

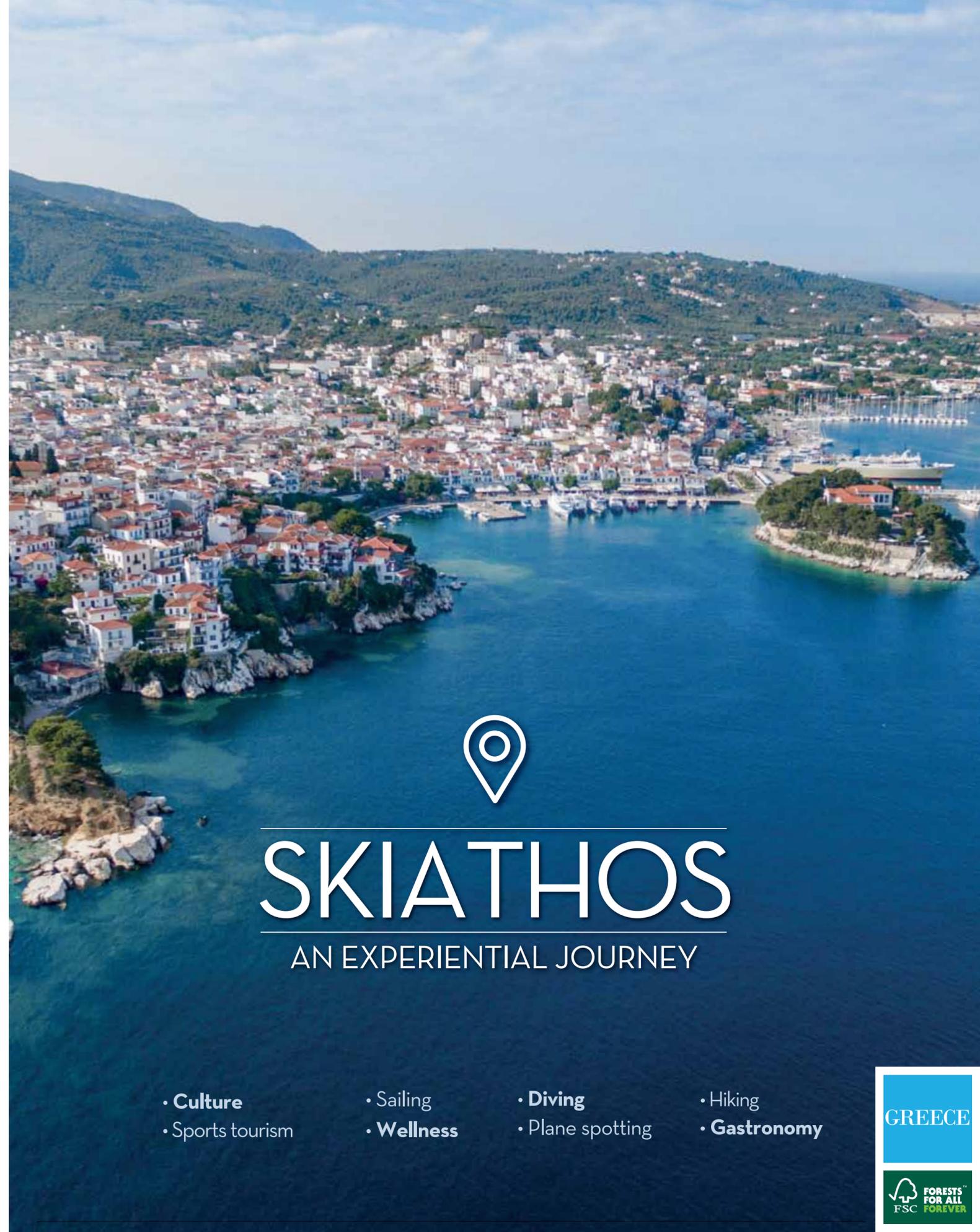


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ΔΗΜΟΣ ΣΚΙΑΘΟΥ - MUNICIPALITY OF SKIATHOS



SKIATHOS

AN EXPERIENTIAL JOURNEY

- Culture
- Sailing
- Diving
- Hiking
- Sports tourism
- Wellness
- Plane spotting
- Gastronomy





SKIATHOS

A journey to remember

The modern visitor to Greece wants an all-round experience which goes beyond the sun and the sea. Skiathos, unique by nature, with its beautiful beaches and the endless green of its forests, offers many possibilities, along with boundless hospitality, exceptional quality and excellent service.

Enjoy a positive and unforgettable tourist experience, one which offers cultural excursions through the geography and

history of the island, water sports, diving, yoga and relaxation, trekking, plane spotting, innovative traditional or gourmet food tasting excursions, wine tasting, a thriving night life, as well as traditional holidays, such as enjoying Easter Skiathos style, with its distinctive customs and night-long festivities. From May to October, Skiathos enjoys summer and invites you to experience it with all your senses.

WELCOME!

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SKIATHOS

Unique by nature

Skiathos owes its name to its striking landscape, a name which it has kept since antiquity.

According to experts the root skia- (σκιά - meaning shadow) comes from the many forests which cover the island. It has been inhabited without a break since the 10th century BC. For centuries it has enchanted all those who come to know it, from Venetian and Dutch travellers and cartographers to modern sunseekers. To discover Skiathos - or even fully comprehend it - you have to know its secrets. No words are sufficient to describe this unique island, two thirds of which has been characterised as 'Aesthetic Forest of Natural Beauty', with beaches and a coastline that are monuments of nature. Amongst these are Lalaria, Koukounaries and Mandraki: some of which are noisy and bustling, but the majority of the island's 67 beaches remain untouched by time or human hand and are peaceful even at the height of summer. Beaches account for almost the entire perimeter of the island, in places black or golden sands, elsewhere with white or multicoloured pebbles, with steep reefs and colourful seaweed and with crystal clear waters like those described in Homer's Odyssey.

Skiathos has a magical hinterland with a network of paths covering almost 200 km, which pass through entralling ravines, by streams and waterfalls and rows of plane trees, as well as monasteries, Byzantine monuments and chapels, and lead to rosy-coloured beaches.

The monuments of Skiathos are also fascinating. Kephala, the only site so



far identified from the early historical period in the Sporades, is of particular importance, since it was inhabited from the 10th century BC, according to the earliest recorded evidence from early historical times. The northernmost shore of the island is dominated by the Kastro (castle), which was established by the inhabitants of Skiathos in the middle of the 14th century AD, when the site of the present town was abandoned to seek refuge from pirate raids by Turks and Venetians. The inhabitants of the Kastro have left their mark in the picturesque chapels and fortifications which have survived the passage of time.

Take a walk through the town and 'lose yourself' in Plaka, a conservation area which is dominated by the 'Captain's houses' and picturesque cobbled streets. You must stop at the house of Alexandros Papadiamantis, now a museum, as well as at the Bourtzi, the acropolis of Skiathos, which houses the Skiathos Maritime and Culture Tradition Museum. Its collections document the island's great ship-building and maritime history.

The testimonies of the poets Seferis and Elytis are impressive: Giorgos Seferis visited the island in 1930 and wrote in his 'Days 1' (his diaries published in 9 volumes posthumously



- Ikaros Publishing 2003): 'This afternoon I found myself on a small beach where a boat had been drawn up, the horizon a straight line beyond, and, in front of me, pebbles fashioned by the waves, each with its own individuality, like mankind. Infinite peace.'

Half a century later, Odysseus Elytis, inspired by the island's natural beauty, created a 'collage' of its beauty spots, entitled 'Optasia'. In his study, entitled 'The Magic of Papadiamantis' (Η μαγεία του Παπαδιαμάντη - Υψίλον Publications 1996) he states: 'And here one contemplates how [an island] of roughly 60 square km with its 3,000 souls came to acquire the significance of a whole continent.' Elytis' experience when he found himself in Skiathos' Galazia Spilia (the Blue Cave) has been immortalised in his description: 'The moment the little boat entered the cave, from the dazzling light, suddenly you find yourself locked in an icy, blue green mint (The Little Mariner - Ο Μικρός ναυτίλος, Ikaros Publishing 1985).

And while Nobel Laureates may have found the words to describe it, your voyage of discovery goes beyond glossy descriptions. Skiathos, with its charm and abundant contrasts, is to a great degree just as Alexandros Papadiamantis left it and as he described it in his short stories. The island is not just a 'classic' holiday destination where you can swim in blue waters of exceptional beaches, walk along picturesque alleyways and enjoy the thriving nightlife. It is now a popular tourist destination for those who want a different kind of vacation, seeking in addition to relaxation, wellbeing and enjoyable sightseeing, the unique experience offered by nature and her bounty, the imprint of Orthodox Christianity and the specialised infrastructure of the tourism industry. On the island you will find opportunities for plane spotting, gastronomic and marine tourism (sailing, boat charters, cruises). You may enjoy diving to the magical depths of the seabed. There are more than 300 species of fish in the Sporades as well as rare red corals.

Lovers of nature and hiking can follow 25 different routes (with marked paths of between 1 and 6 hour's duration) to discover the unspoilt natural environment and idyllic spots which offer stunning panoramic views, perfect for a rest or a picnic. The enchanting beach of Koukounar-



ies is famous for its forest which stretches almost to the sea and for the Strofilia saltwater lagoon enclosed by it, a rare wetland area which is now protected. Skiathos is a modern island but it preserves centuries-old customs and traditions, most of which have been adapted to the daily lives of the inhabitants and visitors. Easter is mystical and all-encompassing. The epitaphios (the funeral service for the dead Christ) begins at 1 am on Easter Saturday, while the funeral procession to carry round the icon of Christ on a bier starts at 3 in the morning. In a solemn atmosphere the procession passes along all the cobbled streets of Chora. The town crier loudly intones the mournful psalms, while the cantors and the faithful chant the same words again while holding aloft their lit candles. Hospitable Skiathos teems with life and its beauty is as authentic as it is diverse.

[Discover this island and you cannot fail to fall in love with it.](#)



KASTRO (the castle)

The medieval period

The iconic Kastro, which stands on a steep rocky peninsula on the northern edge of Skiathos, was used as a refuge for the island's inhabitants during the age of piracy.



It remained the main centre of the island during the Medieval period and under Ottoman occupation. The Kastro was constructed in the 14th century around 1360. As a result of frequent pirate raids and plundering by the Genoese and the Knights of St John, the inhabitants abandoned the Byzantine settlement which was located where Chora is today and built the Medieval settlement of Kastro.

As the fortress was inaccessible from the sea and entrance to it was only possible via a wooden drawbridge which connected the two ends of the walls, the inhabitants were almost completely protected. Below the bridge was a deep moat. Every evening, and in cases of emergency, the guards at the gate would raise the bridge, blocking access to all would be intruders.

The highest part of the Kastro, known as Barberaki, was a tower and the central point of defence, as all of the surrounding area could be seen from here. The cannon, which was placed on a rotating base, was called the 'kanoni tis anangias' (the cannon of necessity) as with it

the guards responded to fire from enemy ships.

The Kastro occupies an area of around 2.5 hectares and is more a natural defensive position than a built fortress. For this reason it is enclosed by a low wall on the three sides facing the sea, while on the side of the peninsula which connects to the mainland they built stronger fortification walls, a gate with a portcullis and the tower with the cannon.

Inside the Kastro the houses were small and dark, built suffocatingly close, one next to the other. Travellers describe how there were about 400 houses, while the population fluctuated between 500 and 1,500 people. There were in addition 20 churches in 4 parishes, water reservoirs, cisterns, baths and the Kangelaria, the seat of the Venetian governor.

During the period of Ottoman occupation the Ottoman Residence and the mosque were built, to meet the needs of the Aga and the few Ottoman Turks who lived on the island, and Papadiamantis describes it brilliantly in his short story 'The Aga and the evil eye'.



He also testifies to the existence of two defensive towers and small turrets. The Kastro was under Byzantine rule from 1360 until the fall of Constantinople and collapse of the Byzantine empire. In 1453 it came under the protection of the Venetians and in 1538 it was captured by Hayreddin Barbarossa, the admiral of the Ottoman fleet. In 1660

the Venetians regained control for a brief period, after the siege by Francesco Morosini, however, the Ottomans recaptured it and it remained in their control until the Greek War of Independence in 1821. Both the Venetians and Ottomans oppressed the inhabitants and did not provide them with any security. In 1829 the inhabitants abandoned the Kastro and re-

turned to the old Byzantine settlement, today the modern town of Chora. When they left, they didn't just take their personal belongings, they removed from their houses and other buildings any building materials which could be used again, such as frames, windows, doors, roofs, timber and the Kastro was deserted abruptly.

Of the c. 20 churches and 400 houses today only the two parish churches, the church of the Nativity and that of Agios Nikolaos (built in the 17th century) survive, as well as the ruins of the Panagia Megalomata, Agia Marina, and Agioi Apostoloi (all buildings of the 17th century) and Panagia Prekla (the old church of the Dormition of the Virgin). Also surviving are the mosque, the ruins of the Ottoman residence, the cistern for drinking water at the entrance and the rainwater cisterns beside the church of the Nativity, the gate with the portcullis and the outer walls of the Kastro, the battlements of which are in a good condition. The church of Agios Basileios (built in the 16th or 17th century) was completely restored in 1995.

A few metres before you reach the Kastro, small cylindrical holes can be made out between the stones of the old cobble path, which look like hoofprints. According to local folklore, they are the prints of St George's horse, the sound of which can be heard coming from the fort at night.

The church of the Nativity was the metropolitan church of the Kastro and the seat of the diocese of Skiathos. From the inscriptions on the iconostasis, the icons and the technical and structural elements of the church we can conclude that it was constructed in the middle of the 17th century and restored at regular intervals. However, the original church was built earlier, as it was the metropolis of Kastro from the 14th century.

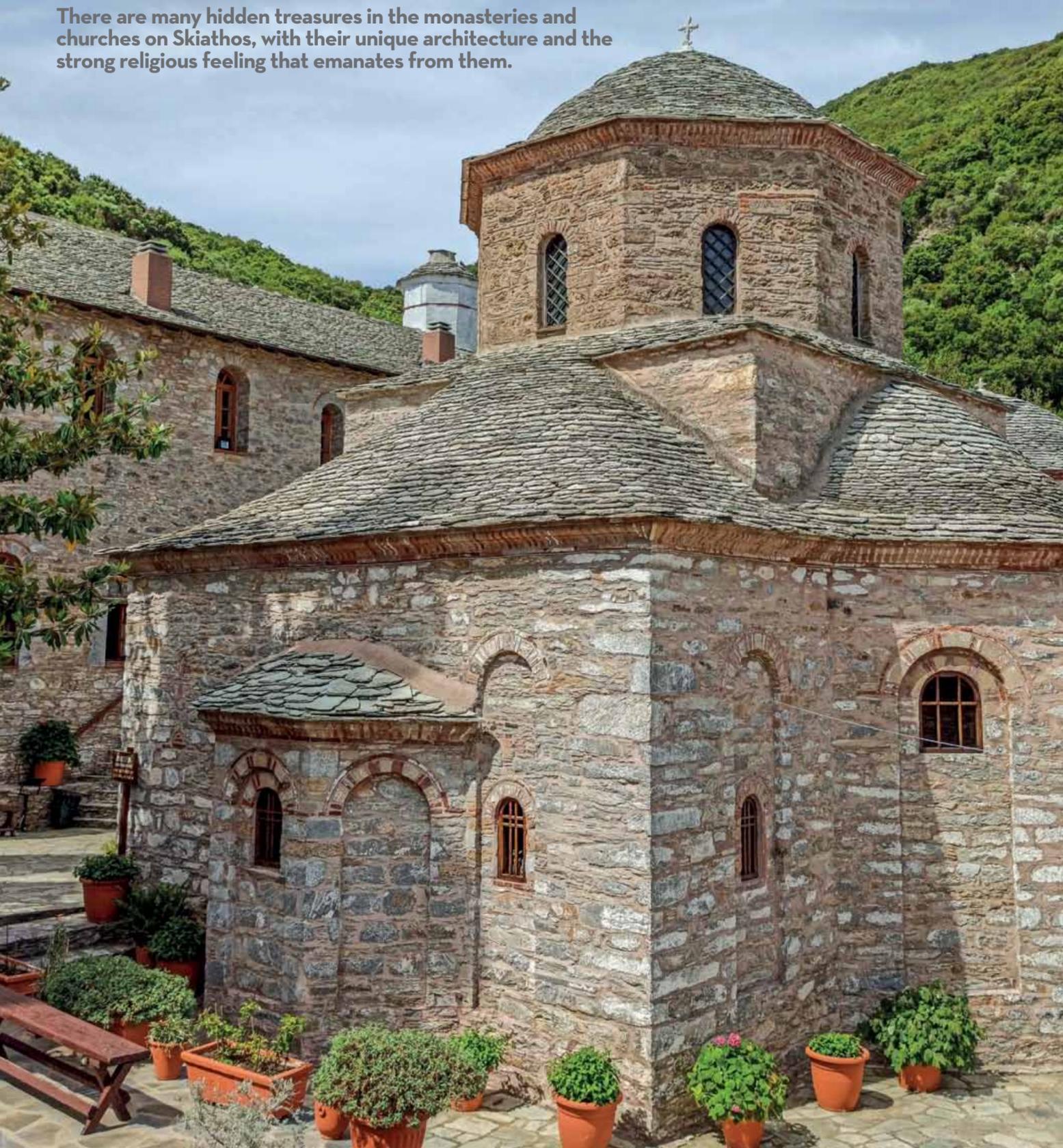
A vigil is held overnight at the church twice a year, on the 5-6th of August for the Transfiguration of Christ and on the 26-27th December celebrating the 3rd day of Christmas, weather permitting. The church was described by Alexandros Papadiamantis in his short story 'Christ at the Castle' and his 'Reverie on the Fifteenth of August' is set in Panagia Prekla.



MONASTERIES

Religious sites

There are many hidden treasures in the monasteries and churches on Skiathos, with their unique architecture and the strong religious feeling that emanates from them.



The **Monastery of Evangelistria** (or Vangelistra as the locals call the monastery) sits in a prominent position and is the spiritual symbol of the island. It is located beneath Karafilizanaka, the highest peak on Skiathos, embraced by the Lechouni stream.

who had served on Mount Athos in the Monastery of Great Lavra, in the Skete of Profitis Ilias belonging to the Monastery of the Pantokrator and at Kapsala. He, together with the Skiathian, Gregorios Hatzistamatis, who had inherited extensive property in Skiathos, built the monastery,

collaboration with the Holy Abbot Niphon, designed, wove and raised the first Greek flag with a white cross on a blue background, as we know it today. This flag was blessed in September 1807 in the presence of Theodoros Kolokotronis, a general, who was one of the prominent



Lost amidst the greenery and the flowers, which the monks tend, it is 4.5 km north of the town if you take the periphery road, 200 m after the junction for the airport.

The monastery was founded in 1794 by a small group of 'Kollyvades' monks who were forced to leave Mount Athos after arguing with the monks of Athos over liturgical differences. The leader of the group was an ordained monk, Niphon,

completing it in 1806.

In 1807 Nikotsaras, one of the greatest leaders of the Kleftes (anti-Ottoman rebels) from Thessaly, took refuge in the monastery, which acted as a catalyst for the formation of the religious education and spirituality of the inhabitants of the island. Together with another famous captain, Giannis Stathas, and their pirate fleet, they maintained a base of operations on Skiathos. These two, in

characters in the Greek War of Independence.

Today the monastery houses three museums: that of the Sacred Relics, in which are kept many valuable sacred vessels and objects, the Folklore Collection, and a collection relating to the Balkan Struggles donated by Andreas Potamianos. The catholicon (the monastery church) is a cross-in-square with dome, with traces of wall painting dating to the 18th century



and a carved wooden iconostasis (the screen which divides the congregation from the altar, usually of carved, painted or gilded wood in which icons are placed) of exceptional quality. The monastery was repaired a few years ago, and some new structures were

erected. In recent years a model vineyard has been established to produce the famous Alypiakos Oinos, a wine which used to be made years ago and was mentioned by Alexandros Papadiamantis in his stories. Near to the monastery are dozens of small churches and chapels,

sheltered oases of spiritual calm, each with its own unique history. The next stop, on the other side of the island is the **Monastery of Panagia Eikonistria or Kounistra**. It is located 13 km to the west of Chora at the 2 km mark on the road which leads to Aselinos



beach. It is a sacred place for the island, because, according to tradition, the icon of the Panagia (Virgin Mary) was found here in c. 1650 by Symeon, a local ascetic. The Panagia is the patron saint of Skiathos and is celebrated twice a year. On the 21st November, on the day of the Presentation of Mary (known in Orthodox tradition as the entrance of the Theotokos to the temple), which is the biggest celebration, the icon is carried in procession from the Metropolitan church of Skiathos where it is normally housed to its place of discovery. It is carried by hand and a large crowd accompanies the icon on foot, in a procession which takes about three hours.

The catholicon of the monastery is a single-aisled basilica with dome built in the 17th century. The carved and gilded wooden iconostasis of the monastery is impressive, as are the exceptional wall paintings depicting the life of Christ and the saints, dating to 1741 and 1805. The monastery of **Agios Ioannis** with its equally amazing wall paintings is located close by. It was built in 1726 and is located on the other side of the mountain of Kounistra, in a verdant location.

Two km to the north of the monastery of Evangelistria, in the area of Kakorema, on Lechouni beach and roughly 5 km from the centre of Chora is the monastery of **Agios Charalambos**. It is not known when it was established, but it was operational in 1809 and the iconostasis and icons date to 1823. The writer Alexandros Moraitidis became a monk here during the last years of his life under the name Andronikos. Every year on February 9-10th local residents visit the monastery to honour the Saint.

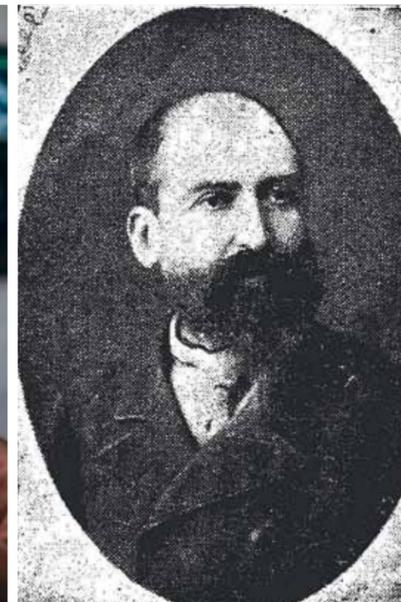
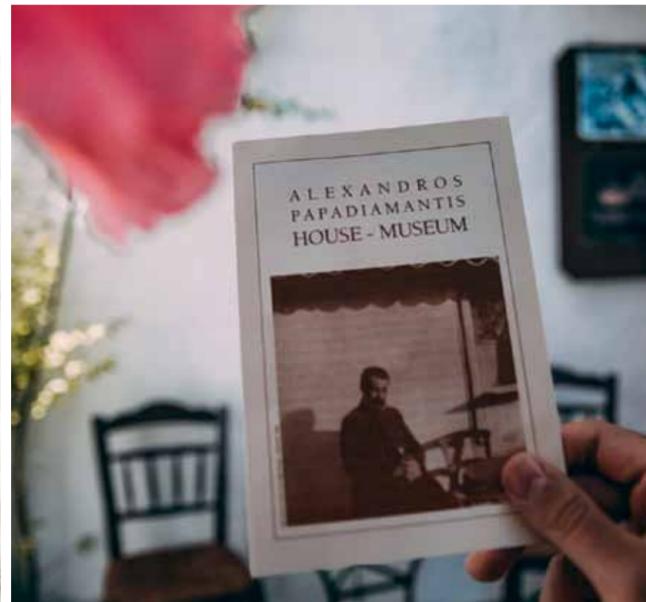
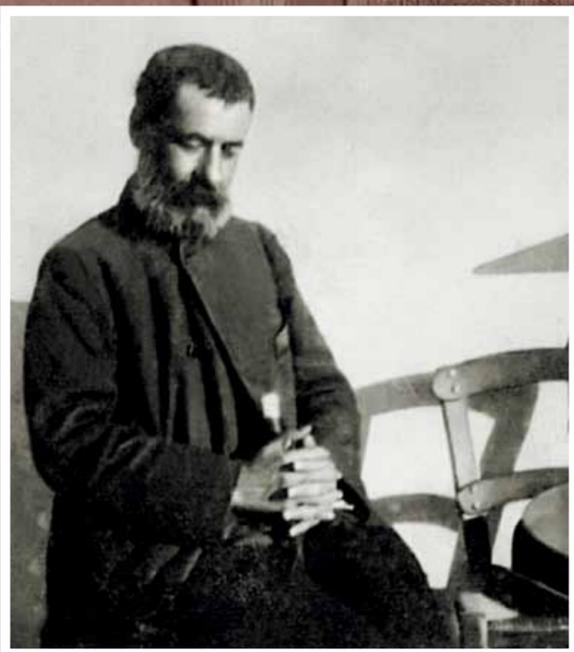
In an idyllic and almost completely isolated valley, thick with olive trees and pines, overlooking one of the loveliest beaches on Skiathos, Kechria, is **Panagia Kechria**. Here on the north western side of the island, 8 km outside Chora, you can visit another of the historic

monasteries of Skiathos, as well as of the wider area, which has been designated a historic monument. The catholicon of the monastery is still in its original form and belongs to the type with a small single-aisled domed nave with side apses. Of particular interest is the carved wooden iconostasis which is dedicated to the Dormition of the Virgin.

SPIRITUAL PEOPLE

History alive

Skiathos 'gave birth' to Alexandros Papadiamantis, and many other writers who shaped the literary identity of the island.



T heir acclaimed creativity was inspired by the beauty and uniqueness of the island and 'gifted' us a spiritual body of work illuminated by the catalytic effect Skiathos had on them.

Alexandros Papadiamantis was born to the poor family of a priest on Skiathos on the 3rd of March 1851 and was the third of six children. Headstrong as a child, he went to many schools and eventually graduated in 1874 from the Varvakeio High School.

He stayed for a few months on Mount Athos and later enrolled in the School of Philosophy of the University of Athens, though he never completed his studies. From 1887 he settled in Athens and taught himself English and French, making a living with private lessons and translations.

His cousin Alexandros Moraitidis, who was a writer, put him in touch with journalistic circles and he began to publish short stories in newspapers and journals. He did not promote his work, nor was he published regularly like a professional writer.

An introverted loner, trapped in the urban life of Athens, he rediscovered the paradise of his childhood through lyrical flashbacks to the lost years of his

innocence on Skiathos. He described the small community and the legends of his island; his heroes were simple people, living good and bad moments and he compared the past with the present. His special language gave it a peculiar charm. The autobiographical elements of his work give immediacy and the poetic resonance links its quality and its testimony. He died of pneumonia in Skiathos in 1911.

Alexandros Moraitidis was born on Skiathos in 1850, the first of seven brothers. His father, a cousin of Papadiamantis' mother, came from a ruling family in Mystras and his mother descended from priests on Skiathos. In 1871 he graduated from the Varvakeio High School and enrolled in the School of Philosophy of the University of Athens, from which he graduated 10 years later. From 1872 he was a member of the Parnassos Literary Society. There he met the publishers Dimitrios Koromilas and Vlassis Gavriilidis and his involvement with journalism commenced with their help. For 20 years from 1880 he was a Secondary School teacher. In 1901 he married Vassiliki Foulaki, but never consummated the marriage. In 1907 he abandoned literature and journalism and after the death of Vassiliki in 1914 he

withdrew from the world. He involved himself only with the writing and translation of theological texts until 1919 when he published the first volume of his works.

In 1914 he was awarded Excellence of the Arts and Letters and in 1928 he became a member of the Academy of Athens. A little before his death he became a monk and changed his name to Andronikos. He died in 1929.

Georgios Rigas (1884-1960), teacher, priest and folklorist, with an emphasis on matters concerning church ritual, was a pillar of post-Byzantine scholarship in the Athonite tradition and he wrote numerous collections of folklore and melodies for the liturgy.

Skiathos was also honoured to have **Zisis Oikonomou**, who belongs to the interwar generation of Greek poets of the 1930s, **Epifaneios Epifaneiadis**, a great proponent of the Modern Greek Enlightenment and teacher of the Nation, and Ioannis Fragoulas, who was awarded a prize by the Academy of Athens for his work.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the catalytic effect that Skiathos had on the Nobel Prize winning poets Odysseus Elytis and Giorgos Seferis, as well as artists such as the painter Yannis Tzarouchis.



A LAND OF TRADITION

Customs of Skiathos

On Skiathos the customs and traditions of centuries have been preserved, not as attractions, but adapted to the daily lives of its inhabitants and visitors.

The celebration on the 21st of November is a great religious event, since **Panagia Kounistra** (whose saint's day it is) is the patron saint of the island. With faith and reverence the icon of the Panagia (Virgin) is carried in procession from the Metropolitan church of Skiathos where it is kept, to its place of discovery at the Monastery of Panagia Kounistra. It is passed from hand to hand and a crowd accompanies the icon, following, on foot, a route which takes almost three hours. A vigil follows and in the early hours of the next morning the icon is returned to Chora, accompanied once again by the faithful.

On the feast of **Agios Nikolaos** (St Nicholas), the patron of sailors, there is a festival. A decorated ship is placed in front of the Bourtzi, while smaller decorated ships adorn many houses.

The festivities of Apokries (the carnival before Lent begins), with its traditional events, such as the Skiathos Wedding and the prize for the best traditional costume, provide the opportunity for much fun and revelry. Of special interest is the women's costume which consists of a



chemise, vest, stockings, a 'gounaki' (a robe made of felted cloth), 'baboukli' (a waistcoat with velvet sleeves), a 'kouzouka' (sleeveless jacket of velvet or cloth, fitted under the bust and decorated at the neck), a petticoat, a 'mallina' (a woolen underskirt), a gold belt, a 'zonari' (silk sash tied at the front) and a 'boktsas' (a large, winter woollen fringed shawl). The outfit is completed with long earrings made of coins, bracelets, rings, brooches and 'koulaina' (a necklace of gold coins). **The aubade** (a song which accompanies the dawn) and the **candlelit procession on the 25th of March** are customs which survive from the years of the Ottoman occupation. They celebrate both the resurrection of Christ and the birth of the Greek State, paralleling the holy light with the light of freedom.

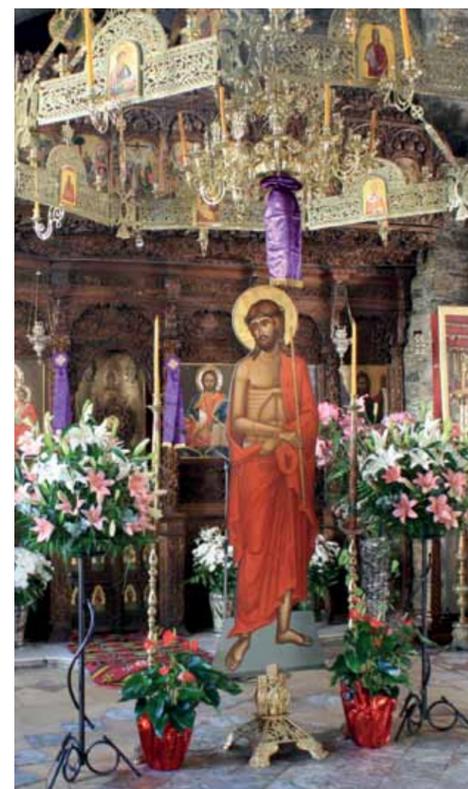
Easter is especially interesting. On the Thursday of Holy Week, after the morning church service and communion, children return home carrying reed crosses decorated with rosemary, violets, roses, lilies and poppies and sing calanta (carols).

Good Friday follows the Athonite tradition. The Epitaphios (funeral service for Christ) begins at 1 am on the Saturday

morning and the procession begins at 4 am as a vigil, passing through all the cobbled streets of Chora.

The **Kamara** is a traditional song of the island. Women in traditional costume dance to it at the festival of Zoodochos Pigi. The song is a variation of the 'haunted Bridge of Arta'. Each line is sung to the same melody, with the same repetitions and the same beat. When the town of Skiathos relocated to the Kastro the Kamara was danced on the terrace. On the feast of Agios Georgios (St George), the patron saint of riders, **horse races** are held as part of the festival which is celebrated at the small chapel beside the nearby lake which is dedicated to the saint. A crowd watches as horses and riders compete in different events.

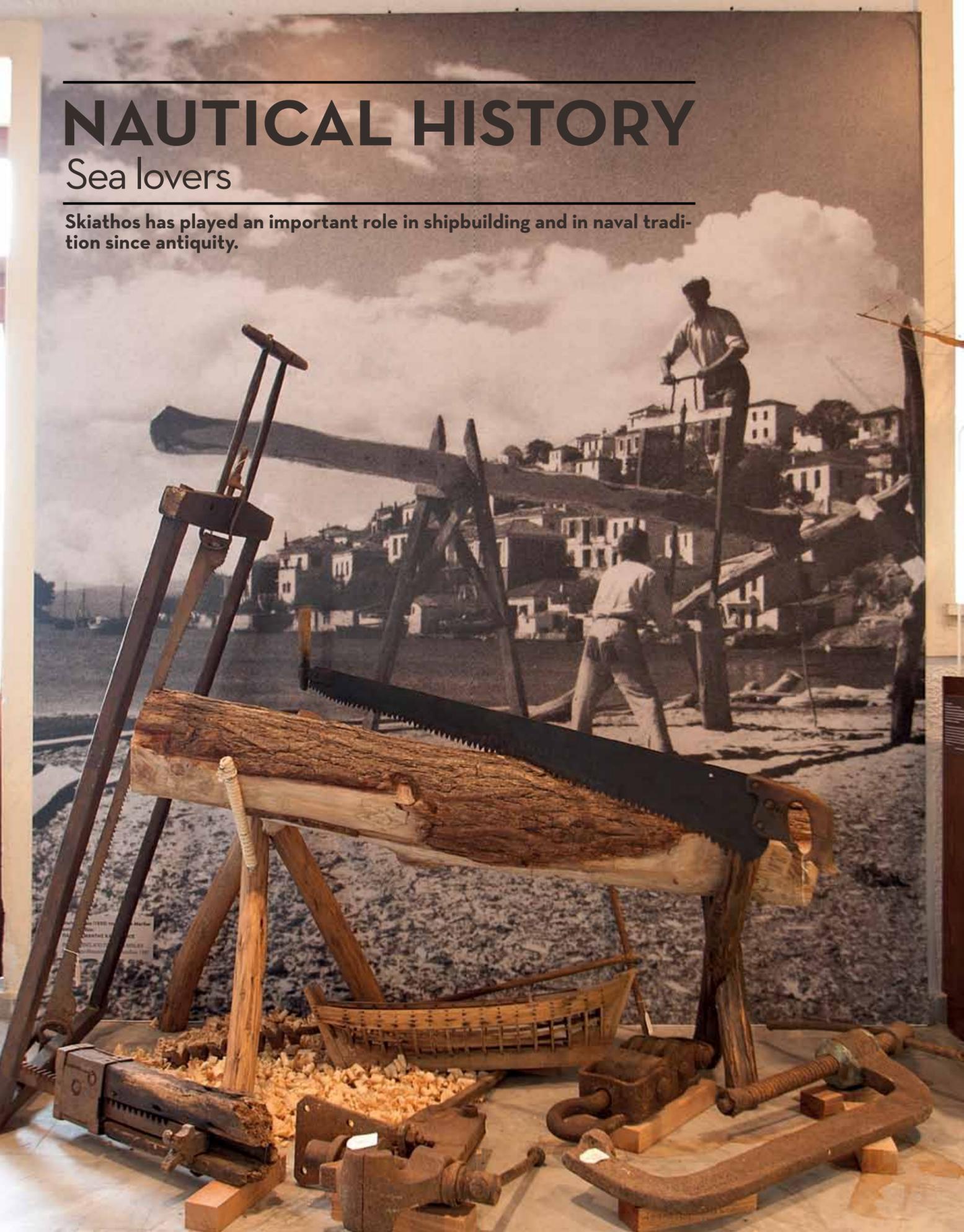
In the middle of September the **Katsonieia** is a commemorative event for the infamous sinking of the submarine, the Katsonis, which was rammed by the Germans in the open waters off the Kastro in 1943, taking the captain Vassilis Laskos, 5 officers and 26 sailors with it to their watery grave.



NAUTICAL HISTORY

Sea lovers

Skiathos has played an important role in shipbuilding and in naval tradition since antiquity.



Skiathos joined both the first and second Athenian League and during the Athenian war against Philip II, Skiathos, according to Demosthenes, was used as a naval base.

After the Russo-Turkish Wars, Skiathos acquired the right to build small ships which were used for transport and trade with nearby places under the Ottoman flag. Lambros Katsonis and Nikotsaras recruited brave and experienced sailors from Skiathos.

When the town moved from the Kas-

the Second World War, when he found himself without ships as everything had been lost during the hostilities. In 1949 the Greek state, in collaboration with America and Greek shipowners, managed to acquire 100 Liberty ships and 7 oil tankers. Three of the Liberty ships were given to Thomas N. Epifaneiadis as compensation for the loss of his vessels.

After the War, Skiathos' occupation with shipping was rekindled and the economy flourished between 1950 and 1990.



tro to its present location with its safe harbour, an impetus was given for the development of ship building and seamanship. The boundless energy of the people of Skiathos, the harsh way of life and the cooperative spirit (the crews had a share in the profits) helped to develop shipping.

Around 1920 the Skiathos shipowner Thomas N. Epifaneiadis, a scion of an old family of scholars, a trailblazing and daring man, paved the way for steam shipping. He set up his own shipping companies in Piraeus which continued in operation until the end of

The Skiathos Maritime and Culture Tradition Museum was founded in 2015 and is housed in the Skiathos Cultural Centre Bourtzi. The exhibits narrate the long shipbuilding tradition of the Skiathos shipyards, which helped the development of Skiathos' sailed-powered merchant shipping before the 19th century, as well as its subsequent development with ocean-going steam ships.

The permanent collection consists of more than 600 exhibits, including ship building tools, plans, and accounts for sail boat construction in the shipyards,

representations of the work of traditional shipwrights, a rare collection of ship models, as well as paintings of Skiathos sail boats dating to the end of the 19th century.

In the section of the exhibition which documents seafaring, there are nautical charts, navigational instruments and log books (for the bridge, the engine room and the radio room), diplomas for officers and crew, a complete reconstruction of the bridge from a Liberty ship, models of ships of the Greek Navy, as well as a small display dedicated to the submarine 'Katsonis' which sank off Skiathos in 1943.

SAIL AWAY

Sporades unique blue experience

A sailing trip is a unique holiday experience and a perfect way to get to know beautiful sandy beaches and otherwise inaccessible secluded bays, as well as enjoy great moments of relaxation.

Skiathos is an ideal destination for sailing holidays. You can rent the boat of your choice and use the island as your base to explore a wide selection of the islands in the Sporades. Take a day or a week-long trip and visit Skopelos, Alonissos, Skyros, or small islands such as Arkos, Peristera and Tsougrias, or more than 20 rocky islets.

You can enjoy the natural beauty of the scenery where green landscapes rich in biodiversity almost touch crystal clear blue waters. You will see dolphins, enjoy swimming in the Blue Cave and if you are lucky you will see Loggerhead turtles (*Caretta caretta*) in the waters round Skopelos, which is their breeding ground, and also Mediterranean Monk Seals (*Monachus monachus*) on the charming islet of Planitis to the north of Alonissos. Eastern Skopelos and Alonissos are part of the National Marine Park.

Throughout the summer the winds are more moderate than in the central Aegean and in July and August, the months with the strongest winds, the wind speeds in the area around the

Sporades do not exceed 4-5 Beaufort, providing ideal sailing conditions. Also the islands are located a short distance from each other, so it is not difficult to find shelter in one of the many bays or coves and safe havens of the islands if you get caught out by the weather and pass an idyllic night. In the case of a north-easterly meltemi, you can find shelter off the west coast of Tsougrias island. Magical Koukounaries is sheltered in all weathers but anchorages are limited. At Xanemos, Mega Gialos and Lalaria you can find shelter from west to north east winds, but you must pay attention to the depth and the rocks.

In the summer, the marina section of Skiathos port is sheltered in all weathers. There you can find whatever provisions you need including medical supplies and for any other emergency.

If your boat has been damaged there are karnagia (small shipyards with dry docks) for boats up to 15 m long and 2 m overall draft. Engine and electrical repairs and spare parts can be dealt with in the same place.

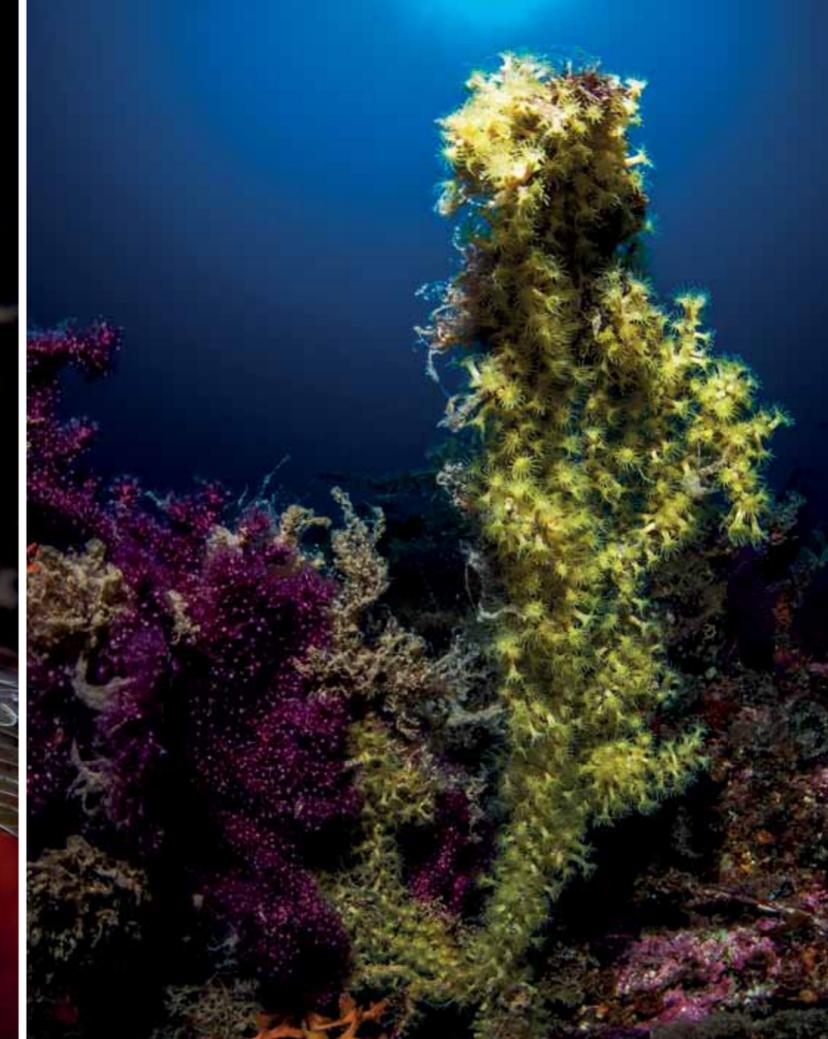
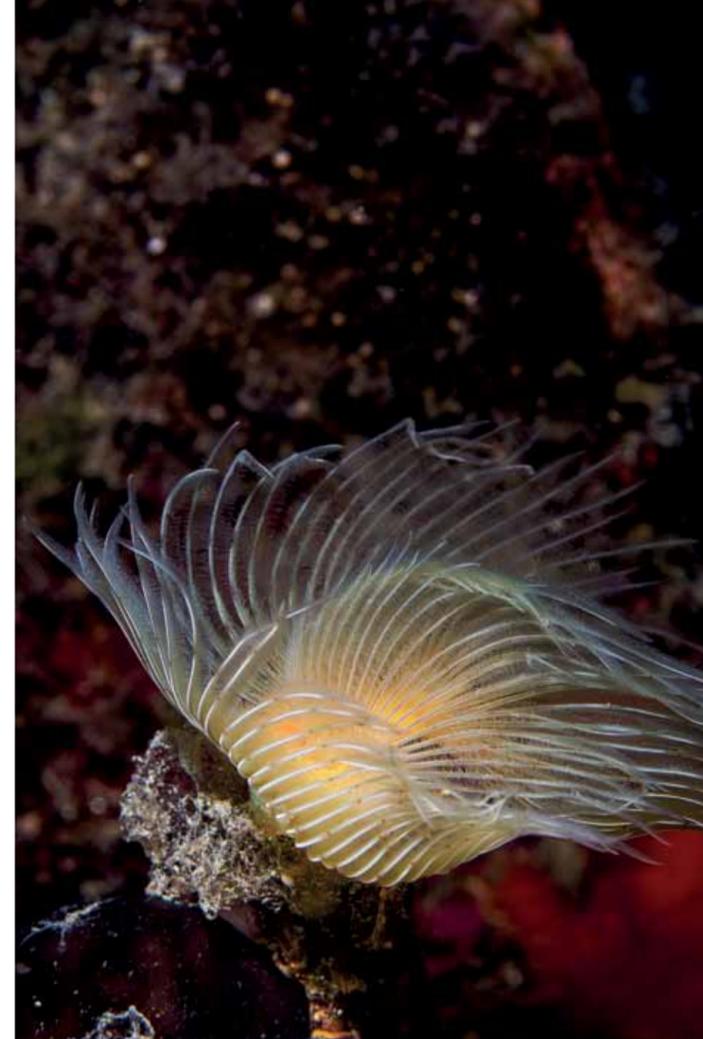




UNDERWATER STORIES

Dive into the deep blue

Diving in the clear blue waters of Skiathos is one of life's unique experiences, since you are able to dive with experienced guides to reefs, shipwrecks, caves and other sights in the magical depths of the Mediterranean.



The crystal clear blue waters with their pleasant temperature in the summer (20-26 °C), the good visibility (the light coming from the surface creates beautiful reflections and helps you to see even without a torch) and the well organised diving schools on the island can offer you an unforgettable experience.

There are dives suitable for everyone: small children with masks can observe the life at the bottom in shallow waters, beginners can go snorkeling, while qualified and experienced divers can visit reefs, shipwrecks, free dive in waters up to 10 m and even enjoy diving at night.

If you want an enjoyable and safe experience then you should go to one of the accredited diving centres, who will provide you with all the necessary equipment and will take you to the perfect diving spots. Even if you have no previous experience there is diving for beginners which starts with the essential technical instruction and health and safety lessons and continues with diving in shallow waters under the close supervision of an experienced diving instructor.

The well-known photographer Francesco Pacienza, with the help of the diver Panagiotis Diolettas, has given us many pictures of unparalleled beauty from the great un-

derwater meadows of Neptune Grass (*Posidonia oceanica*), the bentonite rocks which are completely covered with brightly coloured sponges and separate colonies of impressive corals (red, golden yellow and occasionally black) and a host of multicoloured fish and other marine species. There are more than 300 species of fish and microscopic marine organisms in the waters around the Sporades.

Neptune Grass has leaves that are a bright green colour and can reach a metre in height and they grow on the sandy seabed in waters 1-60 m deep. There are many benefits of Neptune Grass to the ecosystem, starting from sand retention which thanks to their deep root system prevents coastal erosion. They also break the motion of the waves which would otherwise reach the shore with greater force, while the dense foliage of the underwater meadows it creates provides food, shelter and places to lay eggs for the many living organisms such as sponges, worms, clams, crabs, shrimp, crayfish, octopus, cuttlefish, turtles, sea urchins, and fish. Many species of seaweed attach themselves to the large surface area of the leaves.

It is estimated that more than 1000 species of fauna and 400 species of flora live in the Neptune Grass meadows.



This remarkable plant also provides all of the oxygen in the sea, without which no organism can live.

There are many underwater meadows of Neptune Grass in the seas around the islands of the Sporades and boat lovers must take care when dropping or raising their anchor when they are close to them. Tearing or bruising a few cm of Neptune Grass stops it growing and the surrounding areas will die too if subjected to such stress.

The island of Tsoungriaki is of particular interest to lovers of diving. The waters of this spot, 20 m down, teem with fish and many microscopic organisms. You will also find beautiful golden-yellow corals and the splendid and colourful *Peltodoris atromaculata*, which is a type of sea slug, a mollusc commonly known as a 'sea cow'. The black sponge *Sacotragus foetidus*, which stretches



Underwater museum at Peristera islet.

out like a carpet across the rocks is loved by sea slugs (doridacean nudibranches - a group of soft marine gastropod molluscs which shed their shells after the larval stage and are known for their exceptional colours and interesting shapes). The sea slugs *Trapania lineata* and *Trapania maculata* feed on these black sponges and prefer to lay their eggs here.

The underwater museum at Peristera islet near to Alonissos island (a 2-hour boat trip) recently won an award from the European Cultural Tourist Network and is another popular attraction as it is the oldest visitable shipwreck in the world. Both amateur scuba divers and free divers escorted by divers from diving centres can visit the famous 5th century BC shipwreck with its cargo of amphorae. The impressive number of amphorae, the excellent condition of the wreck - lying between 21 and 28 m down and the beauty of the exotic waters and the rich seabed of the area, located within the protected area of the National Marine Park of Alonissos and Northern Sporades, make the ancient shipwreck of Peristera a destination of interest for every experienced diver.

Underwater museum at Peristera islet.



All the photographs are from the heart of Skiathos.

PATHS OF SKIATHOS

Top hiking destination

Let us uncover another side of Skiathos. From the emerald waters we head into the unknown and verdant interior of the island following footpaths recently upgraded by the Municipality of Skiathos into the heart of the island.



Skiathos is first of all famous... for being a cosmopolitan island. For its well known evening stroll beside the sea from bay to bay and beach to beach. For Koukounaries, one of the two largest pine habitats in Greece located on... a beach. For the pebble-strewn beach of Lalaria with its steep storm-torn cliffs to the north. For the sun which sinks across the sea behind the mountains of Pelion, the sunset which you left behind, oh hasty one, on Banana beach. For the innumerable churches and monasteries mentioned in the works of Papadiamantis. For the wonderful swimming off Tsougrias opposite, which encourages you to miss the last boat home. For the 'haimalia' (special pancakes) which you devour because they are stuffed with walnuts. For the old district of Plaka in Chora which clings to the precipitous rocks. For the little fish that you eat, with your feet buried in the sand at Sklithri. For the noisy stream of people on Papadiamantis street on hot summer nights. For all of these and as many again. The island is even more than this.

The other side

Skiathos is also its footpaths; 197 km of paths criss cross the interior of the verdant island, paths which will open your eyes and reach into your soul to reveal another aspect of the island. One that is more reflective. Clearly more otherworldly and obviously less famous. One that is mountainous but not harsh - after all the highest peak is only 433 m. Between the different varieties of pine (Aleppo pines and stone pines), the arbutus trees (strawberry trees), the mastic trees, the myrtles and a further 700 species of plants, it is exceptionally rich in vegetation for an island. The paths have sudden

views which take your breath away. Springs, threshing floors, streams, churches and other monuments, both large and small, weave the history of the island and enchant the visitor as much - dare I say it - as the incomparable pine-shaded beaches of the island. And in the end, the word pictures of Alexandros Papadiamantis in our schoolbooks come to life before our eyes. The paths in Skiathos vary in difficulty from moderate to hard; the time it takes to walk them varies from one hour to six and the routes can be followed using GPS. There are routes for every level of ability, so that no one is left complaining.

The footpaths on Skiathos have existed for years. The good news is, however, that this summer the Municipality of Skiathos, in collaboration with the organisation Paths of Greece, undertook the reorganisation of the entire network of footpaths on the island in order to meet the needs of the modern hiker, together with work to improve the walkability, promotional campaigns and the creation of a route accessible for the disabled. As well as, of course, the possibility of visiting the island for more of the year, as the best months for hiking are April and May, September and October.

Suggested routes

Do not leave the island before you have completed at least one of the walks below.

[From the Holy Monastery of Evangelistria to Kastro](#)

This is the most classic, the most charming and perhaps the most demanding route which will enrich you with the history of the island and views of the Aegean. The people of Skiathos moved their capital to Kastro, on the windiest rocky precipice of the island, seeking protection





from pirate raids. Within its strong walls they established a community of 400 houses and 30 churches (four of which still survive) and remained there for 450 years.

The path is arduous and has steps but the panoramic view of the Aegean from 70 m above sea level makes it worthwhile. Don't complain! You can drive from Chora (the main town on Skiathos) to the monastery of the Evangelistria (or Vangelistra as the locals call it), one of the most impressive pilgrimages you can make on the island. The flag hanging from the dome of the catholicon is not there by chance. It is a copy of the first Greek flag which was designed, woven and raised in the monastery in 1807.

From the Kastro to Panagia Doman and Panagia Kardasi

From the steps of the Kastro you can continue (downhill...) towards the church of Agios Ioannis (St John the Baptist) with its spring of cold water and Panagia Doman (here too there is water) and on to Kardasi, a half hour walk through a lush valley. And you can quench your thirst too.

From Panagia Kounistra to Agios Ioannis, the Hidden

Don't let your mind turn to... word play. Leave it to Papdiamantis, an unsurpassed wordsmith. The monastery of Panagia Eikonistria is named after the icon of the Panagia (Virgin Mary) which was found there, in the depths of the island, hung on a branch (it is now housed in the church of the Three Hierarchs in Chora). By following a short path into the least frequented area of the island you will find yourself at the 'invisible' chapel (thanks to the dense pine forest around it) of Agios Ioannis, and thus named the Hidden. Pause for breath before heading back again.

From Koukounaries to Strofilia

During the migration season in the area directly behind the beach of Koukounaries, the salt waters of the lake play host to rare migratory birds. The lake is surrounded by a forest of tall pines which hide it from the famous beach, but when you visit it after your swim, throw on some clothes and do not start exploring as a thoughtless bather. We are talking

of a place of significant ecological importance which is to be protected, and you must protect it too.

From Megas Gialos to the Harbour of Nikotsaras

From sea to sea, because this is Skiathos. From Megas Gialos the footpath leads to Lechouni and from there to a small, enclosed beach, the stronghold during the pre-revolutionary years of the freedom fighter Nikotsaras. The verdant ravine with its pine trees hanging down to the sea below, is possibly the least disturbed scenic location in Skiathos. And then back again.

Now finally, I leave you with an alternative walk a little outside Chora, in order to do some plane spotting. The length of the runway, only 1,628 x 30 m (!), makes it one of the most difficult in the world and consequently one of the sights of Skiathos. In practice this means - besides the great skill of the pilots - that planes fly at a low altitude for quite some time, so low that you think that if you reached out with your hands, you could grasp them!

WELLNESS TOURISM

Happier in Skiathos

At a time when we have an absolute need for balance, harmony and well-being, a destination like Skiathos, with its unique natural landscape, is ideal for wellness tourism.



You can relax by walking along the stunning footpaths, do yoga and meditation on the beach or swim in the turquoise waters.

The excellent Greek climate, in combination with the therapeutic properties of the sea and also the varieties of wild herbs which surround you throughout the island, all give you the feeling that you are in a natural spa.

Most hotels offer options to combine your holiday with some type of wellness programme. There are luxury packages available at five star hotels but also economy packages for all. The known American actress Goldie Hawn, who visits the island every year with her husband Kurt Russell, has claimed 'I am happier in Skiathos'. She urges everyone to visit the island for a mindful travel experience!





SPORTS TOURISM

Leisure with sport activities

In recent years sports tourism has become a growing industry on Skiathos. The island has the ability and infrastructure to host any type of event which is a draw for the visitor who is interested in taking part in sports, or watching sporting events with their families, enjoying action and vacation.

Skiathos Trail Run

Skiathos Trail Run Half-Marathon “In the paths of Papdiamantis” has developed into an annual meeting in the field of trail running, passing for the first time through Kastro wild beauty. The event’s aim is to strengthen the contact both of the inhabitants and the island’s visitors with the sports philosophy, as well as their acquaintance with the cultural heritage and the island’s natural environment’s inconceivable beauty. It is worth mentioning the substantial support by the ever-evolving volunteer family and the local community

that generously embrace this significant athletic event for our island. The Half-Marathon (18 years old & above) and the 10 klm Urban Trail Run (16 years old & above) in the cobbled streets of Skiathos town will be held on Sunday, 19 September 2021, for the 9th year. Our little friends will run as well, selected short distance routes. Co-organized by Skiathos Municipality, the environmental group EcoZin Skiathos and the environmental club of Skiathos Secondary School.

www.skiathosrun.gr



Skiathos Palace Cup

Since 2016, the sailing race, The Skiathos Palace Cup, has been organised at magical Koukounaries, one of the most beautiful beaches in the Mediterranean, with its unique habitat. During this three-day event many others are organised in parallel for the competitors and the public.

The race is organised by the Nautical Club of Skiathos and the District of Thessaly, while the race itself comes under the aegis of the Municipality of Skiathos with the support of the Hellenic Sailing Federation and the Skiathos Cultural Association.

The form of the Match Race, which is essentially a one-on-one competition between two boats along a predetermined sea course, promotes strong competitive spirits in the stun-

ning location of the bay of Koukounaries.

One of the major sponsors is the iconic Skiathos Palace Hotel, which, as it is amphitheatrically built with a view of the Koukounaries bay, provides a ring side seat for watching the competition.

The Nautical Club of Skiathos, with its permanent sailboat academy, open sea sailing classes, summer sailing programmes, participation of its members in competitions, important collaboration with other clubs, its social and environmental activities and recognized sporting events, has become one of the most active provincial clubs in Greece. Its specially designed summer programmes are directed mainly at visitors to the island and provide an opportunity to anyone who wants to enjoy the sport of sailing in the unique marine environment of Skiathos.



PLANE SPOTTING ON SKIATHOS

For aviation fans

The 'Alexandros Papadiamantis' airport on Skiathos was voted one of the most interesting for plane spotting, having caught the attention of the international community of plane spotters, a special audience which travels to photograph and follow the aircraft take-off and landing from near by.



The airport is located between two beaches. The impressive thing is that anyone can see the take-off and landing of every plane at such close quarters.

This only occurs in Skiathos and at St Martin in the Caribbean, however, the location in Skiathos is even more impressive. The municipality is planning to organize two spaces from which plane spotters, but also all visitors, can observe and take photographs in safety.

The 'Alexandros Papadiamantis' airport took third place, based on the preferences of the voters in the opinion poll organised by the British private aircraft charter company PrivateFly in 2020. More than 6,000 travellers, flight enthusiasts and aviators took part between February and March

2020, shortly before the extensive travel restrictions which were imposed world-wide to combat Covid-19.

Among the magical landscapes of Ireland and Tanzania and other impressive locations such as the islands of Bora Bora and the Seychelles, the 'Alexandros Papadiamantis' airport came third, as it offers stunning views of the island of Skiathos. The feeling that you could touch the sea a few seconds before landing is thrilling. Furthermore, 'to be just a few metres from the start of the runway is a truly special experience of how a plane makes a landing' according to passengers who visited Skiathos.

For 2020 74 airports were selected for the poll with very different criteria, such as their location and whether that was close to urban areas, in island, coastal or mountain areas. The list of participating airports was also based on those that had been most popular with voters in preceding years. Voters were asked to choose their favourite airport in every category with Skiathos airport featuring for the first time among the most 'Scenic Airports' in Europe. Voters commended the 'amazingly diverse landscape' of Donegal airport in Ireland which made first place and the 'beautiful beaches close to the airport' on Skiathos. The results of PrivateFly's 'Scenic Airports' annual poll was a wonderful reminder of the pleasure brought by travelling as well as by the flights themselves.



THE CUISINE OF SKIATHOS

Local gastronomy

The gastronomic delights of the island always were and continue to be special. In the past fishermen exchanged the treasures of the sea for the farmers' vegetables and oil. This bartering created a fragrant cuisine based on seafood and 'horta' (wild greens).



Fish stew (dentex, white grouper, dusky grouper and monkfish), fava (puree of yellow split peas) with sardines, 'tsoflia' (as the locals call crayfish and lobster) with courgettes and 'horta' from the mountains. Chard, sow thistle, chervil, innumerable wild greens are married magically with seafood, highlighting the aromas of the place.

les and mussels shimmer in the early light. They are cooked in a variety of ways: we can enjoy squid with 'horta' and onions, crayfish with courgettes and tomato, lobster with 'horta'. Seafood is accompanied with vegetables and 'horta', with legumes and different sauces, each one special thanks to the herbs added, most frequently fennel which

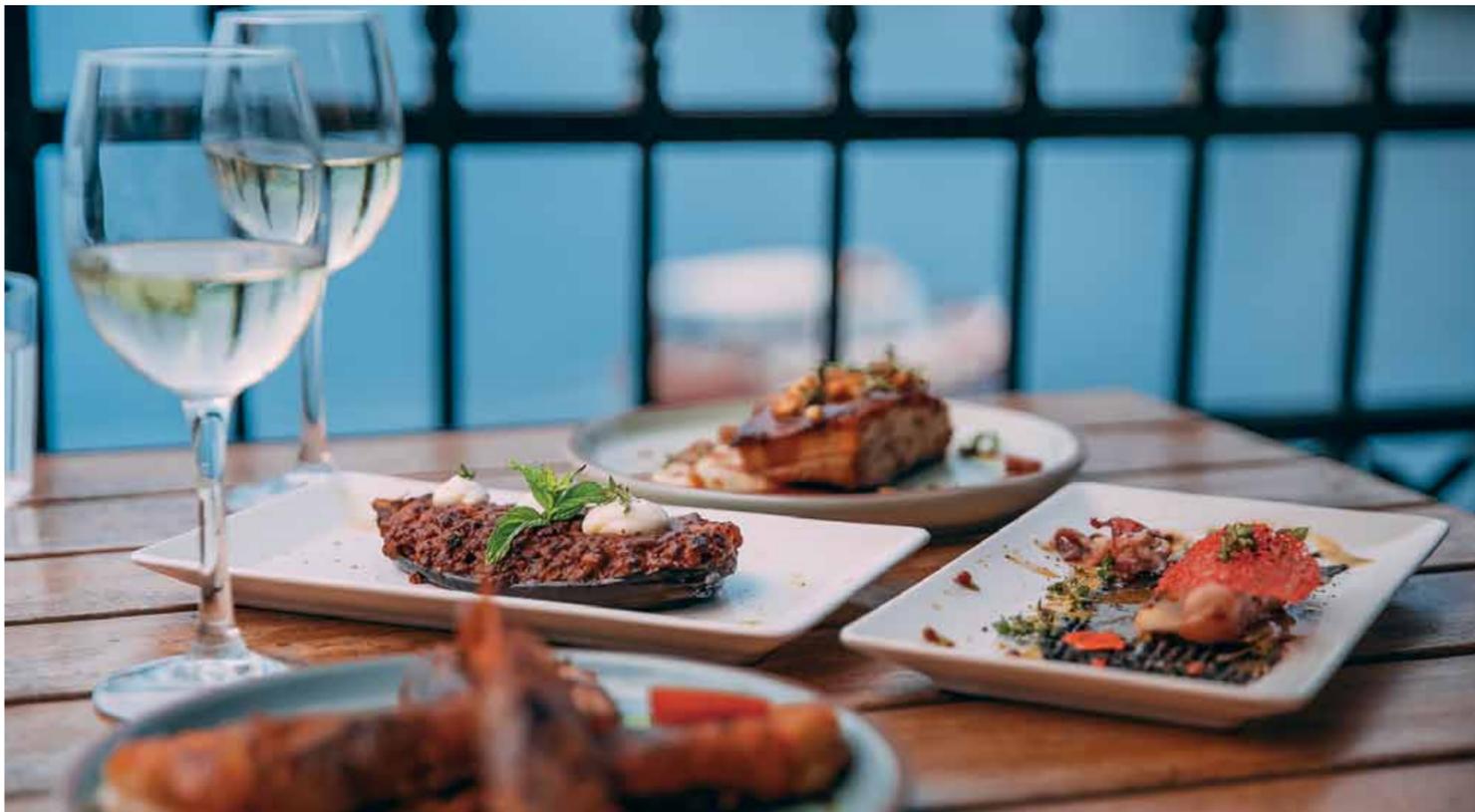
two great authors Papadiamantis and Moraitidis argued. One said 'Skiathos' and the other said 'Skopelos'. Papadiamantis with his special linguistic ability in his short story 'Mavromantilou' (Black Scarf Rock) describes with great pride the garden vegetables: '(...) their atoms mingled ceaselessly in shapes that were varied, unchanging and fluid, in rearing crests and lift-



You will find many varieties of fish and seafood in the rocky bays and small islets. The area around Lalaria, and around the islets, at Tsougrias or Kastro are spots that are considered good for fishing. Laid out in crates against the boats, pelagic fish for soups and grilling, bottom feeders for frying, squid, crayfish, prawns, lobster, cock-

grows abundantly on the island. Green olives can also be marinated with fennel. Wild 'horta' is also very tasty and goes well with seafood. And since there is 'horta', there is also 'hortopita' made with traditional filo pastry, the so-called 'kalapodia'. You can also taste the spiral shaped 'tiroпита' (cheese pie) over whose origin the

ing swells; they seethed, struck, thundered, sounded, smacked, and crashed against their fellows' [trans Lia Dain Sherrard, *The Boundless Garden*, Vol I]. The 'aspro' is a traditional dessert made with finely chopped almonds, sugar syrup and lemon. The secret is in the blending with the syrup. It needs to be well beaten until it turns white.



Traditionally a homemade walnut or cherry liqueur is served at festivals on Skiathos. The Women's Association prepares these and other fruit and botanical liqueurs, such as the aromatic rose geranium, in the traditional manner by leaving them for 40 days in the sun.

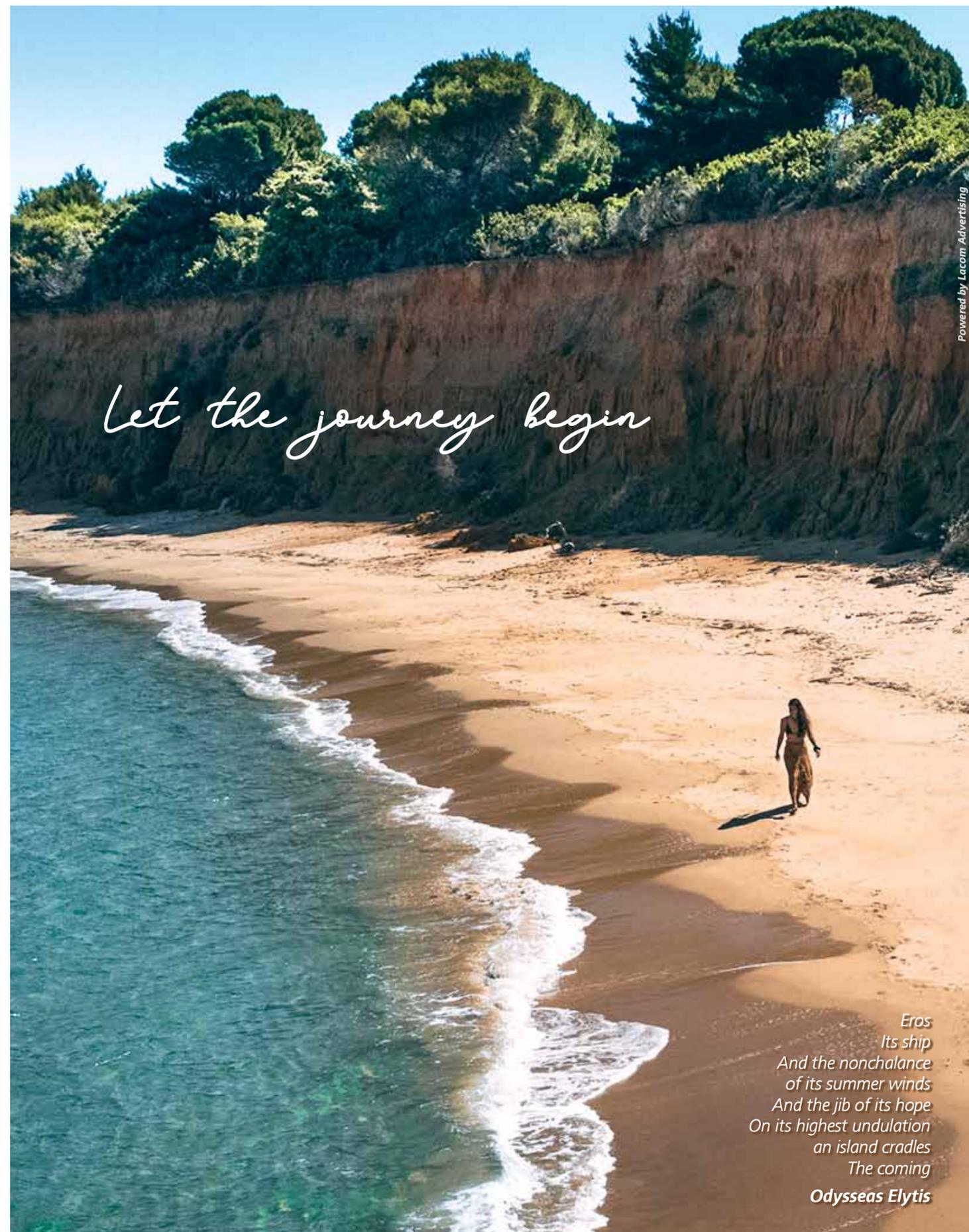
Sweets served at weddings include the famous 'hamalia', which is a mixture of walnuts and local pine honey, which is wrapped in filo pastry, fried and then dusted with icing sugar. Another classic choice is 'kidonopasta' (quince paste).

Your sweet tooth will be assuaged further by trying the local organic honey, which has achieved international recognition.

Anna Abatzoglou and Kostas Mantalaras started producing honey at the Skiathos Bee Farm in Koukounaries 7 years ago.

Wine tasting in the charming environs of the Parissis Winery, with high quality wine, in which the 'roditis' and 'malagouzia' grapes dominate, will complement your gastronomic experiences.

Skiathos recently, under the initiative of the municipality and with the support of the catering sector, contributed to George Pittas' book entitled 'Gastronomic communities' which records and highlights the wealth of gastronomic delights and wines at Greek destinations.



Let the journey begin

*Eros
Its ship
And the nonchalance
of its summer winds
And the jib of its hope
On its highest undulation
an island cradles
The coming
Odysseas Elytis*