoboureko resembles the French mille-feuille. Unlike the French delicacy though, in this instance, the custard is baked with the pastry.



The very fine Aliada dish.

MANDOLES

Mandoles is a sweet snack famous in the Ionian, made of almonds and sugar. Inspired by the famous Italian nougat, you can buy Mandoles either buy the kilo or packed.



The greek nougat, known as Mandoles or Mandolato.

PASTEELI

Pasteli is a sesame seed candy, made of local honey. You will find Pasteli in a flat bar, just like a chocolate bar. Pasteli is another perfect, sweet snack.



Fresh Pasteli.

BOUGATSA

Bougatsa is the country's most popular breakfast pastry, made of homemade custard between layers of filo pastry. In every bakery on the island you will find a warm Bougatsa. In most bakeries you will be offered the savoury version of the pastry as well. You can find the Bougatsa where in place of custard, the pie will be filled with cheese or minced meat.



The sweet and creamy Bougatsa.

GREEK COFFEE

There are lovers and there are haters. People who have tried the Greek coffee, also known as Turkish although you are better off ordering it as 'Greek', have either fallen in love with its strong coffee smell and thick texture or have found it hard to even get a sip off the cup. Order this unfiltered coffee with a spoon of sugar, otherwise you will be joining the haters in no time. Complement your Greek coffee with some pastries from the local bakery.



Greek coffee is boiled in a pot.

GREEN LIVING

We at Ionian Island Holidays take an active role in assuring that we do our utmost to be energy aware and we do all we can to aid conservation to help the environment. We know many of our guests want to conserve energy and water, so here are a few tips to help you during your stay.



WATER CONSERVATION

- Turn taps off when brushing your teeth or shaving.
- Take shorter showers: recommended time 4 mins.
- Fully load the washing machine/dishwasher OR, if not full, use the half load button if available.
- Use lower economy settings on washing machines and dishwashers.
- Do not leave taps running unnecessarily.



ENERGY CONSERVATION

- Switch off lights when not in use.
- Kettles use lots of electricity – so only boil what you need and don't overfill.
- Don't leave TVs/DVD-players/Radios on standby – this still uses a lot of electricity.
- Don't leave your mobile phone or other device charger plugged into the socket when not charging, as this still draws on electricity.
- If it's not too hot, instead of using the air-conditioning, open doors and windows and let the cool summer breezes in.
- To maximise air-conditioning, ensure external doors and windows are shut (air-conditioning in some properties will not work otherwise).
- Optimum air-conditioning temperature is 22-24°C, helping conserve energy and preventing units from potentially freezing up and causing water leakage (Remember, it's not recommended to sleep with air-conditioning as you may catch a chill).
- If the hot water switch is on, make sure it is turned off when not needed.

RESPONSIBLE & SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Ionian Island Holidays is committed to high standards of service and believes in regular and thorough training of employees. We continually seek to review and improve our holidays. We listen to our customers and always welcome suggestions for improving standards.

OUR INVOLVEMENT IN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

We are committed to the conservation and preservation of the natural environment. With strong local connections, we feel we have a moral responsibility towards the environment and the local community.

SUPPORT FOR THE ECONOMY OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

We support small scale agriculture and local crafts of the local community, introducing you to the products and services available locally, from traditional wine and olive oil procedures to honey farmers.

PROVIDING PRACTICAL SUPPORT FOR LOCAL INITIATIVES

We support and sponsor initiatives that seek to maintain the natural beauty of our region, including regular beach cleaning, footpath clearance and management of the wildlife.

INCREASING CLIENT AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT IN LOCAL ISSUES

You may only have a short time to spend in this region, but we realise that this has an important part to play in ensuring that the qualities that attracted you to the area in the first place are preserved.

WORKING CLOSELY WITH OWNERS AND LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITIES

We encourage appropriate future development and share a mutual responsibility towards maintaining the natural beauty of our surroundings and to ensure appropriate future development.



GREEK ANIMAL WELFARE

We at Ionian Island Holidays are passionate about Greece and its inhabitants, which includes all the local animals as well as the indigenous wildlife. Greece are not as fortunate as we are in the UK to have such fantastic charitable organisations and infrastructure such as the RSPCA, The Dogs Trust, Battersea Dogs Home and all the other wonderful animal charities that prevent us from seeing strays on our streets.

HOW IT WORKS

Your local Representative will place an animal welfare charity envelope inside your welcome letters and we kindly ask if you would kindly like to donate any of your left over change before you depart on your journey home in order to help the animals on the island or in the area where you have stayed.

The money raised will help local animal charities to purchase vaccinations, microchipping neutering and paying vets bills, feeding, fostering and rehoming.

Your donations will save the many lives of dogs, cats even donkeys, mules and horses and as all our chosen charities are run by volunteers all the donations go directly to helping the animals.

We thought you might like to read a story about how your donations helped Sasha a pure bred German Shepherd who was found wandering the streets of Corfu. She was in very poor condition, extremely weak from hunger in fact so weak she could barely walk. Sasha was ridden with fleas, ticks and suffering from a severe case of mange.

CARE (Corfu Animal Rescue Establishment) were alerted and they immediately took Sasha to the local vets where she was placed on medication for all the ailments she was suffering from. Sasha was in such poor condition that it was felt she would be best looked after by one of the volunteers from CARE who took her in and fostered her. Sasha was very well looked after and received the specialist attention and care she needed to recover.

Now some months later, Sasha has made a remarkable recovery. A bounding lively girl, Sasha is 10kgs heavier and full of energy, exhibiting all the characteristics one would expect to see from this fascinating breed. The kind volunteers from CARE have found Sasha a loving permanent home in Corfu. Your donation has had a direct impact on this dog's life – in fact the money donated actually saved her life.

This is just one story how your donation will help make happy endings! From all of us at Ionian Island Holidays and on behalf of the many volunteers of the charities, thank you for any donation you may be able to spare.



For more information visit:
www.kefalonias-animal-trust.org or email
mail@ionianislandholidays.com

YOUR NEXT TRIP WITH US...

When the Gods chose Greece for their home they knew what they were looking for...

- A land so beautiful time has almost stood still
- A sea so blue it shimmers against cloudless skies
- Endless hot summer days drifting into starlit nights
- Hundreds of tiny islands each unique with its own proud history and culture
- Spectacular secluded beaches stretching as far as the eye can see
- Never ending olive groves whistling in the wind
- A land with endless possibilities and choices

Ionian Island Holidays feature some of the most beautiful areas this glorious country has to offer and we are certain that you will become as captivated and passionate about Greece as we are!

LOYALTY DISCOUNT

EXCEPTIONAL SAVING WITHOUT COMPROMISING ON QUALITY

Ionian Island Holidays love to reward our loyal clients. To show our appreciation to returning guests, we offer an additional **5% loyalty discount** off any holiday with Ionian Island Holidays.

Should you book two holidays with us in the same season at full brochure price, we will **reduce the cost of your second holiday by 15%.**



View of the island's beautiful harbour.

YOUR NEXT DESTINATION

KEFALONIA

Home of Ionian Island Holidays and the largest, most varied of the seven islands. Dramatic mountains and a coastline made for exploration, green valleys, secluded bays, havens of peace and solitude. The island has some of the most beautiful beaches in Greece.



LEFKADA

Known as the White Island, Lefkada is wild in the west, with perfect beaches, a turquoise sea and rugged mountains above fertile eastern valleys. Inland, flower strewn hill villages nestle in lush, green pine forests.



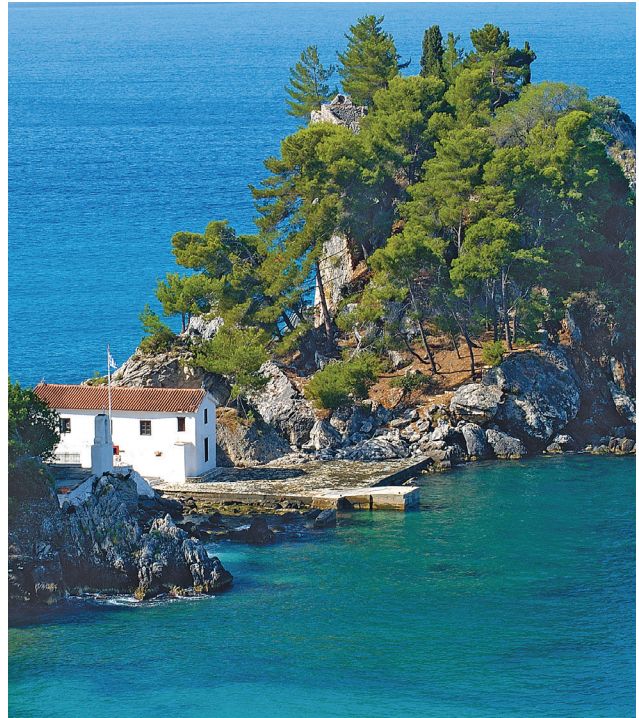
MEGANISI

A unique island of where tradition and relaxation are combined to create a small, peaceful island where time really does stand still. The rural tradition of centuries lives on in unspoilt villages amongst vineyards and olive groves.



PARGA AND THE EPIROS COAST

Justifiably referred to as the jewel of mainland Greece, Parga has a picture-postcard town and beautiful beaches. Dramatic scenery, enriched by a long and interesting history, provide compelling reasons to explore the area.



PAXOS

Apart from Gaios, the bustling island port and capital, Paxos is comprised of small hamlets and isolated houses with no large holiday complexes. Even at the height of the season, this remains a peaceful island where it is possible to discover shaded paths down to hidden coves.



CORFU

The most romantic and verdant island of the Ionian, Corfu has inspired writers and poets for over a thousand years. Despite its popularity the magic remains through its remote, traditional mountain villages, glorious bays and beaches and rich architectural and archaeological heritage. We operate solely to the beautiful bays and harbours of Corfu's idyllic north eastern coastline.



SKIATHOS

With its 68 superb beaches lapped by turquoise seas, plus a lush, green backdrop inland, it's easy to see why Skiathos has been a popular destination since its development in the mid 60s. Bustling Skiathos Town has managed to combine its development as a tourist centre and busy port, while maintaining its original character of narrow alleyways, old churches and Venetian houses. This is in contrast to the island's interior which is still rural with olive groves, pine woods and aromatic hillsides that few visitors explore.



SKOPELOS

Apart from the island's eponymous capital, a bustling harbour with a maze of narrow streets, Skopelos remains remarkably undeveloped. The magnificent, craggy coastline hides secluded bays, each with a sheltered beach fringed by pine forests and olive groves.



ALONISSOS

The remotest of the four inhabited islands of the Sporades archipelago, this narrow, wooded island is the haven we all dream about when life becomes too stressful. There are many old trails criss-crossing the island leading down to uncrowded beaches.



PELION

The Pelion Peninsula is truly unique and unsurpassed for exploration on foot. The Aegean on the one side, the sheltered inland sea of the Pagasitic Gulf on the other and the mountains of the Pelion in the north. The forests of oak, chestnut and beech cover every hillside, valley and ravine.





IONIAN & AEGEAN ISLAND HOLIDAYS

Olympia House, Armitage Road, London NW11 8RQ

020 8459 0777

mail@ionianislandholidays.com

www.ionianislandholidays.com



Ionian & Aegean Island Holidays and Aegean Island Holidays are trading names of Ionian Island Holidays Ltd. Company registration No. 04352657