

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 Marina	3
About Ionian Island Holidays	4
About Villa Marina	5
Local amenities	6
Health & safety	7
Exploring Kefalonia	10
Top beaches in Kefalonia	16
Top places to visit in Kefalonia	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 MARINA

Ionian Island Holidays and the property owners would like to welcome you to Villa Marina, Lourdas, Kefalonia. We trust that your journey to Kefalonia 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 Kefalonia. 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 MARINA

CLEANING

A midweek linen change and clean is provided on Wednesday or Thursday morning. In accordance with government guidelines the property should be vacated with the windows left open so the cleaner can enter the property. Rubbish can be left in the black bin outside the apartment and will be emptied daily, alternatively if you wish to empty the rubbish yourself you can use the municipal bin on the main road.

HOT WATER

The hot water is provided by a standard boiler.

ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES: WASHING MACHINE/ DISHWASHER

Most of the machines are straightforward to use. You will find manuals by the side of them. If you are having trouble with any of the machines, 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 lock box next to the front door and instructions on where to leave them will be given in your departure letter. A remote is attached to your keys and can be used to operate the gate. We would ask that you take good care of the keys to the property. 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 cleaned every other day.

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

Fire drill instructions can be found at the back of the front door.

SAFETY DEPOSIT BOX

The safe is located in the closet in the main bedroom. You will there find instructions on how to operate it.

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

Lourdass has all the amenities you will need for your stay nearby, with a range of tavernas and restaurants, ATMs, post office, bakery and shops.

SHOPS

There are two mini-markets on the road heading down to Lourdas Beach, alternatively Vlachata is a 5 minute drive and has some larger stores and a couple of souvenir shops.

BANK

There is no bank in Lourdas, there is an ATM located on the beachfront next to Klismatis Tavern. Alternatively there is an ATM outside Petros market in Vlachata. The nearest bank can be found in Argostoli and is open Monday to Friday – 8.00am-2.00pm.

PHARMACY

There is a pharmacy on the main road in Vlachata.
Tel: 2671 031660.
Hours: Monday-Friday 8am-2pm and 5pm-8pm, Saturday 8am-2pm, Sunday closed.

DOCTOR

Nearest doctor is Dr. A. Michaelides, Lithostroto 4, Argostoli. Tel: +30 26710 23338, Mobile: +30 69322 87600

DENTIST

The nearest dentist is located in Argostoli and is open Monday to Friday 9:00am to 2:00pm and 6:00pm to 8:00pm. For more information please contact your representative.

BAKERY

The closest bakery is located in Vlachata on the main road to Argostoli.

RESTAURANTS

The closest restaurants to your villa are located along the Lourdas beachfront, alternatively Vlachata offers several other restaurants.

BEACHES

Lourdass Beach is the closest beach to your villa – approximately 5 minutes walk.

POST OFFICE

You will find the local post office at Café Chleo in Vlachata on the main road to Argostoli. The postman is often seen standing in the main road playing tennis.

PETROL STATION

The nearest petrol station is in Peratata. It is called Aegean and is open 7 days a week.

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 KEFALONIA

Kefalonia has some of the most spectacular scenery in the region, such as the Ionian's highest peak, Mt Ainos with its famous fir forests, standing guard over sandy beaches of the south, spectacular caves in the east, magnificent sea cliffs in the west and the gentler beauty of the Lixouri and Erisos Peninsula in the north. Combine all this with the Kefalonian people themselves – individual, genuinely friendly, possessing a marvellous sense of humour and it is easy to understand why so many visitors return year after year. There is something for everyone on this island. For the archaeological amateur detective there is recent evidence (though whisper this softly if you visit its smaller neighbour) that the island of Homer's epic called Ithaka is in fact Kefalonia! There's even an acropolis that predates its more famous counterpart in Athens. Venetian fortresses, British designed roads and bridges, certainly the island has a cosmopolitan history, much of which can still be seen today. History aside, perhaps Kefalonia's greatest asset lies in its diversity. For a family day out on a blue flag beach with all the conventional amenities, Lassi near the island capital Argostoli would be hard to beat. Perhaps the choice might be a secluded beach where ancient olive trees provide shade for a quiet read (or siesta!) with the blue waters of the Ithaka Channel at ones feet, then Foki Bay near Fiskardo will appeal.



You can also explore by car the unspoilt mountain villages of the interior, the fertile valley vineyards such as Robola or the high forests of Mt Ainos, then walk the incredible mule track from Assos that climbs the mountain behind. Maybe just stay at home, on balcony or terrace, contemplating the view, thinking about a swim in the pool or whether to eat in at your barbecue or out at a waterside tavern. Kefalonia is the home of Ionian Island Holidays, so we might be just a little biased, but we are glad to be sharing it with you!



View of Fiskardo.



Many sailing boats moor to the dock in Fiskardo.

FISKARDO

Northern Kefalonia remains almost completely untainted by tourism and happily for us strict planning laws prevent the picturesque towns of Fiskardo and Assos from being overdeveloped. The majority of the hustle and bustle in Fiskardo comes from the vast array of boats that stream in and out of the harbour throughout the season. With a combination of sailing flotillas, daily ferries and some of the finest quality yachts in Europe the people-watching potential is endless and many an hour can be spent in the harbour-front tavernas watching the world go by.

Fiskardo sits on a bed of limestone that buffered it against the earthquake of 1953 which virtually destroyed the island. It was only the northern part of Kefalonia that survived the devastating quake and as such Fiskardo boasts the island's only remaining example of the attractive Venetian architecture of Kefalonia's past. Two lighthouses, Victorian and Venetian, guard the bay and the ruins to be found on the headland are believed to be from an ancient chapel begun by the Norman invader Robert Giscard, after whom Fiskardo is named.

You can hire motorboats here and explore most of the Ithaka Channel - even go across to Ithaka if you want. There are diving courses and a marine adventure trip as well as cruises around the islands. The boats leave every morning and stop at various beaches and harbours on the way - some even go to the big sea caves on Meganisi, which are said to have been used to hide submarines during the war. If you're into walking, there is a series of trails and

tracks to follow. You could even buy a rod and line and catch your supper off the rocks around the harbour! There is a daily ferry to Lefkada and Ithaka.

ARGOSTOLI

Capital of the island since the 18th century, Argostoli today is a cosmopolitan blend of boutiques, coffee bars, jewellers and fine restaurants.

Originally built as a safe haven out of sight of potential invaders in 1757, the town became the capital due to its advantageous location. The changes the town has seen over the years have been immense, yet the style and design of the building and monuments today reveal little of the capital's past. Rebuilding Argostoli after the tragic earthquake of 1953 was a rather hurried process after this catastrophic crisis wiped out the entire town and the buildings standing today reveal none of the town's original Venetian splendour. What Argostoli does boast however, is the style and elegance of a modern European city in microcosm, which is unique to the island and can be found nowhere else in the Ionian.

The town is a hive of activity all year round, but particularly in July and August when it attracts a multitude of tourists. Along a palm tree lined coastal road, fishermen can be found selling their morning's catch at the fresh fish market which is visited by all of the local taverna owners to buy their produce. For fresh homegrown produce there is also an impressive fruit and vegetable market which is open every day in peak season. The main square is lively and full of a range of tavernas and bars. Many relaxing hours can be spent absorbing the hustle and bustle in and around this 'platia', or alternatively the shops range from leather goods and local ceramics to handmade crafts such as lace, crochet work and the characteristic Greek 'kourelia' rugs in varying colours and designs. Other points of interest include the archaeological and folklore museums, which are well worth a visit, not to mention the numerous silver and gold boutiques for which the island is famed!

Legend has it that Kefalonia is named after Kefalos, son of Hermes, one of the twelve gods of the Olympic Pantheon. With a father renowned for bringing a stroke of luck, we believe that this island fully lives up to its mythological associations and reflects the nature of your magnificent stay here.

EXPLORING KEFALONIA (CONTINUED)

LASSI

The largest tourist resort on the island, Lassi is located only ten minutes south of Argostoli and boasts an attractive stretch of sandy beaches and range of restaurants. This is the busiest area of the island and as such is probably one of the least charismatic, although it is excellent for watersports, such as ringos, waterskiing and pedaloos. Bathing is safe with a lifeguard service on most of the main beaches.

This coast is also famous for a remarkable escape story from World War II. An allied submarine was on patrol in the area and sunk. It came to rest on the bottom of the sea over 100 metres down. All of the crew drowned, except one man who managed to survive, swimming to the surface. The whole island was swarming with Germans, but the local people hid him and eventually helped him to escape. Of course Hollywood is now making a film about it.

LOURDAS

The village of Lourdas is largely undiscovered although in recent years some of the larger tour operators have begun to pick up on the appeal of this charming resort. With a long stretch of sandy beach and a small selection of waterfront tavernas this attractive resort is an ideal day out for beach lovers. The village is fairly isolated and boasts an attractive mountain backdrop which makes an ideal spot for some pretty sunsets.

SKALA

A scenic but busy resort located on the Southern

coast of the island, Skala is a blend of old and new – in fact quite literally, as the ‘old village’ of Skala, destroyed by the earthquake, is located directly behind the new village and resort. Although much of the old town was destroyed in 1953 by the quake, it is still worth a stroll through the remains, which reveal a wealth of history of the area, with the old wash house and spring, bell tower graveyard and olive press. The resort has a very popular sandy beach which is particularly good for water sports, but not good for those wishing to escape the crowds. Further along the beach a breeding sanctuary for the endangered sea turtles native to the area can be found.

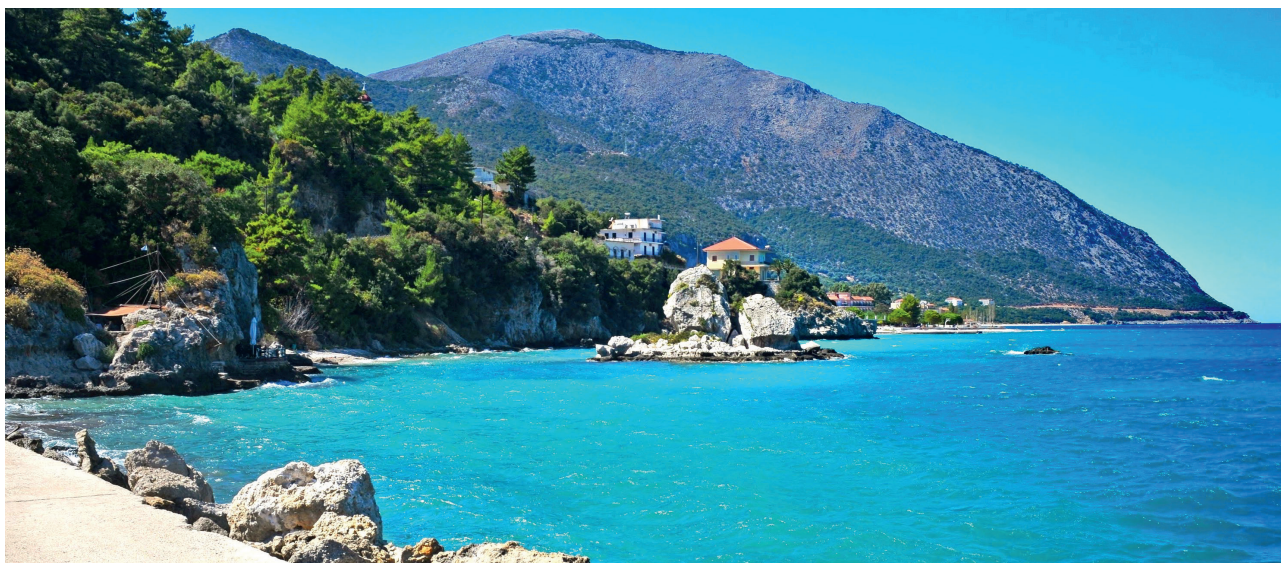
A selection of around 20 tavernas and restaurants in the new village make the resort a good choice for an alternative evening out. Just outside Skala, on the coastal route towards Poros, you will find the ancient temple dedicated to Apollo, which dates back to the 7th century BC and the pretty church of Saint George rebuilt from the pre-classical building.

POROS

Poros is an attractive harbour town on the south east coast of the island, which like some of the other southern based towns of the island has become slightly more crowded in recent years due to the increase in tourism. With a good choice of waterfront tavernas and restaurants, Poros gives access to Killini on the mainland by ferry, also to the island of Lefkada and is a good stop off point when traveling around Kefalonia. The shingle beach is fairly small and can get crowded in peak season.



The beautiful beach by the village of Lourdas.



The port city of Poros.

SAMI

Sami is a major port with regular ferries to Ithaka, Patras, Astons and also summer departures to Italy. The town is a popular but low key holiday resort. Shingle beaches are also the more secluded option of the picturesque Antisamos Beach, located just over a mile eastwards up a pretty mountain road.

Like the majority of settlements on the island, Sami was destroyed in the earthquake of 1953 and as such does not portray much of the traditional style architecture of the island, although there are plenty of pleasant waterside tavernas and bars to choose from. In spite of the town's modern appearance, Sami played a highly significant role in the island's history. The town is arguably the most important of the four ancient cities of the island and was inhabited at least until Roman times. As a city state it minted its own coins, which highlights its significance and size during that period. Sami is mentioned by Homer as a participant in the Trojan wars and also as the place of origin of many of Penelope's suitors. In 187BC during the Roman invasion, the inhabitants of Sami retired to their fortifications and put up a fierce resistance until they were eventually overcome.

Although little of the town's turbulent history remains, visitors can still view the old ruins of Agios Fanentes Monastery on the hilltop enjoying stunning views of Sami Town. The monastery contains stones of the ancient acropolis of Kyathis and is well worth a visit.

DROGARATI CAVE

Drogarati Cave is an understandably popular tourist attraction on the island and definitely worth a visit if this is your first time to Kefalonia. The underground cave has been formed over the course of 150 million years, although it was only actually discovered last century. The formations of the stalactite and stalagmites are illuminated so that visitors can view their fascinating range of colour and shape. The acoustics inside the cave



The Drogarati cave stalactites.

EXPLORING KEFALONIA (CONTINUED)

are spectacular and since 1963 the cave has been developed with interior lighting so that a number of concerts can be held there during the year for audiences of up to 500 – Maria Callas is even said to have sung in the cave! This area of Kefalonia is riddled with cave and the resistance fighters in the war used many of them to hide in.

Drogarati cave is 144ft below ground level and the diameter ranges from 100ft to 120ft. Tourists can enter the cave for a small fee and view inside. The tour is unguided and the cave is slightly damp under foot so suitable footwear is advisable – it is not recommended for those with walking difficulties.

MELISSANI LAKE

Just two kilometres north of Sami is the village of Karavomylos, where you can find the stunning underground lake beneath the Melissa Caves. Again, as a first time visitor to the island it is worth seeing, the lake is situated in the heart of the caves and due to a collapsed roof directly above, is one of the most visited sights of the island. The water actually comes from the sea at Cape St Theodoron near Argostoli on the other side of the island. If you go to the main platia in Karavomilos, there's another small lake beside the sea with a water wheel and a good taverna. Karavomilos means Boatmill in Greek. There's a good shop for

postcards, ice creams etc. To enter the cave, twenty steps lead down from the entrance to a landing platform where boats can be taken on a small guided tour inside which is certainly worth taking. The tour lasts ten minutes – a small fee is charged throughout the summer.

AGIA EFIMIA

The pretty port of Agia Efimia is located on the east coast. This town was one of the island's most important trading places before the earthquake of 1953, but nowadays is one of the main summer bases for flotilla yachts. Only thirty-five minutes drive from Fiskardo, the town has a small selection of shops and waterside tavernas and a narrow stretch of shingle beach and boasts wonderful views out across the Ithaka channel.



The port of Agia Efimia.



The stunning Melissani lake.

Straight out of Hollywood, Myrtos each has been voted as the best Greek beach more than 10 times.



Panoramic view of the majestic Myrtos beach.

MYRTOS BEACH

The journey between Argostoli and Fiskardo is the most spectacular ride as the road rises into the Evmorfia foothills and beyond Agnonas, clinging to sheer cliffs as it heads for Dhivarata which is the stop for Myrtos Beach. This is the most dramatic beach in the Ionian islands and has not only been voted by the Sunday Times as one of the top 5 beaches in the Mediterranean, but is now also famed as the setting for the Hollywood epic Captain Corelli's Mandolin.

With its combination of pure white sand and pebbles and amazingly clear waters, the beach is a stunning picture postcard sight from the mountain roadside above. In peak season Myrtos gets fairly busy and has very few shaded areas so it is worth taking an umbrella or visiting later in the afternoon to escape the glare of the midday sun. There is one beach taverna and in peak season sunbeds can be rented. Weaker swimmers and children should take extra care, as the beach shelves very steeply and the current is deceptively strong, although there is a lifeguard patrol.

ASSOS

The atmospheric village of Assos is a haven of peace and tranquility, positioned on the small isthmus between the island and a huge hill crowned by a ruined Venetian fortress.

The history of this area is rich, and the fortress dates back to 1590, once protecting sixty public buildings and 200 private houses from the threat

of pirates. The old prison, inside the castle has just been restored. When the British ruled the island in 19th century, the Greeks revolted, so the British to regain control, imprisoned the main offenders in the fortress. Unfortunately these same men were the local farmers and the soldiers began to run out of food. The prisoners came up with a clever scheme. They suggested that they should be allowed out during the day to work in their fields and return in the evening back to their cells. The soldiers got their food and wine, the farmers for their money and everyone was happy with the arrangement! It was used for this purpose until 1953 when the earthquake struck the island.

One of the first ruins to see when entering through the top gate is the Catholic Church of St Marcos built originally around 1604. There are other ruins still around; including that of the Governor's house – part of the inside is still used by local farmers but the public are excluded. From the upper gate follow the track as it winds down through the interior of the castle to reach the lower gate. From here you will find a footpath which descends gently around the hillside and there is a point where it closes with the upward track and is easy to cross over, if preferred.

Fortunately in spite of its unique natural beauty, Assos has remained relatively undiscovered and untouched by the main influx of tourism to the island. A handful tavernas can be found in the village with a small selection of shops and a mini-market for everyday needs. There is a short stretch of shingle beach with good swimming in the harbour and caves to explore at the other side of the bay.



The beautiful village of Assos.

TOP BEACHES IN KEFALONIA



Avithos beach.

AVITHOS

Avithos is a beautiful beach with crystalline waters located 12km southwest of Argostoli, the capital of Kefalonia and very close to the village of Svoronata. The beach consists of reddish sand and an impressive mountain backdrop. Surrounded by verdant vegetation, Avithos makes the ideal environment for children, offering many games in the sand and in the shallow waters. A couple of nice taverns are found in close distance from the beach offering delicious meals from the local cuisine. It offers great views to the tiny islet of Dias and the small church that stands on top. It is definitely among the best in the south coast of Kefalonia.

TRAPAZEKI

Trapezaki is a beautiful beach located 13.3km southeast of Argostoli, the main town of Kefalonia. The beach is totally unspoilt offering an enchanting landscape that captivates all visitors. Certain amenities like mini-market and a tavern are found nearby. Trapezaki offers spots for both relaxation and more noisy atmosphere. The long sandy beach provides a nice choice for quiet family vacation. Water sports are also available for all ages. The nearest village is Moussata, which is a few minutes drive away. The countryside is excellent for taking walks and finding the local tracks.

AI-HELIS

Ai Helis is located in the southwest part of Kefalonia, 11km from its capital Argostoli and close to the village of Svoronata. The beach consists of nice sand, crystalline and shallow waters which makes an ideal environment for children. It is surrounded on both sides by towering rocks and enchanting lush greenery that create a beautiful atmosphere. It has a descent development with sunbeds and a snack bar while it is also considered quite suitable for water sports activities. The beach offers two volley courts and is much preferred by the beach volley fans. There is a nice car park from which it is a ten minute walk to the beach.



Ai-Helis beach.

PALIOSTAFIDA

Paliostafida is one of the least known beaches in Kefalonia. It is located only 3km from Argostoli, the capital of Kefalonia. This is a small yet fully organized beach with umbrellas and sundecks. It is surrounded by steep cliffs covered with vast greenery, tall pine trees and various plants. The water is clean and shallow, ideal for children. The limited length of the sandy beach doesn't allow many beach games or other activities. Despite the short distance from the town, Paliostafida remains still unknown from many visitors and Greek travellers.

PLATIS GIALOS

Platis Gialos beach is a fantastic sandy beach set in a gorgeous bay, surrounded by pine trees, sheer rock faces and vegetation, it has beautiful soft golden sand and transparent water. There is a beach bar, showers and sun loungers with umbrellas all available on the beach.

MAKRIS GIALOS

One of the most frequented beaches of Kefalonia it is popular for its shiny golden sand, the azure and clean waters. Similar to most of the island's beaches, Makris Gialos boasts a stunning landscape with dense vegetation and tall pine trees. Some rock formations are scattered creating an exotic atmosphere.



Spartia beach.

SPARTIA

Spartia village is located 12km southeast of Argostoli. It is a traditional fishing village with abundant natural beauty that attracts many visitors. The beach of Spartia lies next to its fishing jetty enclosed by a steep limestone cliff known as Hatzoklis. The cliff gives respite to the beach from the afternoon sun as well as the strong winds. If you like to stroll around the beach you will find interesting rocky enclaves and pools in the outcrops nearby. The water is crystal blue and warm. There are also a couple of taverns at the back of the beach.



Platis Gialos and Makris Gialos beaches.

TOP PLACES TO VISIT IN KEFALONIA



The monastery of Agios Gerasimos.

MONASTERY OF AGIOS GERASIMOS

The protector of the island, Saint Gerasimos, was born in 1503 and spent a big part of his life in Jerusalem, Crete and Zakynthos before arriving to Kefalonia where he eventually died on the 15th August, 1579. In 1560, Saint Gerasimos founded what he called the 'New Jerusalem' – a nunnery in central Kefalonia. The monastery is a striking construction that has been re-built together with a church. Saint Gerasimos lived in a cave beneath the monastery, which is still accessible today. The monastery is a five minute drive – or twenty minute walk – from Valsamata, a village of less than a thousand residents in central Kefalonia.

ROBOLA WINERY – OMALA

In 1982, the experienced winemakers of Robol a, established the Robola Cooperative of Kefalonia in an effort to promote the calibre and potential of the Kefalonian vineyards and to ensure a steady income for themselves. A year later, the first



The Robola winery, next to the monastery.

grape concentration was bottled and brought into the market, marking Robola's first move to commercialisation. Today, the Cooperative is 300-strong and with its own winery factory is now based in the community of Omala, right next to the Monastery of Agios Gerasimos.

SAINT GEORGE'S CASTLE – KASTRO

Built not far from the sea in 1500's by the Venetians, the castle was used as a means to command trade routes. A few years later, the fort fell into the hands of the Byzantines, the Franks and the Turks before the Venetians reclaimed it with the help of the Spanish and the Kefalonians. The people of Kefalonia were impressed by the Venetians' level of craftsmanship and preferred to be ruled by them rather than the Turks. Visitors enjoy the wonderful panoramic view from the castle's bastions. The castle is open usually from 9.00am to 6.30pm with a small entrance fee.



Agios Georgios castle, Kastro.

VENETIAN FORTRESS – ASSOS

Located 20 miles from Argostoli, on the North-West coast of Kefalonia, the Venetian Fortress is one of the largest castles in Greece. As Saint George's castle did not suffice the island's defence, the construction of the fortress began in 1593. The Venetian Senate's plan was to found a city within the fortress, transferring the island's administration away from Saint George's castle. Kastrini people where the last recorded inhabitants of the castle – in the late 1960's – living off grapes and olives. Today,



The entrance of the Venetian Fortress, Assos. visitors see the debris of the prison yard and prison cells, with the site being open daily at no charge.

MOUNT AINOS

The tallest mountain in the Ionian, at five thousand feet, is a national park covered in its unique Greek fir tree, the abies chephalonica. There are plenty of caves that have been thoroughly explored by speleologists over the years, with more than three thousand people living on the slopes of mount Ainos.



The Venetian Castle of Saint George, Peratata.



Stunning view of Melissani Lake.

DROGARATI CAVES & MELISSANI LAKE

Kefalonia has an impressive underground water network with subterranean lakes and caverns. Formed over the course of millions of years, Drogarati Caves are an understandably popular tourist attraction on the island. The cave's stalagmites and stalactites are illuminated and visitors enjoy a captivating view full of colours and shapes. The stunning underground lake beneath the Melissa Caves, four miles from Sami, is another 'blockbuster' tourist attraction. The sunlight together with the stalactites create beautiful colour combinations no to be missed, especially if its your first time on the island.

THE VENETIAN CASTLE OF SAINT GEORGE - PERATATA

The Castle of Saint George is located 7km southeast of Argostoli. It has a polygonal shape and covers an area of 16,000 sq. m. This Castle was originally built in the 12th century by the Byzantines but it was mostly the Venetians who gave it its present form. In fact, its external walls were built in 1504 by the Venetians. The castle is ruined today and only a few buildings survive. It was not only the time and wars that caused its damages. This castle also suffered a lot from the earthquake that hit Kefalonia in 1956. At the time of its glory, inside the Castle, there were residences, public buildings, storehouses with food and guns, churches, hospitals, prisons, cisterns of water and generally an organized town. In fact, this Castle was the capital of Kefalonia before Argostoli was made the new capital in 1757. Close to a small square in the castle, you will also see the ruins of the Catholic Church of Saint Nicholas.

LOCAL FOODS

The island of Kefalonia 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.

KEFALONIAN PIES

The Kefalonian pie is the trademark delicacy of the island. Homemade crust, filled with rice, meat or spinach.



The trademark Spinach Pie.

ALIADA

If you enjoy octopus, then Aliada could be just the perfect dish for you. Aliada is a delicious boiled octopus dish put together with garlic and mashed potatoes.



The very fine Aliada dish.

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.

ROBOLA WINE

The Greek wine grape variety grown in Kefalonia is known for its dry taste and its hint of lemon. Robola is the perfect white wine to complement your summer holidays, especially during those hot Greek days.



The refreshing and fragrant Robola wine.

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 overflow.
- 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%.**



Assos harbour, Kefalonia.

YOUR NEXT DESTINATION

ITHAKA

An island of hidden coves, green mountains and secret valleys where reality is as inspiring as the legend. Our properties are located in the south around the bustling main harbour Vathy and in the timeless small fishing harbour, Kioni in the north.



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.



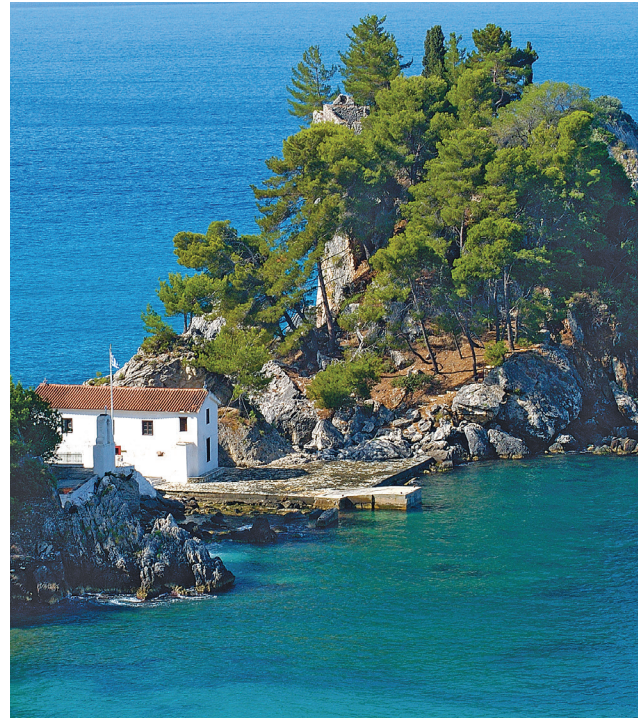
MEGANISI

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