EAT • DRINK • RELAX
**Welcome to Kefalonia**

We have supplied this villa book to give you additional knowledge about the Island of Kefalonia and this fascinating Country.

We hope you find everything as you have expected at your accommodation but if you need anything at all, please do not hesitate to call using the contact numbers provided.

If this is your first time travelling with us or you are one of our many repeat clients we hope you enjoy your holiday and will return to experience another stay with us soon.

**Please Note:** Essential information, contact numbers and driving instructions are also included in your pre-arrival email and it is essential you print this and take it with you.

The Agni Travel Team
ESSENTIAL ADVICE:

AIR CONDITIONING

Where air conditioning units are fitted within our properties Agni Travel does not charge a local fee for their usage. However, due to the high running costs of air conditioning and to help the environment, clients are requested to observe our booking terms (part 2(c)) for proper use: Windows and doors must be kept closed while units are on. Air conditioning must only be used when you are in the property and should be switched off when you leave. (The units, being fan assisted, will very quickly cool your property on your return).

CANDLES AND MATCHES

For emergencies, candles and matches are provided and to be found in a kitchen drawer. We hope that these will not be necessary but a power failure may occur, particularly during a thunder and lightning storm. If they are used for a non emergency purpose their replacement before departure would be appreciated, thereby ensuring future guests will also have a supply of these.

FIRE SAFETY

Please make a note of where all the exits are and the location of the fire equipment in your accommodation. Be especially careful when barbequing as the surrounding vegetation gets very dry during the summer. Always ensure that hot coals have been completely extinguished. (The owners of some properties, due to extreme fire risk, do not allow the use of barbeques so please check with us first).

FURNITURE

Please do not take the indoor furniture or furnishings (eg. cushions, throws, pillows etc.) outside as these will spoil in the sun or if it should rain. If the outdoor furniture provided is not adequate, please let us know.

LOCKING UP

Although Greece is generally safe, we recommend that whenever you leave your accommodation you ensure that all windows, French doors and shutters are locked, and the air conditioning, fans and lights are switched off.

SIESTA

In Greece siesta is taken very seriously. Between the hours of 15.00 and 17.00, shops close and people go home to sleep. If your villa has local neighbours, please be considerate.

SUN UMBRELLAS

Please make sure that the umbrellas are closed at night and when you leave the property. The wind can ‘whip’ up very suddenly, causing damage to the umbrella itself and to surrounding property. If they are left open and unattended we will have to ask you to pay for any damage incurred and for any broken umbrellas.
Toilets

Please be considerate of the drainage systems and remember that a blocked toilet may not be resolved as quickly as we would like, especially in the high season.

Water and Plumbing

Tap water is drinkable but due to different mineral content it is advisable to use bottled water for drinking and making ice.

Please use water sparingly. There is a possibility of occasional water cuts due to water shortages in the height of the summer. If your water does stop, then please immediately notify us so that we can try to arrange an emergency supply.

Location of the hot water heater switch is in the fuse box. Please ensure the switch is up when hot water is required, but we suggest that while showering the hot water heater switch is turned off.
Welcome to Kefalonia!

Agni Travel welcomes you to Kefalonia. The following guide will help you make the most of your holiday.

The Island of Kefalonia

Kefalonia is the largest of the Seven Island (Eptanisa) in the Ionian Sea, its area measuring approximately 780 sq. kms. It lies opposite the entrance to the gulf of Patras and at a distance of about 30 kms from the western shores of the Peloponnese, between the islands of Ithaca, Zakynthos and Lefkada. Its coastline, which measures approximately 250 kms in length, is deeply indented with the bays of Sami and Antisamos to the northeast, the bay of Myrtos to the northwest, the bay of Argostoli to the west (one of the safest natural harbours in the Mediterranean), and the bay of Lourdas to the south.

Kefalonia is the most mountainous island of the Ionian sea and its highest peak is that of the Ainos Mountains, with Agia Dynati next highest (1130m.), rising to 1628 meters. The few plains of the island lie along the western and eastern coasts, where we find the valleys of Krania, Omala, Lixouri and Sami. You will find citrus trees, fruit trees, olive trees, vines and vegetables growing here with a large part of the island clad in luxuriant forests.

The climate of Kefalonia is temperate with mild winters, relatively cool summers and plenty of sunshine throughout the year.

The prefecture includes Kefalonia, Ithaca and the neighboring deserted islands. Its capital is Argostoli, and its total area measures nearly 940 sq. kms with a population numbering approximately 42000 inhabitants.

Exploring Kefalonia

By the coast, search for quiet rocky coves or untouched sandy beaches. Inland, a network of twisting roads service local villages that seem totally untouched by tourism. Stop, explore and meet the warm and friendly local people.

Relaxing

Laze by the pool, or search for secret coves that can only be reached by motor-boat. With sparkling waters and beachside tavernas awaiting you, Kefalonia is a perfect 'stress cure'.

Return Visitors

Incredibly varied, the island has something to offer everyone, and judging by the number of visitors who return year after year, it has a great deal to offer to many.

History – Overview

According to mythology, the island derives its name from the Athenian, Kephalos (Cephalus), who sought refuge here, shattered by the death of his wife whom he himself had accidentally killed during a hunt, mistaking her for his quarry.

During the Trojan war, it lent its support to the king of neighbouring Ithaca, Odysseus. The archaeologists, by studying the important finds from the excavations, came to the conclusion that Kefalonia was divided into four warring kingdoms: those of Krani, of Pronnoi, of Sami and of Pahlì, which flourished during the 5th century BC and minted their own coins. They took part in the Persian wars, allying themselves initially with Athens and later with Sparta, and finally in the 4th century BC they became members of the Athenian Confederacy after their defeat by the Athenian general,
Iphicrates. During the time of Roman rule, the island became a Roman province. Around 50 BC the entire island submitted to the Romans, and the only city to put up a resistance was Sami, which, however, finally yielded and paid a heavy price in blood and destruction for her opposition.

During the Byzantine period Kefalonia was often raided and plundered by pirates. Administratively it belonged to the province of Achaea, later to the theme of Lombardy, and finally to the theme of Kefalonia, which included all the Ionian Islands except Kythera and possibly also Zakynthos. Between the 11th and the 12th century the island suffered repeated destructive raids by the Normans and by the Crusaders of the First Crusade. At the end of the first Turk-Russian war (1463-1479), the Turks took Kefalonia together with Lefkada and Ithaca. It was later retaken by the Venetian Tocco family, then came into Venetian hands and finally was conquered by the Turks in 1484. In 1500 the Venetians once more took possession of the island, which remained under their domination until 1797. After the end of Venetian rule, Kefalonia shared the fate of the other Ionian Islands. After a period in French hands, another under the Turk Sultan, and again under French and British rule, the Ionian Islands were united with Greece, on the 21st of May 1864.

Kefalonia also took an active part in the Greek War of Independence, by contributing men and ships. During World War II and the German (and Italian) occupation many Kefalonians participated in the resistance movement and suffered severe reprisals. On a summer's day in August 1953, a terrible earthquake struck the island. The violent seismic shocks flattened the beautiful town of Argostoli, destroying its traditional houses, its churches, stately mansions and farmhouses.

**SAFETY**

Kefalonia is safe, the locals honest, and you need not worry about walking on your own at night. If there were any danger at all, it would be from other tourists. Tourist resorts sometimes attract individuals who are looking for an opportunity to steal easily. But the locals are a tight community and will immediately investigate a suspicious person. Crime and theft is very rare, and even these days many locals do not lock their car or homes.

**KEFALONIA CATS AND DOGS**

In Kefalonia, as in many parts of Greece, cats thrive. However, please do not feed stray cats and dogs or let them inside your accommodation. Subsequent clients may dislike or be allergic to them. More importantly, stray animals become dependent on food given to them during the summer season and may suffer during the winter months when there are no tourists to feed them.

**MONEY AND ATMS**

The local currency is of course the Euro. ATMs are available in the main towns and larger resorts. Credit cards are now widely accepted on Kefalonia.

**WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU NEED A DOCTOR?**

Should you need healthcare during you holiday do not worry, you will be in good hands. Most local doctors speak English. The general hospital is in Argostoli which has a 24 hour accident and emergency service. There are also some private clinics and although you pay for their service your travel insurance will usually cover the costs.

If you need a doctor please refer to the emergency numbers at the beginning of this book.
**Kefalonia and the Roads**

Greek roads have improved over the years and pot-holes are no longer quite so plentiful, although they do still exist, especially on the smaller roads. However, there can be obstructions on the road due to falling rocks where the roads cut through mountainous areas and you may also encounter some slippery areas where the roads are lined by olive trees - olives tend to fall onto the tarmac to be squashed by your rental Suzuki Jeep's tyres, ensuring that only the finest quality cold-pressed extra virgin olive oil is drizzled in your path! Watch out as this can make for a very slippery drive.

**Do Not Worry**

With extra care and respect for other road users your driving experience here will be a delight. Around a corner you might encounter a flock of sheep or goats or even a donkey, but you will almost certainly find breathtaking view. Take a turn off the main roads and go exploring, search for a tiny cove or traditional hamlet. You may get slightly mislaid, but you won’t get completely lost, Kefalonia isn’t big enough for that!

**Driving Licence**

When driving your rental car, it is necessary to carry your driving licence and car rental contract at all times. If you do not have a new 'photo' version, then we recommend you carry your passport as well.

**Drink Driving Laws**

The laws governing drink-driving are similar to those in much of Europe, and the maximum legal blood alcohol concentration limit when driving is 0.05%, somewhat stricter than in the UK where it is 0.08%.

**Water**

The water supply to your villa is usually supplied from local mains:

**Local Mains:**

The local water supply is usually of high quality as it comes directly from the mountain (usually from a bore hole). However, the mineral content might be too high for delicate tummies, especially young children.

**A Sterna:**

Some villas and apartments are sensibly built with an underground ‘sterna’. These store rainwater that has been collected from the roof during the winter months and is usually located under your villa. Consequently, it may be unwise to drink, although washing your hair with the water will leave it incredibly soft. If the sterna runs dry water often has to be trucked in at great expense to the owner. Therefore, during your stay, please:

- Do not water the garden without the owner’s permission
- Make sure taps are not left running
- Where possible take showers rather than a bath

**No Water?**

If there is a power cut you may find your water supply goes off as most water is pumped. There are also occasionally water cuts, although these rarely last for more than an hour or so.

**Bottled Water**

Generally, you should not have a problem drinking the local mains water, but to be on the safe side we would recommend drinking bottled water.
Argostoli is the capital of Kefalonia and the island's main working port with a natural harbour. It is on the east coast of a peninsula, surrounded by wooded mountains, and an ideal base from which to explore the island. There is a very attractive cobbled promenade fringed with palm trees along the harbour in Argostoli. Here, in the early morning, you can see the local fishermen bringing in their catch and if you are really lucky you can sometimes see a sea turtle near the fishing boats. In the evenings this is a favourite place to stroll. Where the promenade ends there is a permanent vegetable market of local produce and a selection of cafes and small tavernas which are ideal for an ouzo and some mezes.

Argostoli main square is lined with cafe bars and restaurants and in the summer the square attracts children who gather here to play while their parents drink coffee in nearby cafes. The Greek children stay up very late in the summer. It's also the place for feast days and festivals with parades and local bands. Traditionally, the town square was used for promenading but nowadays the promenading tends to centre around the area of Lithostroto. In the corner of the square sits a statue of Panagis Vallianou, the benefactor after which the square (Platia Vallianou) is named. He was a famous philanthropist having donated the money for many buildings including the hospital.

Kabanas Square is the square of the bell-tower. You can admire a panoramic view of Argostoli from the top of the bell-tower and see a photo-exhibition concerning the tower and Lithostroto (the pedestrian) street and Argostoli before the earthquake of 1953. Here you will find 'The Bells', which is a traditional cafe with a difference. The Cafe belongs to the 'ROTA' Cooperative which as part of the EU Initiative 'Employment Horizon' and employs people with mental health problems. In their shop you can buy products of the cooperative such as scented herbs and locally made sweets. Service is always friendly and there are some children's rides in the square which take 50 cents and 1 Euro coins.

There is a wide choice of shops, cafes and tavernas in Argostoli. The shops stay open late on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays and in high season Argostoli gets busier by night than by day. Night-life is centred around the main square and along the pedestrian Lithostroto. During the winter months Argostoli is the centre of activity on the island and therefore has a lively atmosphere year round.

The beautiful architecture of Argostoli was severely damaged in the 1953 earthquake losing most of its Venetian architecture. The town was rebuilt soon after, following the original street layout and is continually under improvement and expansion with the addition of buildings following the traditional style as well as some more elaborate and contemporary constructions.

There is a beach in Argostoli near the small Marina near the taverna Maistrato which is at the start of the Fanari Road leading to Lassi. Along this road are some small sandy covers with more impressive beaches to be found at Kalamia, Gradakia, Palio Stafida, Makris Yialos and Platis Yialos in Lassi resort.
The Drapano bridge, also known as the De Bosset Causeway, is the 900 metres long stone bridge from Argostoli to Drapano, which was constructed in 1813 during the administration of the Swiss de Bosset, who was in the service of the British army. The bridge was constructed to enable villagers to communicate more easily with the island's capital. The original structure was predominately made of wood. In 1842 the bridge was remodelled by the then Resident, Baron Everton and built with hard stone giving it the shape we see today. Since then the bridge has been partially rebuilt with arches of concrete construction. The bridge is not only a landmark but a historical monument to the period of British rule between 1809 and 1864. The symmetrical obelisk, half way along the causeway has seen a change in inscription according to different periods of rule. Originally dedicated to the glory of the British Empire, the disappearance of its inscribed plaque coincided with the end of British rule! The bridge has been pedestrianised since 2005 so that traffic destined for the north of the island must now take the longer route around the lagoon.

Recent development of the Koutavos lagoon area has made walkways around the lagoon and the inaccessible bird island has become a bird sanctuary. Photos and information about the birds can be found near the lagoon.
The picturesque fishing village of Fiscardo is a beautiful spot on the northern coast of Kefalonia about 50 kms from Argostoli. It is set among rugged hills, cypress trees and olive groves. The small working harbour lined with restaurants, cafes and bars is overlooked by colourful traditional houses offering wonderful views across the water to the neighbouring islands of Ithaka and Lefkas. Colourful local fishing boats line the quayside making room for the visiting yachts during the summer months. With stunning scenery, a wonderful atmosphere, easy access to local islands and an abundance of restaurants and cafes, Fiscardo is a great place to visit or stay.

The village itself has a doctor’s surgery, bakery, bank, mini-markets and plenty of tavernas. In the immediate surrounding area there are wonderful walks, some of which have been planned by the local environmental group. Hiring a motor-boat for a few days is a pleasant change from driving and is the best way to find some otherwise inaccessible and secluded beaches. There are daily cruises to the nearby islands of Lefkas, Meganissi, Skorpios and Ithaca.

This picturesque seaside settlement took its name from the Norman pirate Roberto Guiscardo who died there in 1085. The Venetians established their rule in Kefalonia during the middle of the 17th century and after 1700 Fiscardo became the commercial harbour to the whole Erissos area. Although the 1953 earthquake destroyed much of the Ionian islands, the village of Fiscardo stayed almost intact and the village retains many original Venetian built buildings from the 18th century. With foresight the island’s governors issued strict building regulations to maintain the elegance of the Venetian architecture which lines Fiscardo’s deep horseshoe harbour.

The 16th century remains of the old lighthouse of Fiscardo, built by the Venetians is one of its famous landmarks. It has been inactive since 1892. The lighthouse measures approximately 6 meters (20 ft) round the masonry tower. Adjacent to the lighthouse is a single storey lighthouse-keeper’s house which dates from the 19th century. It is actually possible (but not advisable) to climb the tower. It is likely that the British refurbished the lighthouse during their administration of the Ionian Islands between 1809 and 1864. The site is open for visitors but explore with care.

Take a cruise from the port of Fiscardo for a day’s excursion to one of the nearby islands. Cruises visit the ports of Frikes and Vathy on the island of Ithaca and there are day cruises to Lefkas taking in the Onassis island of Skorpios and Meganissi island. In high season the cruise boats tend to get packed. A more exclusive cruise runs daily in a converted caique with just 17 passengers which is operated and guided by a marine biologist who will introduce you to an octopus but serve vegetarian pasta for lunch! Snorkeling equipment is provided and advance booking is recommended.
Situated 7 km north of Sami on the east coast of Kefalonia and 30 kms from Argostoli, Aghia Efimia is a very pretty fishing village with a well sheltered harbour. It is a popular stop for the yachting flotillas which cruise the Ionian islands and has a number of excellent waterside cafes and tavernas around the harbour. Lots of small pebble beaches are scattered around this area and the famous Myrtos beach is about 20 minutes drive away. Aghia Efimia was once one of the island’s more important centres of trade with stately homes and mansions. However the whole village was destroyed in the 1953 earthquake and completely rebuilt with help from the French. The Greek shipping magnate Gerassimos Agoudimos has an elegant home in the heart of Aghia Efimia which he uses for his summer vacations. Agoudimos Lines operates ferry services linking up Albania, Italy and Greece and runs one of the local services from the port of Sami to Patras on the Greek mainland. Aghia Efimia exudes an atmosphere of traditional Greek hospitality where visitors are welcomed back as friends. The local harbour is lined with restaurants, tavernas and bars which reflect an uncommercialised Greek ambience rather than tourist-inspired catering. You will find some of the best food on the island as well as traditionally wood-fired bread from the local bakery. With the most captivating views of the island of Ithaca, watching the sun go down is one of the favourite pastimes along the quayside, making it a wonderful setting, among the numerous waterfront cafes and bars, to relax and completely unwind.

Beaches in the region from Aghia Efimia south to Sami are made up of white pebbles. In the main town of Aghia Efimia the white pebble beach leads gently down to the warm sea for perfect swimming near a motor-boat jetty. There is a new walkway beyond the harbour lined with benches for people to admire the stunning vista across to the island of Ithaca. Below this there are some small pebbly coves and a short stroll from here brings you to the main part of Paradise Beach which is accessed by some steps. Along the coastal road south towards Karavomylos there is a sprinkling of white pebble coves which all share the same incredibly crystal clear water and wonderful views across to neighboring Ithaca. Some of these beaches can be reached from the road whilst others can be reached if you hire a motor-boat from Aghia Efimia. None of the beaches have any facilities such as loungers and umbrellas for rent so you are advised to take anything you need with you - especially bottled water. Aghia Paraskevi is a pebbly beach in the area which is situated close to a cafe bar with gardens almost down to the sea. Here you can hire a deckchair for more comfortable relaxation.
The tiny, secluded village of Assos is a romantic setting and perhaps the most beautiful location on the island of Kefalonia. The Assos peninsula is on the west coast of the island with the village nestling in its horse-shoe shaped harbour. The whole area is surrounded by beautiful coastal scenery of dramatic white rocks and cobalt sea with hillsides covered in forests of cypress and pine. Dominating the entire area are the remains of a Venetian fortress high up on the imposing peninsula. The charming village of Assos is simple and rustic with a population of about 100 inhabitants. It also contains some fine examples of Venetian architecture commonly found on Kefalonia before the 1953 earthquake.

As you enter the village there is a small, shady, pebble beach offering clear waters and views across the bay. The town beach is in the centre of Assos. Along the shoreline is a selection of cafes and tavernas.

In Assos village most of the tavernas are to be found lining the harbour and on the small main street of Assos. A couple are just off the main street on the road leading up to the hillsides and out of Assos. On the hillsides, dining with a super sunset can be very romantic.

For those staying in Assos, the evenings are very special. After admiring incredible sunsets, there is a choice of local tavernas where you can spend your evening. The atmosphere is very safe and friendly and many people return to Assos every year to meet up again with the friendly locals. There are no discos, nightclubs or noisy bars in Assos but there are cafe/bars where you can enjoy a drink in the company of fellow travellers and locals alike.

The history of the castle of Assos began in 1584 when the rocky promontory of Assos, a naturally impregnable location, was selected and 2000 metres of walls were built to follow the contours of the terrain forming one of the most famous landmarks on Kefalonia. The remains of the castle within, still remain abandoned and uninhabited in a place of scenic beauty, well worth exploring. There is a long, steep and winding track which takes you up to the castle so you are advised to walk in the cool of the day and take water with you.

Before the war and the 1953 earthquake, the locals produced wine and cereals and a testament to their hard work and productivity can be seen in the abandoned vineyards on the terraced hillsides which slope down towards Assos. Nowadays the income in the area comes mainly from tourism and real estate.
Katelios is a seaside village with a sand and shingle beach and is 32 km from the island’s capital of Argostoli. Katelios is famous for its fresh fish tavernas and if you like fishing, you can catch your own! This rural setting is a paradise for lovers of nature so if you enjoy walking, discovering rare plants and birds, then wear some comfortable shoes and follow the local footpaths. There is much of interest to explore locally - from the local wine estate in Mavrata famous for its Robolla, the Sissia Monastery and church of the Virgin of the Snakes, which are all fairly local. The location of Katelios is very un-commercialised, the largest number of visitors being the loggerhead turtles. If you are interested in the protection of the caretta caretta turtles, who love the sandy beaches in the area, take a visit to the Katelios Environmental group, who have set up a small museum and information centre. The local bus service runs from Katelios to Skala and along the coastal road to Poros or in the other direction to Argostoli.

Whether you want a beachside snack or a full lobster meal there is a great choice of places to eat in Katelios. In the Ag Barbara beach area you will find a few snack bars. At the other end of the coast you will find a good selection of fish tavernas near the small marina at Katelios. From the village take the road leading out towards Argostoli and a whole new selection of bars and tavernas is on offer.

Lourdas

When describing the resort of Lourdas, it is an area of steep hillside, which ends in a lovely beach of course pale sand. The resort of Lourdas can refer to any part of the region from the village of Vlachata, starting on the main Argostoli to Poros road and winding down through a rural landscape. This area is dotted with private and tourist accommodation, shops and tavernas to the main village of Lourdata with its natural spring, many restaurants, tavernas and cafes. Lourdas Bay is one of the largest bays of Kefalonia and is fringed by over two miles of sand and pebble beach. It is a wonderful place for walkers and hikers. With the backdrop of the pine forest and cypress trees of Mount Ainos, this makes a wonderful walk through the local village and down to the beach for swimming, in the amazingly blue sea. The few tavernas situated by the beach at Lourdas, offer locally caught fish and the vegetables are grown on their own plots of fertile land, alongside the beach.

Trapezaki

Trapezaki is a village in a rural setting on a hillside close to Lourdas. There are only a few tavernas and a couple of mini-markets in the area. The nearest village with supplies and bakery is a few minutes' drive away at Mousata. The resort of Lourdas has a greater selection of amenities. It is a beautiful stretch of countryside and perfect for rambling. Walkers will enjoy rambling through the countryside and finding the local tracks, which take you to either Karavados and the beach at Aghios Thomas or along the road to the village of Lourdata.

At the far end of the main Trapezaki beach, close to Lourdas, is the stretch of coastline known as Lithero. Here you will find a peaceful stretch of sandy beach with a local taverna. A short walk along this beach brings you to the busier beach of Lourdas.
Lixouri and the Pali Peninsula

Lixouri is the second largest town on Kefalonia and is the capital of the Pali peninsula, which is often called the Lixouri peninsula. When people refer to Lixouri, they may mean the town or the area in general. To reach Lixouri you can either drive around the bay of Argostoli or take the local ferry, which takes about 25 minutes from the port of Argostoli. Most of the Pali peninsula is agricultural, with numerous vineyards, fruit orchards, olive groves, large market gardens and herds of goats and sheep.

About 2 km south of the town of Lixouri you will find the sandy beach of Lepeda. The beach has clean golden sands and an old monastery dedicated to Agia Paraskevi. Behind this, is an old cave with an ancient tradition. According to local folklore the water which drips from the walls of this cave can cure eye infections. The main road going south will take you to the fishing village of Mihalitsata, which is a small village on the top of a hill, with lovely views over the bay and the coastline opposite. In the distance lies Vardiani, the little island at the entrance of the bay. The next villages are Soularis and Mantzavinata, before the road leads to the most famous beach of Xi known for its red sand and clay cliffs. Where Xi beach ends, the beach of Mega Lakkos begins. From Xi beach you can take a rowing boat to Vardiania island which is 500 metres away. The main road above here will take you through Vouni to Havriata, a pretty village known as the balcony of the Ionian due to the panoramic view of the sea and the fertile green valley of moshato grape vineyards. About 1 km further on the road forks left and it is around 7 kms to the south west coast where the 18th century Kipouria monastery can be found on the edge of a vertical precipice.

Some of the villages on the Pali peninsula have remained unchanged for years reflecting a more traditional Greece than the rest of Kefalonia island. Visit Kaminarata village where you can try a local taverna for mezes, home-made wine, wonderful views and laid back hospitality. Each of the villages has its own character. The pretty village of Rifi is great for photos. The village of Agia Thekla has two churches worth visiting and wonderful views. In the south of the peninsula, the village of Mantzavinata is home of the Vitoratos winery. Nearby is the village of Vouni home of the Foivos winery.

In low season the ferry runs every hour on the half hour from Argostoli and every hour on the hour from Lixouri. In peak season the service is more frequent. To be sure of the timetable - see the notice-board at the ferry-port.

The famous landmark statue of Andreas Laskaratos centrally positioned in Lixouri port was sculpted in bronze in 1961 by Thanasis Aparti.

Andreas Laskaratos was born in Lixouri in May 1811 and was educated in Argostoli. He sought the company of great poets such as Lord Byron who stayed on Kefalonia and in Corfu the Greek poets Andreas Kalvo and Dionysius Solomos. Laskaratos was born at a time when the island of Kefalonia was moving away from the French towards Britain as its protectorate.

A teacher in Greek and Italian and a controversial poet, Andreas Laskaratos published 'The Mysteries of Kefalonia' in 1856 and was excommunicated by the Orthodox Church as he directed some of his satire at the founding members of the church. Having twice been excommunicated the poet was also imprisoned for his published political views and his newspaper banned. Slowly his works became accepted and one year before he died his excommunication was lifted and he was reunited with the Greek Orthodox Church.
Lakes and Caves

The Cave of Melissani

This is one of the most significant sights on the island. According to mythology, caves have always been associated with the divine due to their enclosed beauty with the result that they were the most suitable places for religious ceremonies. Melissani has its own myths; the locals believe it is named after a shepherdess called Melisanthe who was looking for her lost sheep and fell into the lake and drowned. Another myth refers to the nymph Melissani who committed suicide in the Lake because Pan would not reciprocate her love. The dolphins are also associated with this myth, having been used by the nymph to carry messages to her beloved, they turned into stone in the cave after her demise. You can quite clearly see the shapes of dolphins in the stalactites within the cave.

Shaped like the letter B, the cave is 40 metres wide and 36 metres high and 3.5 metres long. The subterranean lake has water from 20 to 30 metres in depth due to the collapse of a part of the roof. A tunnel has been made and small boats carry visitors to admire the spectacular sight of the stalactites and the changing colours of the water. The sun’s rays create exquisite colour combinations in the transparent waters of the Lake. Below the calm surface of the lake gushing springs replenish the supply of water. There is a flight of steps before the tunnel and a few steps down to the waiting rowing boats. Even if you don’t want to take the tour of the lake by rowing boat and perhaps just want to take photographs, an entry ticket has to be purchased before entering the tunnel down to Melisani lake.

Some ancient artifacts have been found in the cave which date back to the post classical and early Hellenistic periods (3rd and 4th century BC). The remnants of holy rituals from a period when faith was linked to Mother Earth, such as horns, tiles and slates can be found in the Argostoli museum.

Melisani Lake is open from Easter to the end of October. There is a small cafe and gift shop and entry tickets can be purchased at the gates to the tunnel. Visitors can use this as a ‘comfort stop’ as there are wc facilities housed in a separate building.

Drogarati Caves

Speleologists say that the cave is 150 million years old. Despite partial damage by earthquakes, the polychrome stalactites hanging from the roof like curtains still remain in the large underground chamber which is 37 meteres below ground. As water filters through, drops slowly solidify. The red coloured formations are from the iron content in the rock and the white from chalk and limestone. The second part of the cave is accessible for tourists and is sometimes used for cultural events. A right hand corridor leads first to the Royal Balcony with its translucent stalagmites. From there you can see the Chamber of Exaltation with its marvelous acoustics from above. This area can accommodate an audience of 500. Turning back into the corridor you walk between tall multi-coloured columns and a small lake. To the right is a knot of stalagmites on the higher level which is reserved for performers. There is a spectacular view from the top or balcony of the cave. Musicians can be seated along the cavity of a rock. The temperature is at a constant of 18 degrees C throughout the year and there is a plentiful supply of oxygen.
Katavothres and Karavomilos

The famous Katavothres (swallow-holes) are an extremely rare geological phenomenon. No one knows of any other place where these can be found. Sea water flows into sink holes and disappears. Back in 1963 there was an investigation by Austrian geomorphologists using purple dye in the water to find that it travelled through underground rivers, mixing with rain water and ending up in Melissani Lake 15 kilometers away. The water then rushes into the sea at the nearby village of Karavomilos, taking two weeks to make the journey across the island.

Kefalonia Castles

Assos Castle

Situated on the north west coast of the island 36 kms north of Argostoli, the Assos fortress is the larger of the two castles on Kefalonia and is one of the largest castles in Greece. Its 2000 metres of walls follow the contours of the terrain and form an irregular rectangle, reinforced at five points by bastions, virtually running around the whole circumference of the Assos peninsula.

Building commenced in 1593 under the supervision of Ambrosius Cornelius, as the sign outside the main gate shows. Petitions had been made by the Kefalonians to the Venetian Senate for the foundation of a new fortress in 1584 as the castle of Saint George could not defend the whole island. This coincided with the more ambitious plans of Venice for protecting territories in the East. They intended to found a city within the castle and move their administration from Saint George’s.

Assos has remained throughout history as a small town confined to the Borgo near its little harbour with its inhabitants now amounting to around 100 people. Having laid out the interior of the castle to provide accommodation for islanders living nearby, they were reluctant to move within its walls. Although this huge, strong castle was built on a naturally impregnable peninsula, its location also meant that under attack, its vital supplies could also be cut off. The grander city plans were scaled down and Assos became the capital of the northern part of Kefalonia and a building was constructed to serve the needs of the local government.

A major problem for the fortress was the lack of water as there was no natural spring in the area so large water tanks were built.

Until 1797 at the end of the Venetian rule in Kefalonia the castle continued as the seat of a Venetian Proveditore and from 1797 to 1799 under the rule of the French.

In 1822 about 1700 people came from Souli to stay in the Assos fortress and the whole area became a quarantine area resulting in a site within the fortress named Souli. After the union of the seven Ionian islands with the rest of Greece in 1865 there remained a small community in Assos.

After the war a prison farm was set up for political prisoners who made terraces for their vineyards and crops of cereal. The prison was in use until 1953. The latest inhabitants lived within the castle walls up until the late sixties. They were known as the Kastrini people and were groups of large families who
lived from cultivating olives and grapes. The Kastro housed more than double the residents of today's village of Assos with around 200 houses as well as many public buildings.

**Monasteries and Churches of Kefalonia**

**Saint Andreas Monastery**

The monastery was founded during the Byzantine era and re-established in 1579 when three local spiritual sisters Benedict, Leondia and Magdalen bought the land where the chapel of the Apostle Andrew once stood and started a small nunnery. In 1639 the Greek Romanian princess Roxane, renamed nun Romila, started her monastic life. The wealthy princess dedicated a large amount of money to the monastery and brought a valuable spiritual treasure from Mount Athos. This was the Holy remains of the right foot (sole) of Apostle Andrew, with the hole from the crucifixion of the Saint.

The monastery also has an ecclesiastical Byzantine museum founded in 1988 which is located in the old church which was the only building preserved from the 1953 earthquake. The art treasures found there date between 1300-1900 AD. Besides the existing wall paintings and icons found in the monastery, others have been transferred to the museum from abandoned churches all over Kefalonia.

In the early 19th century during the British rule there was conflict between the nuns and the British who temporarily interrupted the divine services at the Monastery and covered their beautiful frescoes with asbestos in 1832 because the Monastery - a Greek Orthodox epicentre - had a negative attitude towards the British rule. Now the treasures of the Monastery and icons are displayed with pride and among them is a painting of the nun Romila with her parents.

In the Nunnery solemn vigils are performed continuously and Holy Mass takes place every Sunday. The nuns spend the rest of their time making bishops' officiating robes, handicrafts and gardening. The Nunnery celebrates twice a year - on the Friday after Easter and on 30th November which is the feast day of Saint Apostle Andrew.

The Monastery is open for visits from 07.00 to 14.00 and from 17.00 to 21.00

Mr Constantine Staveris is Director of the Museum Tel 26710 69398

**Kipouria Monastery**

The Monastery was founded in 1750 by the archbishop of Paxi, Chrisanthos Petropoulos and it is dedicated to the Annunciation of the Virgin. It is called the Monastery of Kipouria due to the many gardens looked after by the holy fathers to be self-sufficient.

In 1915 it was bombarded by the French when, during a misty day, the cruiser mistook the chimney for the enemy's ship. The Monastery was further destroyed by the 1953 earthquake. Over the last 15 years the remaining buildings have been rebuilt by the only monk who lives at the Monastery.
In the church you can see the miraculous icon of Annunciation and the sculls of the Monastery founders. The last remaining monk at Kipouia is father Eusevios who lives at the monastery and since the early 1990’s has been dedicated to rebuilding the monastery buildings.

The main feast days at the Kipouria Monastery are 25 March and 14 September. Visitors are welcome and the sea views with rugged coastline and steep white rocks beneath are breathtaking and the sunset is magical. The best views are from the Monastery courtyard but if the Monastery is closed, there are benches outside making an ideal place for a stop while touring the Pali peninsula. If when you arrive at the gate it appears closed - check that it is not locked - then just let yourself in. You will need the assistance of the resident monk to open the chapel within the monastery but you can wander around the monastery grounds.

**Cave and church of St Gerassimos in Lassi**

It is often overlooked that Saint Gerassimos stayed in a hillside cave in Lassi on his arrival on the island in 1555 after leaving the island of Zakynthos where he had spent five years living as a hermit. From the age of 46 until he was 51 years old, the saint lived in a small cave in Lassi. The saint wished to live as a hermit craved peace and quiet but found that he was disturbed by a constant stream of visitors. This combined with the villagers begging him to establish a nunnery for their unmarried daughters, caused him to move to the Omala plain in 1560 where he rebuilt a ruined church.

St. Gerassimos’s former home was a cave in Lassi. on the north side of the cave there is a natural opening measuring 30 cm by 30 cm giving the cave some natural light and a sea view. The cave has been incorporated into a small but beautifully kept church that constitutes one of the buildings of a small hermitage attached to the monastery of St Gerassimos in Omala. From the centre of Lassi, take the steep and winding hillside road which is signposted and you will find the church on your right.

The church is open from 0700 to 1300 and from 1500 to 2100.

**British Cemetery**

The British Cemetery is situated at the north end of the Drapano bridge on the road to Lixouri outside of Argostoli. It is the final resting place for over 200 British Servicemen and their families and for a few civilians. Recorded burials go back to 1681. A former British army officer, Roy Harrison, moved to Kefalonia in 1997 and the following year he was offered a contract by the War Graves Commission to care for the cemetery.
Dating back to 1560 the beachside monastery was destroyed in the 1953 earthquake. After the earthquake, some of the monastery was salvaged and preserved and a new church was built by the old site, virtually on the red sand beach of Lepeda just two kms outside Lixouri town. The cave was used as a hermitage for monks in 1668 and some ruins of this still remain today.

**SAINT GERASSIMOS MONASTERY**

Saint Gerassimos was ordained a Monk at Mt Athos, went to Jerusalem for 12 years, spent some time in Crete and Zakynthos and in 1555 arrived on Kefalonia. He spent his first 5 years in a cave in Lassi. Saint Gerasimos' first Kefalonia hermitage is signposted from the main Lassi road and you will find a small church dedicated to the saint half way up the hill overlooking Lassi which incorporates the cave which has a natural hole offering daylight and a sea view!

In 1560 he moved to the Omala valley where he rebuilt the country chapel and founded a nunnery naming it 'New Jerusalem'. His favourite saying was 'Children be peaceful with yourselves and don't think high' Saint Gerasimos was known as a teacher, a healer and a water diviner. He was a man who sought peace by living in a cave and worked for his fellow man establishing many wells in the area of the Monastery. The islanders soon started to call their children Gerasimos (Makis for short) in honour of this lovely man and his remains are still cherished with pilgrims flocking from all over Greece to see them.

Today the Saint's relics are kept in a glass relic-case within a magnificent silver sarcophagus which is placed above the Saint's tomb. The small church of Saint Gerasimos has been built above the tomb and the cave where he lived. This hermitage can be reached by climbing down a 3 metre high ladder. The Saint planted some plane trees which are still preserved in the Monastery as well as the three large wells and 37 smaller ones he opened and the threshing fields that he worked to bring in funds for the Monastery. A new and very magnificent church of the Saint was completed in 1992 and is also within the Monastery grounds.

There are 5 feast days but the main ones are on 16th August and 20th October when the Saint's remains are brought out and carried in procession to the plane trees. Solemn vigil Holy Mass is performed in the Monastery from 03.00 to 07.00 a.m. You can visit the Monastery daily from 04.00 to 13.00 and from 17.00 to 21.00.

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**Do's and Don'ts**

A word of warning. Strictly no cameras in Greek Orthodox churches and out of respect please cover your shoulders and legs - beach attire should stay at the beach! Shorts are acceptable, but you must wear at least a T-shirt, and for the girls it is essential to have shoulders covered.
EXPLORING KEFALONIA

There are various ways to get around the island. Hire a car or moped, take a local bus, an excursion by coach, a taxi or even a boat taxi. With such beautiful views and fabulous sensation of cool air blowing gently over you, renting a motor boat can be the experience of your holiday, and no licence is required. However, you may prefer to remain on terra firma, and explore Kefalonia on land. Whatever your preference may be, here are some details of the various ways to see the beautiful island of Kefalonia.

KEFALONIA AND THE ROADS

Kefalonia’s roads can be a little challenging at times, especially some of the smaller ones that, even in these enlightened times, are not always devoid of potholes and loose gravel. Another hazard is that of herds of goats and sheep as well as stray animals that find themselves on the road. Driving along the narrow coastal roads in the north you may also find small boulders that have fallen from the cliffs above. Jeep hire is recommended if you really want to get off the beaten track.

CAR HIRE AND RENTAL

A hire car really is the most flexible way to get out and about, explore the inland villages, be enchanted by the wonderful views and get to the most beautiful of beaches.

CAR RENTAL – WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- The minimum rental period is usually 3 days. Longer rental periods attract a more advantageous daily rate.
- Do check insurance details. Some companies demand high excesses and it is not usual to offer cover for damage to the underside of the vehicle or tyres.
- If you have forgotten to bring your driving license with you, contact the local Agni coordinator who may be able to assist in getting a copy faxed over so that you can hire a car.
- As with most European countries, you drive on the right in Kefalonia, and cars are left hand drive.
**Other forms of transport**

**Mopeds, scooters and quadbikes**
If you decide to rent a moped or bike, please be very careful. As well as being an essential safety precaution, crash helmets are in fact a legal requirement when riding, despite the fact that many locals do not seem to wear them. Reputable hirers will always include a helmet as standard, so do wear it.

**Local buses**
Local buses are both an experience and inexpensive way to travel. However, bus timetables are usually only available at the bus station. The best way is to ask a local, they are normally happy to share their years of experiencing odd times and strange bus stop locations!

**Taxis**
These are relatively inexpensive methods of transport and you will find the drivers are both courteous and careful. It is quite acceptable to ask for and agree the price to your destination before setting off. Please note that when you telephone for a taxi to collect you they will put the clock on as they leave the taxi station, not when they collect you. There are additional charges for late night service and luggage handling.

**Bicycles**
Bicycles are available for hire from Argostoli.

**Boat and coach excursions**
On Kefalonia there are organized coach trips around the island as well as coach and ferry trips to Ithaca which are available in the south of the island only. There are boat trips from Kefalonia to the neighbouring islands of Ithaca and Lefkas. If you are unsure about driving during your stay these can be an enjoyable alternative.
Kefalonia Weather and When is The Best Time to Visit

May
Few visitors arrive earlier than May. This is partly due to the availability of flights and also because by then spring will really have sprung! The olive groves and roadside banks are carpeted with spring flowers, the weather just right for walking, and the fireflies will arrive to light your way at night. May is a magical month in Kefalonia.

June
Many people consider June to be the best time for visiting Kefalonia. Beaches and tavernas are starting to get busier but are not yet crowded. Beautiful warm days with temperatures reaching mid to high 20’s mean its warm enough to swim but not so hot as to be uncomfortable.

July
By July things are really hotting up for Kefalonia. The first two weeks see daytime temperatures of low to mid 30’s, often reaching the high 30s by the end of the month. Evenings are warm and there is rarely any rainfall.

August
Hot and busy, with families making the most of the long school holidays and sun worshippers coming to build up the tan. Temperatures have been known to get into the 40s, you might experience a tropic storm or two towards the end of the month that helps to clear the humidity.

September
Evenings are still warm but occasionally a jumper will be required late at night. The days are still hot but not stiflingly so. The beaches and resorts are getting quieter. The sea is warm.

October
The sun is now lower in the sky making crystal clear, light blue skies with warming rays. The landscape returns to its lush green state after the hot summer. Evenings can be cooler, with a jumper required for outside eating. Expect occasional rainfall, particularly towards the end of the month, these tend to be heavy but brief downpours.

Rain and Tropical Storms
Many comment on how green Kefalonia is compared to many 'summer' holiday destinations. Well it does rain occasionally! Rain in Kefalonia is not the light drizzle accompanied by days of low-lying grey cloud that many in Europe experience. When it rains, the heavens truly open, the lightning flashes, thunder rolls massively and a deluge inevitably follows!

Winter Months
This is only for those who like natural beauty and enjoy a mixture of less extreme weather conditions. Of course it rains in winter, as in any European country and the days are cooler and when winter really strikes it becomes cold. Kefalonia has snow on the peaks of Mount Ainos in the winter months. If you plan to visit during any of the winter months, accommodation must be chosen carefully and heating is essential. However the days can really be enjoyed, as when the sun does shine it can be beautifully warm and walking those hills is a real pleasure. The air is clear, the views spectacular and those beaches are all yours! It is also a great time to experience the real Kefalonia, and see what happens to the island when the seasonal visitors have gone home. Although the travel is a little more inconvenient (via Athens) it is well worth the effort and with a sensible outlook and good preparation for your visit, Kefalonia can be enjoyed as much as in the summertime.
Sampling the Local Cuisine

A Few Pointers
Before eating out in Greece, why not become familiar with a few of the local customs, the dishes available and how to enjoy Greek cuisine?

Greek Eating Places
Greek eating establishments vary enormously; with locals themselves considering the best places to be where the food is freshly cooked and plentiful. This is often where the setting or cuisine is not the fanciest, so it is not uncommon to find that the most popular eating places are in particularly remote locations, some of which bear an uncanny resemblance to someone’s living room! The combination of traditional cooking and outside influences has produced a huge variety of restaurants and tavernas in Greece. The following are just a few of the ones you will find on Kefalonia.

The most common and traditional Greek eating place is usually family-run and open all day.

Psaro Taverna
A fish taverna offering fresh fish and sometimes a few meat dishes. Usually the taverna will have their own 'dedicated' fisherman, sometimes this is the owner. The menu will always reflect what has been freshly caught.

Psistaria
These charcoal grill-room 'tavernas' are mostly found in the mountain villages and are often one of the most overlooked tourist 'experiences'. The service can be patchy, the presentation basic, but the taste and quality superb. They offer just a few starters and salads and many types of barbecued meats. Look out for 'Kokoretsi' - goat innards wrapped in intestine and gently grilled over charcoal – it is a truly delicious Greek delicacy, but not for the squeamish!

Pizzeria
It is not surprising to fine some great pizza houses on Kefalonia, considering the Italian influence. Many also serve traditional Greek dishes.

Snack Bars
Quick, easy and usually good value for money. Found in Kefalonia town and some of the more touristy resorts.

Souvlatzidika
Great fun! A sort of takeout Psistaria offering small souvlakis (kebabs) often made into 'gyros' by wrapping them in toasted pita bread with salad and tzatziki.

Zacharoplasteion
A cake and coffee shop, often combined with a bakery.
**Ouzeri**

A bar that offers a selection of 'mezes' to go with your drink. These can range from a few olives and a little feta cheese to a large platter of mixed starters.

**Kafeneion**

A meeting place mostly for the local male population who manage to spend a great deal of the day talking about politics and football!

**Timing**

Greeks do not expect quick service and often frown upon food that is too hot! Waiters will not rush you and will rarely deliver food in the same order as it was placed. Dishes sometimes arrive as and when they are ready - just sit back and relax and you will soon adjust to the Greek way of life!

**What to Eat**

Firstly, and maybe surprisingly, fish tends to be expensive. Prices are usually per kilo not per portion. When looking at the menu do not assume that everything listed will be available! The golden rule is that if the price has been removed then the dish is not on offer. Many establishments work on a 'seasonal availability' basis, as most produce is local. In some of the more traditional places, it is usual to go into the kitchen to be shown what is available; great for those who have trouble selecting from the menu. Greek menus by law have to be in Greek and English. Some of the translations may cause you some amusement.
STARTERS:

Taramasalata
Ta-ra-mo-sa-lata: A fish roe dip made with garlic, onion, breadcrumbs, olive oil and lemon juice. Homemade versions are light salmon in colour and a delight. If you are offered an artificial bright pink sludge, then it has been bought in; drink up and find somewhere else to eat!

Tzatziki
Tz-at-ziki: The famous yoghurt, cucumber and garlic dip. Scooped up with fresh bread, it makes a refreshing snack.

Dolmades
Dol-ma-thes: Vine leaves stuffed with rice or meat - normally served cold. Fresh ones are only available early in the season (May and June) when the vine leaves are fresh, otherwise they are tinned!

Tiropitta
Ti-ro-pi-tta: Filo pastry pies stuffed with feta cheese. These are an absolute delight. Also look out for Sp-ana-ko-pitta - which are the same but with a little spinach added.

Saganaki
Sag-an-aki: A hard Greek cheese which is battered and shallow fried. Served with a large chunk of lemon.

Gigantes
Gi-gan-tes: Large butter type beans, baked in a thick, seasoned, tomato, onion and garlic sauce.

Keftethes
Kef-teth-es: Fried meatballs with garlic and herbs.

Loukaniko
Lou-kan-iko: Spicy local sausages - usually grilled.
**Main Courses – Fish**

**Prawn Saganaki**
Prawn Sag-an-aki: a rich creamy dish with king-size prawns, feta cheese, tomato and a little garlic.

**Kalamari**

Ka-la-mari: Baby squid, usually fried with a dusting of flour, but better grilled. Fresh ones are normally only available when there is no moon as they are caught with the aid of a powerful 'gas lamp'. The light attracts them to the surface. Watching dozens of illuminated fishing boats bobbing along the coast on a dark summer’s night is quite magical.

**Octapothi**

Oc-ta-po-thi: Octopus often boiled and served in what the locals call a 'salad'. Actually these are small pieces in olive oil with no salad in sight! It is though very tasty, a little bit like chicken. Grilled is also excellent, but often quite expensive as it shrinks to a tiny size when cooked. The octopus is caught using a long pole with a few leaves attached to the end, plus a liberal sprinkling of hooks! The pole is prodded around the rocks to tempt the octopus to grab the leaves, a time consuming task.

**Atherina**

Ath-e-ri-na: Whitebait. Tiny fish that are fried and usually eaten whole.

**Marithes**

Ma-ri-thes: Sardine sized fish which are fried and yummy. Incidentally, sardines and many other fish also caught at night are not available when there is a full moon. The reason is that the fish can 'see' the nets and simply avoid them.
Main Courses – Meaty

Moussaka
Mou-sa-ka: (Notice there is no 'r' in the correct pronunciation and the accent is on the last 'a'.) Layers of fried aubergine, potato and minced meat (usually beef) topped with a creamy béchamel sauce.

Stifado
Stif-ath-o: A rich stew made with beef, veal or rabbit with red wine, baby onions and tomato. The meaty chunks are soft and tender and the baby onions go soft and sweet - to be eaten with lots of bread.

Sofrito
So-fri-to: Tender beef steak cooked in a garlic and wine sauce.

Main Courses - Vegetarian
For those preferring not to eat meat, then you will be pleased to know that you will not miss out. There is a wide range of tasty salads and vegetables available - although some will of course be seasonal. Look out for bean dishes such as fasolakia or gigantes. At Taverna Agni, we often suggest that vegetarians order a selection of starters as their whole meal. This way of eating is actually the 'Greek way'.

Generally in Greece, though mostly in the mountain villages, the idea of not eating meat is somewhat foreign and you may be encouraged to eat something that has 'just a little bit of meat' in it! Persevere and explain that eating meat is like going against your religion - it will work eventually.

Salads
Firstly, take note of the following. When you see the word salad in a Greek menu - it does not always mean what it says. It is taken from the French word: salade. For example 'Aubergine salad' is a creamy dip! A 'Russian salad' is potato and mayonnaise.

Xhoriatiki
Xho-ri-at-iki: A Greek salad. Literally translated means 'village salad' and includes tomatoes, cucumber, onion, lettuce or cabbage, topped with feta cheese, olives and sprinkled with dried herbs. There are many variations though - so expect anything!

Horta
Hor-ta: Wild bitter greens. Locals go mad for these dandelion looking weeds that are carefully collected, cleaned and then boiled. They look similar to spinach when cooked. Served with olive oil and lemon and sometimes new potatoes - well worth a try if you see it on a menu, but needs to be eaten with a meal.
**Desserts**
Tavernas in Greece do not automatically serve desserts or coffee - you normally have to ask. The following is often available, but a small platter of fruit is more usual Greek choice and often more refreshing.

**Baklava**
Bac-la-va: (As with Mou-sa-ka, there is no 'r' in the correct pronunciation and the accent is on the last 'a'.) Filo pastry layers with chopped walnuts, cinnamon and steeped in honey. Homemade versions are not too sweet and excellent, but bought in versions are not!

**Galactoboureko**
Ga-lacto-bou-reko: Milk custard pie with filo pastry and a little honey.

**Halva**
Ch-al-va: A very traditional sweet from the mainland, made with semolina, olive oil, almonds and a honey.

**Greek yoghurt**
Yoghurt: Greek yoghurt is thick and creamy and usually served with a little honey or fruit.
**Greek Wine**

**Greek Wine Classification**

VdT - Vin de Table
VdP - Vin de Payes
AO - Appellation of Origin

**Greek White Wines**

Modern Greek whites are fresh, fruity and very new world in style. Try some of the new 'zingy', dry Sauvignons.

**Greek Red Wines**

Many of the Greek reds are superb. Enjoy light Nemeas (even better chilled) or a bodied and chewy Merlots from Costas Lazarithis.

**Local Drinks**

**Metaxa Brandy**

The end to any meal in a Greek taverna is not complete without a Greek Brandy! Occasionally, it is disappointing to hear a request along the following lines: "It's time for an after dinner digestive. Do you have any proper brandies - not a Greek one?" Let us explain why Metaxa can be so highly rated.

Metaxa is distinguished as the most famous Greek spirit worldwide. It is misled as an actual brandy but in actual fact is something more. Thus, when we are talking about Metaxa we refer to this unique spirit and not to a brandy product. It was invented by a silk trader named Spiros Metaxas in 1888. He was from the Attica region - a province of Athens. The grapes Savatiano, Sultanina and Black Corinth are locally grown and form the basis of this spirit which is twice distilled and blended with aged Muscat wine from Samos, then blended with a secret botanical mix and aged in hand made oak casks. When served in a large brandy glass and warmed by the palm of your hand, the perfumed aroma is a truly intoxicating experience.

**How Many Stars?**

Metaxa is generally available in the following versions: Three Star, Five Star, Seven Star and Twelve Star. Each star represents a year that it has been aged in oak barrels for. Hence the Metaxa 5 star is at least 5 years old. Occasionally, you will find a Metaxa 'Private Reserve' which is at least 20 years old. There is no difference in terms of quality and production process between the different Metaxa stars, as in every family, age is the only uncommon characteristic. It is worth pointing out that other Metaxa products considered as 'collector items' are occasionally available, such as the 'Metaxa Grand Olympian Reserve', and 'Metaxa Golden Age'.
**Retsina**
Retsina is 'normal' wine that is often undrinkable or poor. It is transferred to barrels made from Cyprus wood - and left to mature. The resin seeps into the wine giving it its particular flavour. Great at lunchtime, takes some getting used to, but it is drinkable! Some locals add Sprite to their retsina - but they would not normally admit to it.

**Local wine**
Each Taverna usually has its own wine served by the kilo (equal to a litre). The taste and standard varies tremendously. Most often than not, it will be served in a metal carafe or jug - just enjoy!

**Beer**
For beer, think lager! Mythos, Amstel and Heineken are the locally made favourites.

**Ouzo**
Ouzo is a social drink that should not be drunk on its own but with friends, and preferably with a Meze. An Ouzo Meze usually consists of a small plate with a few olives, feta cheese, and local sausage, and if you are lucky some grilled Octopus. Picking at these nibbles helps keep the effects of the alcohol from overwhelming you and enables you to sit, drink and talk for hours in a profoundly calm state of mind where all is beautiful and life is fine. This not just a drink, but a part of Greek life!

If you do not like the taste of liquorice, then ouzo is not for you. Fennel extract is the main added ingredient. Ouzo is drunk with ice and water. When you add water, the ouzo turns a milky white. How much to pour in is a matter of taste, so when Ouzo is served, the water is always served separately, leaving the drinker to mix the ratio to their taste.

Occasionally, you will meet a taverna or kafenion owner who makes their own ouzo. Watch out! Although they call it ouzo, it is really 'raki' or 'tsipuro' and does not have that liquorice flavour one associates with ouzo. It is made in homemade stills and goes down smoothly, but its effects are rapid and powerful. One glass won't hurt, but two might kill you! Strangely, it is a drink that does not seem to travel and your desire for ouzo may soon stop the moment you step on the plane home!

**Greek Coffee and Frappe**
If you normally drink an espresso after a meal, then you must try Greek coffee. It is quite strong and served in a small cup. Remember, when you order it you need to indicate how much sugar should be used when making it: Sketo - none; Metrio - one sugar; Glyko - two sugars. Also, do not make the 'tourist' mistake of drinking the sludge at the bottom! Finally, ordering one Sketos, one Metrio and one Glyko at the same time for your table will really upset your waiter as each needs to be made separately!

**Frappe** Ice, cold frothy coffee - just try one on a warm summer morning. The best hangover cure yet!
Olive trees can hardly be missed on Kefalonia as they are everywhere! Olives flower during May and if this is the time when people who have hay-fever can suffer. During the summer months the olives slowly fatten. They start to turn green and depending on the variety, there are more than 300 hundred types, they will turn purple, then black. (And you thought that green olives were just unripe black ones!) Kefalonia mostly has the small black variety.

During October and November the olive nets are prepared. Olive groves only give fruit every two years. Now this may come as a surprise to you and it is certainly a little problematic. Nets from groves not giving fruit need to be moved to those that are - not an easy task.

Before setting the nets under the trees, the ground needs to be cleared of undergrowth. With Kefalonia's warm climate weeds and brambles thrive making the task of clearing difficult - often a petrol strimmer is employed rather than a traditional hand scythe.

The nets are laid under the trees. Each net is about 10m by 30m, making them awkward to position under the trees. They are sewn together using nails, twigs or large plastic pins. Usually the whole grove is covered with nets.

During December and until April, the olives slowly ripen and then drop. Every ten days or so during this period a visit to each grove is needed to collect the fallen olives. If they are left any longer, they start to shrivel and their oil becomes useless.

The olives are collected using a short stick with a nail or small hook in the end. Starting from the top of the grove, the stick is pressed into the net, turned 90 degrees and then lifted. This action of raising the net makes the olives run downwards. Once the olives start rolling, coupled with a swift wrist action, the olives can be gathered into small piles. The whole grove needs to be worked in this fashion.

Each pile of olives has to be sifted of leaves and twigs. Then using a traditional "couva" they are scooped up and put in to sacks, which then need to be carried back to the road. Often this is quite some distance. Even these days the steep slopes and remote locations mean that donkey power can be the ideal solution to moving these heavy sacks.

After being collected, most olives are pressed for their oil. The very best will be preserved in brine for eating whole. There is nothing finer than eating fresh bread and olive oil that you have just had pressed!
It’s All Greek to Me!
Although English is widely spoken here in Kefalonia, you may like to impress the locals by trying to speak their language. It’s fun and certainly appreciated. Here are a few words and phrases that you may find useful during your stay.

### The Alphabet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greek Letter</th>
<th>Sounds like</th>
<th>As in</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Αα</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>Alpha art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ββ</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>Vita vine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Γγ</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>Gamma game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Δδ</td>
<td>th</td>
<td>Delta this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Εε</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>Epsilon bet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ζζ</td>
<td>z</td>
<td>Zita zoo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ηη</td>
<td>ee</td>
<td>Eeta eat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Θθ</td>
<td>th</td>
<td>Theeta thick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ιι</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>Iota fit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Κκ</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>Kappa key</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Λλ</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>Lamda lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Μμ</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>Mi me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Νν</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>Ni neat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ξξ</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Ksi taxi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Οο</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>Omikron olive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ππ</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>Pi peat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ρρ</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>Ro road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Σσ</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>Sigma signal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ττ</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>Taf tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Υυ</td>
<td>ee</td>
<td>Ipsilon eel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Φφ</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>Fi fairy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Χχ</td>
<td>ch</td>
<td>Chi loch (Scottish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ψψ</td>
<td>ps</td>
<td>Psi maps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ωω</td>
<td>aw</td>
<td>Omega port</td>
</tr>
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</table>
**Some useful words and phrases:**

### Numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>One, two, three ...</th>
<th>One, two, three ...</th>
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<tr>
<td>Zero</td>
<td>Μηδεν</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ενα</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Δυο</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Τρια</td>
</tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Τεσσερα</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Δεκα</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Δωδεκα</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Δεκατρια</td>
</tr>
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<td>Δεκατεσσερα</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Δεκαπεντε</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Δεκαεξι</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Δεκαεφτα</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Δεκαοχτο</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Δεκαεννια</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Εικοσι</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>Εικοσι ενα</td>
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<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Τριαντα</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>Τριαντα ενα</td>
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<td>90</td>
<td>Εννενηντα</td>
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<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>Εκατο</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>Διακοσια</td>
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<tr>
<td>300</td>
<td>Τριακοσια</td>
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<tr>
<td>400</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>500</td>
<td>Πεντακοσια</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000</td>
<td>Χιλια</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*What time is it?*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What time is it?</th>
<th>Ti ora ine?</th>
<th>Τι ώρα είναι;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It's nine o'clock</td>
<td>Πέντε πέντε</td>
<td>Πέντε πέντε</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- five past ten</td>
<td>Είναι δέκα και μεντέ</td>
<td>Είναι δέκα και μεντέ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a quarter past 11</td>
<td>Είναι εντεκα και τεταρτο</td>
<td>Είναι εντεκα και τεταρτο</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- twenty past 12</td>
<td>Είναι δώδεκα και είκοσι</td>
<td>Είναι δώδεκα και είκοσι</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- half past 1</td>
<td>Είναι μισή</td>
<td>Είναι μισή</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a quarter to 4</td>
<td>Είναι τρεις και ικοσι πεντε</td>
<td>Είναι τρεις και ικοσι πεντε</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- midnight</td>
<td>Είναι μεσανυχτά</td>
<td>Είναι μεσανυχτά</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half an hour</td>
<td>Μισή ώρα</td>
<td>Μισή ώρα</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What time?</td>
<td>Τι ώρα;</td>
<td>Τι ώρα;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the morning</td>
<td>Το πρωί</td>
<td>Το πρωί</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the afternoon</td>
<td>Το μεσημέρι</td>
<td>Το μεσημέρι</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the evening</td>
<td>Το βράδυ</td>
<td>Το βράδυ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At night</td>
<td>Τη νύχτα</td>
<td>Τη νύχτα</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This morning</td>
<td>Σήμερα το πρωί</td>
<td>Σήμερα το πρωί</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This afternoon</td>
<td>Σήμερα το μεσημέρι</td>
<td>Σήμερα το μεσημέρι</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This evening</td>
<td>Σήμερα το απογευμα</td>
<td>Σήμερα το απογευμα</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonight</td>
<td>Αποψε</td>
<td>Αποψε</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last night</td>
<td>Τη περασμενη νυχτα</td>
<td>Τη περασμενη νυχτα</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This week</td>
<td>Αυτη την εβδομαδα</td>
<td>Αυτη την εβδομαδα</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Next month</td>
<td>Τον επομενο μηνα</td>
<td>Τον επομενο μηνα</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last year</td>
<td>Περυσι</td>
<td>Περυσι</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Next</td>
<td>Τον επομενο</td>
<td>Τον επομενο</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remember that in Greek you say what you see, there are no silent letters, and it’s just a question of getting the accent on the right part of the word...!