

# Lefkada

The ideal destination for all those looking for:

- Unparalleled sandy beaches\*, seas in shades of turquoise.
- An unbelievable natural environment, a true ecological paradise.
- All the advantages of an island with none of its disadvantages since the island is linked to the mainland by a causeway measuring 50 m long.
- Easy access to the other Ionian Islands as well as important archaeological monuments and other sights on mainland Greece.
- A strong cultural tradition jam - packed with artistic and literary events.
- Friendly residents with a strong sense of humour who really know how to enjoy themselves.
- Good wine and delicious food at reasonable prices.

Many people who visit Lefkada just keep on coming back year after year as if it exerts some invincible pull over them that they cannot resist.

So why not visit Lefkada too and give in to its metaphysical power. Lefkada is sure to reward you.

\*The best beaches in the Mediterranean according to an internet poll.

# A few words about the island

Lefkada is the fourth largest island in the Ionian Sea located between Corfu and Cephalonia. A thin strip of sea which the first Corinthian settlers here dredged in the mid 7th century BC is all that separates the island from the prefecture of Akarnania, but having said that access is easy thanks to the causeway which links the two sides of this channel.

Lefkada owes its name to the island's most southerly tip, Cape Lefkatas, which in ancient times was known by the Greek name 'Leucas akra' or 'Leucas petra' meaning white end or white stone, referring to the white rock there.

Twenty four small and large satellite islands scattered across the sea form the Prefecture of Lefkada. This small chain of islands with its varying landscape and special features is a real challenge just crying out to be explored.

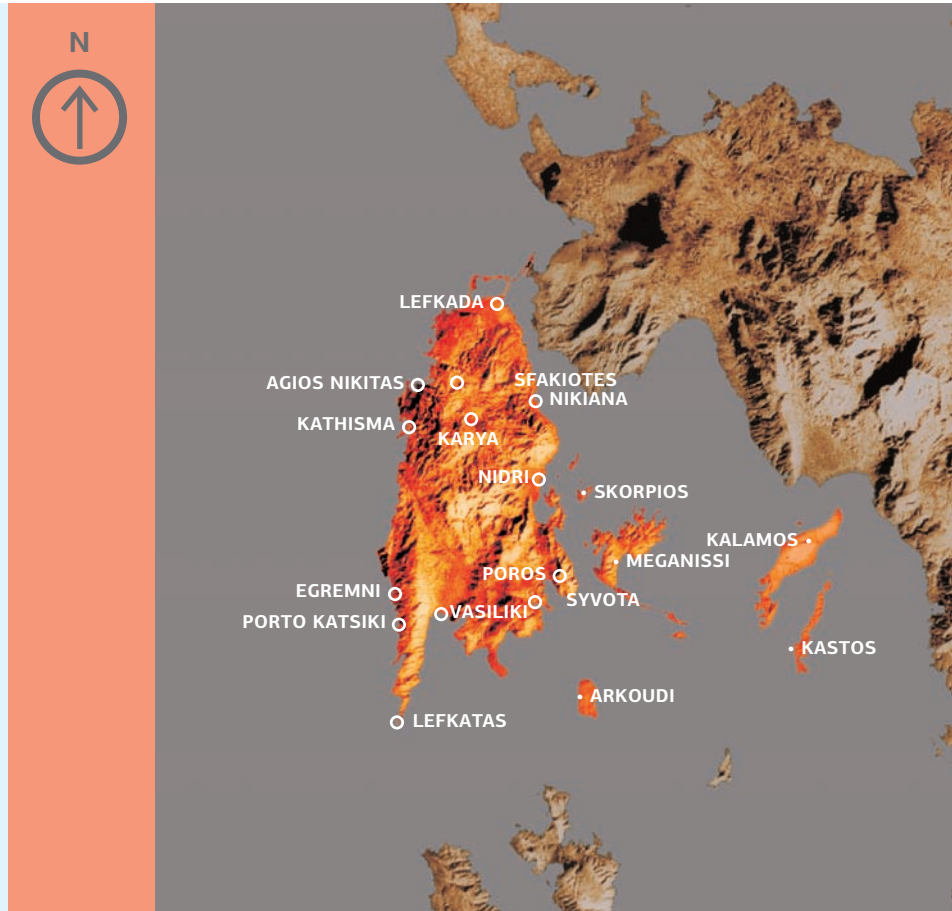
**Lefkada's history:** 3000 - 1100 BC: Grave finds from the Bronze Age.

7th century BC: Lefkada was a colony of Corinth and took part in the Naval Battle of Salamina, the battle of Plateae, and the



The causeway linking Lefkada to Akarnania

Satellite shot of Lefkada, the surrounding islands and part of Akarnania



# Lefkada's history

Peloponnesian War (as an ally of the Spartans).

**338 BC:** The island was conquered by Philip of Macedonia. Lefkada resisted Roman rule but was finally integrated into their Empire following a heroic defence of the island in the 2nd century BC.

**1204:** The island was incorporated into the Despotate of Epirus.

**1294:** Despot Nicephorus I married his daughter Maria to Giovanni Orsini, giving her Lefkada as a dowry.

**1331 - 1362:** The island was captured by the Angevins.

**1357:** Villagers on Lefkada rose up against Gratianus Zorze.

**1362 - 1479:** The family passed into the hands of the Tocci family.

**1479:** The island was captured by the Ottoman Turks.

**1502 - 1503:** Lefkada was temporarily under Venetian rule.

**1503 - 1684:** Recaptured and ruled by the Turks.

**1684 - 1797:** The island returned to Venetian rule with a short break (1715 - 1716) when the Turks recaptured it. The island capital was moved from Kastro to the Amaxiki plain, the location of the current day capital.

**1797:** The island was conquered by the French Republicans.

**1798 - 1807:** Russian - Turkish domination. In 1802 it joined the Ionian State, the first, small, semi - independent Greek state under Russian and Turkish 'protection'.

**1807 - 1810:** Lefkada was conquered by the Imperial Army of France.

**1810:** It passed to the English who integrated it into the Ionian Island State.

**1819:** The villagers of Lefkada revolted and people from the island participated in the 1821 Revolution.

**1864:** Integrated into Greece proper along with the other Ionian Islands.

Stater from Lefkada, 400-330 BC



From left:

- The Counts of Tocci's coat of arms
- The Counts of Orsini's coat of arms
- The Duke Walter's coat of arms

The bell tower of Santa Maura church in the Castle



Lefkada seen from the Castle.

Edward Lear, Views in the Ionian Islands, London 1863  
Lefkada Public Library Collection



The Santa Maura Castle





## Lefkada's Culture

Lefkada is the island which has brought forth some of the most important poets and leading figures from the arts and sciences at Greek and world level.

**Ioannis Zambelios** (1787 - 1856). Having studied in Italy and Paris (law, literature, philosophy) he returned to Lefkada, was appointed as Ionian Island State prosecutor, joined the 'Filiki Etaireia' and dedicated himself to national liberation becoming one of the leading members of that organization from Lefkada. He wrote 12 tragedies about the Greek situation.

**Spyridonas Zambelios** (1813 - 1881). Son of Ioannis Zambelios. An historian whose most important work is "Byzantine Studies" (1857), in which he attempted to demonstrate the unity of the Byzantine State. He was also a renowned author of novels.

**Aristotelis Valaoritis** (1824 - 1879). His poetry echoes with his love for his homeland, freedom and his admiration for the liberation fighters in the Greek Revolution of 1821. He represented Lefkada for many years in the Ionian Parliament where he struggled for unification with Greece from within the radical lines. When this dream came true he was elected to the national parliament.

**Lafcadio Hearn** (aka Yakumo Koizumi) (1850 - 1904). The author who made Japan and its culture known to the West. He is considered to be one of Japan's national writers.



Lafcadio Hearn



Aristotelis Valaoritis



**Angelos Sikelianos** (1884 - 1952). Poet and leading light behind the Delphic Idea. This visionary poet combined ancient Greek and Christian ideas in his poetry and in the process managed to make it resonate on a universal level.

**Kleareti Dipla - Malamou.** Poetess and prose writer, the first Greek woman to be awarded a prize by the Athens Academy.

**Nikos Svoronos** (1911 - 1989). Internationally acclaimed Byzantine Studies expert and leading scholar of Modern Greek history.

**Aristoxenus Skiadas** (1932 - 1994). Internationally acclaimed Classical Literature Professor and Vice Chancellor of the University of Athens.

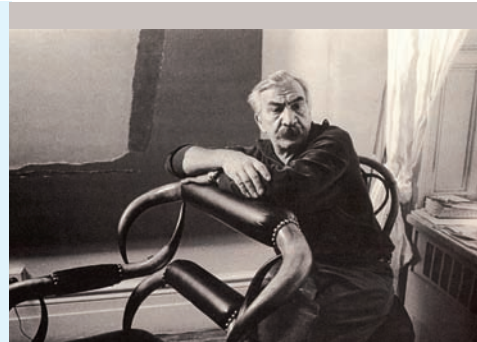
**Nikos Katiforis** (1903 - 1967). Prose writer, playwright and for many years contributor to the Rizospastis newspaper.

**Gerasimos Grigoris** (1907 - 1985). Award - winning author with two state literature prizes in 1958 and 1963.

**Theodoros Stamos** (1922 - 1997). Painter with an international reputation, innovator of abstract expressionism.

**Nanos Valaoritis.** Leading super-realist poet, prose writer and playwright.

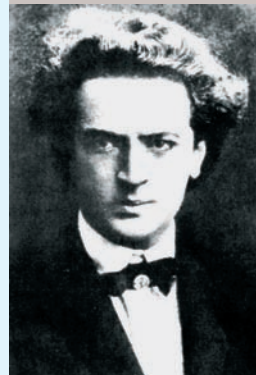
**Agni Baltsa.** Leading opera mezzo-soprano.



Theodoros Stamos  
Photo from the book by F. Piombinos "Stamos: Testimony to a Painter", Fagotto Publications 2003



Theodoros Stamos, Field with sun box 1963-1964  
National Art Gallery of Greece Collection



Angelos Sikelianos in 1909

Ὁ Λαγυρὸς κἀδὲν  
 ἔγινε ἀπὸ μὲν ἀπὸ  
 τῶν ἀντικειμένων πάλιν ἑαυτοῦ  
 Τὸν ἴππευ, ἴδιον ἔγινε  
 τῶν κειμένων τῶν ἀντικειμένων,  
 τῶν ἀντικειμένων τῶν κειμένων  
 καὶ ἔγινε τῶν ἀντικειμένων  
 τῶν κειμένων, ἢ ἀντικειμένων!

Archives Vivette Tsarlamba-Kaklamani

It was on Lefkada that institutions such as the Literature and Arts Festival and the International Folklore Festival first appeared, in 1955 and 1962 respectively, which are still held every year, building on old Ionian island traditions. These events were immediately embraced by the local community attracting throngs of tourists and have now been imitated right across Greece. During the summer a wide range of theatrical performances, music events, exhibitions, conferences and poetry readings are held, bolstering the island's cultural tradition. In August the streets of the island capital are filled with dancers from all over the world who fill the central square dancing and singing with flags and banners in front of them. These festivals have featured various exceptional moments over their long history such as the unscheduled appearance of Maria Callas in 1964, her last professional appearance before the Greek public.

After Corfu, Lefkada has the oldest Philharmonic Band in Greece dating from 1850. This venerable band has contributed to the musical education of the citizens of Lefkada and it has played a role in all important national moments such in 1864 when it celebrated the unification of the Ionian Islands with Greece, or 1896 when it participated in the Athens Olympic Games, or 1906 when it took part in the mid - Olympic Games, and so on. Also active on Lefkada are traditional dancing groups, choirs and mandolin bands which are renowned throughout Greece and abroad.

The Lefkada Philharmonic Band



Various Groups from the Folklore Festival

Group from Lefkada wearing traditional costumes









## Lefkada Town

The island capital was successively relocated from the area of Koulmos, to the Santa Maura castle (during the first decade of the 14th century) and once again in 1684 by the Venetian Morozini to the Amaxiki Plain where it is located today. It is built on a peninsula surrounded by the charming sea channel which separates the island from the mainland and the lagoon. This watery body reflects the capital's colourful houses, its verdant mountains and the sky. Further to the north is the fine circular line of Gyra Beach with its scattered trees and windmills that punctuate, and in doing so, highlight the view to the Ionian Sea which stretches out before us.

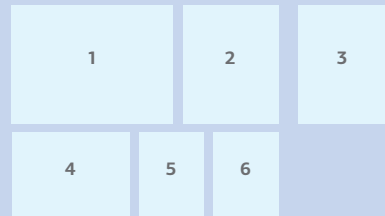
The island capital's layout follows that of medieval European towns. The town plan designed by the Venetians resembles a fish bone (or so they say) and is today the historical town centre.

The style of building on Lefkada is unique in Greece and Europe, and is a representative sample of how to build to withstand earthquakes. Traditional, multi - coloured houses and basilicas adorn the narrow winding streets with their intense colours and scented flowered, which overflow from both gardens and flowerpots.

Characteristic example of house architecture from Lefkada with the wooden frame showing outside

Lefkada town





1. The Shipyard in the Channel  
2, 3 The Pantokrator Church and detail from the façade of the church  
4, 5, 6. Characteristic views of the town.



## Lefkada's sights

### Lefkada's sights include:

**Its churches** (basilicas) with their unusual architecture influenced by the Venetians and their Ionian Island (post - Cretan school) wall paintings and delightful wooden carved iconostases, some of which are covered in gold leaf.

**The Archaeological Museum of Lefkada**, whose collection includes finds from Early and Mid - Bronze Age graves at Nydhri, the necropolis of the ancient city of Leucas and from various other areas on the island.

**The lagoon**, which includes one of the most remarkable wetlands in the Ionian region which is protected under the Ramsar Convention as an internationally important wetland, with an age - old fish farm. It is also home to a large number of charming bird species such as gulls, herons, swans, wild ducks, wild geese, etc.

**The Gramophone Museum**, a small private museum with gramophones, records, rare everyday objects, and decorative items, put together by a local dedicated collector.

**The Municipal Library** which is housed in a neo-classical building, former home of the Zoulinos Family. It has a large number of books and houses a rich collection of post - Byzantine icons primarily in the Ionian School by artists such as the Ionian Island hagiographers Doxaras, Patsaras, Roussos, etc.



Clockwise from top left:

- The Municipal Library
- Ag. Nikolaos Church
- The bell tower of the Panaghia ton Eisodion Church
- The interior of the Archaeological Museum



Santa Maura Castle, Ammoglossa, Gyra, the lagoon and Lefkada Town in the distance



**The Santa Maura castle** which protected the island capital from the first decade of the 14th century to 1684 and was its defence against both pirates and other enemies.

**The four windmills** at Gyra (all that is left of the twelve which once stood here). Most bear Russian names such as Orloff, Metzickoff, Moscovas and up until the beginning of the 20th century ground large quantities of wheat, much of which came from Russia.

**The Haramoglios Special Lefkadiaki Library** which houses a collection of books and other documents either written by residents of the island or referring to issues directly related to Lefkada. This collection has been listed in the Guinness Book of Records.

**The Theodoros Stamos Art Gallery** which hosts various exhibitions around the year.

**The Nikos Svoronos Library**, donated by Nikos Svoronos, which includes books, manuscripts, and personal mementos of this internationally renowned Lefkada man.

**The charming Ai Nikolas islet**, favourite place of Angelos Sikelianos, near the coast of Akarnania.

**The Olive Grove.** To the north of Lefkada town is the olive



1, 4. The western pier  
2. View of the Santa Maura castle  
3. Ai Nikolas Islet





Faneromeni Monastery and in the background the olive grove and Lefkada town

grove with its centuries - old olive trees which were planted on the initiative of the Venetians in 1684.

**The Church of Panaghia ton Vlachernon** lies amid the ash - green forest of olive trees here. On the last Sunday of the Orthodox Carnival, 1821 the chieftains and dignitaries of the Greek Mainland gathered there on the initiative of Ioannis Zambelios (eminent member of the 'Filiki Etaireia' in Lefkada) and confirmed that they would participate in the national struggle for liberation and would immediately declare revolution in their areas by taking an oath on a copy of the Holy Gospel, which has survived to this day.

**Kouzubey** is home to two traditional coffee shops which have survived in the shade of the centuries old olive trees, towering plane trees and poplars. These coffee shops serve up traditional Greek fruit preserves, delicious fried potatoes, a vanilla flavoured dessert and soumada. Amid the quiet reigning over the olive grove, time comes to a standstill at these coffee shops; the pace slows down as ad hoc backgammon tournaments are organized on the small metal tables to the sound of interminable conversations.

**Faneromeni Monastery.** On the lovely hill which crowns Lefkada town lies the Monastery of Panaghia Faneromeni, the island's patron. It is built on the site of the ancient temple of Artemis. The miraculous icon of the virgin which is housed by the monastery was made by the Athonite monk Benjamin Kontrakis in 1876 on Mount Athos.



The Kouzoubey coffee shops



Panaghia Vlachernon Church



Panaghia Faneromeni's icon



## Lefkada's Marina

One of Lefkada's most recent acquisitions is its marina, the most modern in Greece, which is located on the eastern edge of the town. It can berth up to 500 vessels and its building facilities include a control tower, multi - purpose building, sailing club, office and retail unit complex, a small hotel, vessel repair and maintenance unit, spacious parking lots for cars, over - wintering facilities for 300 vessels, and leisure and green areas. The total length of its seawalls is 1,700 m and its floating jetties 940 m.



# Eastern Lefkada

The island's eastern side is calm and quiet with strongly developed tourist infrastructure. Here the beaches are welcoming, the sea shallow. Leeward bays are ideal for yachts taking on supplies, taverns operate on the seashore and tourists can easily enjoy water sports.

Kariotes, Lygia, Nikiana, Periyali, Nydhri, Vlycho, Yeni, Desimi, Poros, Syvota and Vasiliki draw the most visitors.

Nydhri, the island's best developed resort, dominates the eastern side of Lefkada. Every summer it is awash with tourists who can find modern hotels, restaurants, night clubs, water sports, and the wonderful view of the bay and the surrounding area there. In front of Nydhri lie smaller islands spotted across the sea; Madouri belonging to the Valaoritis Family, Skorprios and Sparti to the Onassis Family, Skorpidi, Meganissi (home island of the Taphians, mentioned by Homer) and the Ag. Kyriaki Peninsula where the German Homer expert Dörpfeld is buried, according to whom Lefkada has a strong claim to the Homeric Ithaca.

Vasiliki has tourist facilities but has managed to retain its charm. It has some of the best waters worldwide for wind-surfing.

The port at Lygia



Ayiofylli Beach



Alikes Alexandrou at Kariotes



Syvota



- 1. Nikiana
- 2. Desimi Bay at Vlychos
- 3. Vasiliki Harbour
- 4. Vasiliki Bay

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1. Fokotrypa at Kastos
2. Kalamos
3. Madouri, home to Aristotelis Valaoritis
4. Aristotelis Onassis
5. Mikros Yialos Beach at Poros
6. Skorpios, Aristotelis Onassis' private island.



Nydhri, Madouri, Skorpis, Meganissi in the background, Vlychos Bay to the right, Yeni, and Aghia Kyriaki









Meganissi



# Western Lefkada

- 1. Ai Yannis Beach
- 2. Pefkoulia
- 3. Cape Lefkatas
- 4. The Stavrou Estate (near Ai Yannis)



The island's western side, moulded by wonderful rock falls, has a wild, grandiose air to it, with its precipitous rocks and wide open seas. The green colour dominates here in the form of pines stretching down to the sea and cypresses, olives trees, and Judas trees and the entire range of Mediterranean shrubs are to be found here and some remaining vineyards, the nostalgic reminder of the wine making tradition here, which was once the mainstays of farmers in the area.

Some of the most beautiful beaches in Europe also lie along Lefkada's western shoreline including Kastro Beach, Ai Yannis, Pefkoulia, Mylos, Kathisma, Yialos, Egremni and Porto Katsiki. Here one can find sandy beaches with crystal clear waters, with trees reaching right down to the water's edge in some cases or in others with rocks violently, yet magnificently slicing the coastline. These are beaches to stir the spirit...

The west coast ends in Cape Lefkatas also known as Kavos tis Kyras or Kavos tis Niras Cape (as the locals call it) where the temple of Apollo stood in antiquity. According to mythology it was founded by Odysseus' companion Leucadius. In ancient times human sacrifices took place on this cape's precipitous rocks while tradition has it that jumping from Cape Lefkatas can save one from the passions of unrequited love. Myth has it that Sappho jumped from this point into the waters of the Ionian to save herself from her unrequited love for Phaon.





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1. Egremni

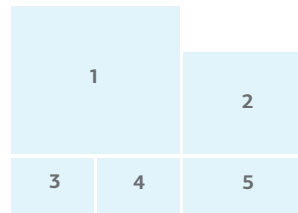
2. Porto Katsiki viewed from on high (opposite page)











- 1. Kathisma
- 2. Panoramic shot of the traditional village of Aghios Nikitas
- 3. Gialos Beach
- 4. Mylos Beach in Agios Nikitas
- 5. Aghios Nikitas



## The interior

The mountainous interior of Lefkada has retained its agricultural character untouched to a great degree. The first group of charming villages one comes across moving inland consists of Spanohori, Lazarata, Kavalos, Asprogerakata, and Pinakohori, which make up the Municipality of Sfakiotos. The villages of Drymonas and Exanthia with their wonderful views over the Ionian Sea also belong to the same Municipality. A little further on is Karya (Lefkada's most important village), Englouvi famed for its lentils, Vafkeri abundant in both water and plane trees, Alexandros, Platistoma and Syvros.

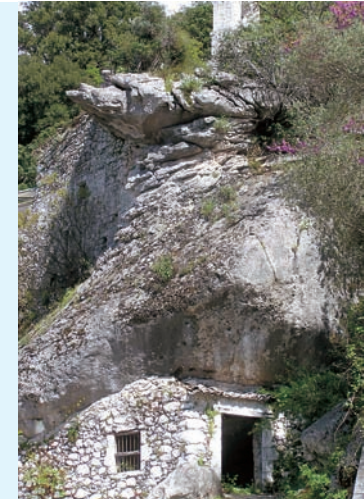
In these villages many women still wear the traditional island costumes. However, the landscape here is never monotonous with wonderful plains stretching out before the eyes dotted with old churches and ruined monasteries, or dry stone walls climbing the sides of mountains, like the stepped seating of ancient theatres, built by the old residents of the island to hold back the soil on the mountain slopes for their crops.

In the island's interior one can come across scattered windmills and water mills, gorges such as the picturesque Melissa Gorge, and wonderful churches and monasteries. These include the Aghios Georgios Monastery in Skari, the Ag. Pateres Hermitage, the famed Ai Yannis in the Monastery in Livadi (Plain), the historic Kokkini Ekklesia Monastery in Platistoma, the Asomatos Archangel Michael Monastery in Vafkeri with its major wall paintings, and the Ai Yannis Monastery in Rhodaki whose foundations rest on the ruins of the ancient temple of Demeter.

The Kokkini Ekklesia (Red Church) in Platistoma



The Agii Pateres Monastery



The Ai Yannis Monastery in the plain of Karya

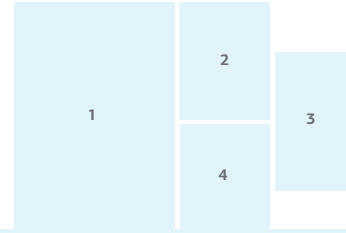


Vaults in Aghios Donatos





photo: THANOS PAPADOPOULOS



1. Karya
2. The Kerasia Spring at Syvros
- 3, 4. The waterfalls at Dimosari

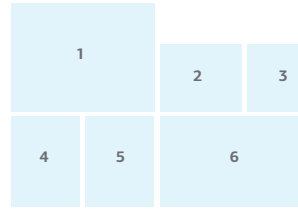


- 1. A vineyard at Sfakiotes
- 2. Threshing floor on the Englouvi plateau
- 3. Drymonas
- 4. The Asomatos Archangel Michael Monastery in Vafkeri
- 5. Kalamitsi

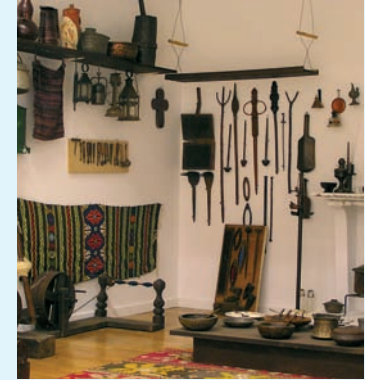
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1. Interior of the Ai Yannis Church in Alatro
2. Greek Musical Instruments Museum in Neohori  
P. Tsatsoula collection
3. The Folk Museum in Kavalo (Sfakiotes)
4. Kavalos
5. Traditional costumes worn by newlyweds
6. Interior of a house in traditional Lefkada style



# Sports

Two of the best beaches for windsurfing worldwide (Vasiliki and Ai Yannis), the ideal wind conditions for kite surfing, waters suitable for safe diving, the opportunities for trekking and mountain biking over the mountains, gorges and ravines make Lefkada the ideal place to practice or learn sports that make a visit to the island's natural wealth a pleasure.

Over recent years the World Speedboat Formula III Championship has been held on the island's eastern side with a large international following.

Between April and mid - September westerly and north - westerly winds ('maistros' and 'pouentes') blow on Lefkada, and southerly winds ('ostria') to a lesser extent, making a yacht or dinghy the ideal way to explore its beautiful beaches, many of which are inaccessible from dry land. The shades of the sea, the constant changes in landscape, the satellite islands one meets along the way, the quiet bays with the opportunities for taking on fresh supplies that they offer, make wandering, following the route taken by Odysseus himself, an enchanting affair.

Parachuting at Kathisma

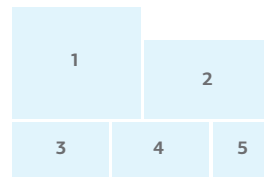


Mountain Bike



Hang gliding with the Lefkada Air Sports Club





- 1. Kite-surfing at Ai Yannis
- 2. Yacht races
- 3. Surfing at Ai Yannis
- 4. 5. Sailing – Canoeing



# Lefkada's products

Visitors to the island should try honey prepared from thyme grown at Athani, traditional sesame seed pasteli bars and nougat, soumada (an almond-based soft drink), oil from the centuries - old olive groves, lentils from Englouvi village, salami and sausages, fish roe from the fish farm ('ivari') of the lagoon and white and red wine, all products of Lefkada. Of particular note is the wine made from the rare Vertzami grape variety grown in the Municipalities of Sfakiotes, Karya, Apollonia and Ellomenos at altitudes between 200 and 700 meters, considered to be one of the best varieties grown in Greece.

Embroidery from Karya is also famous. Its unique style of embroidery is not to be found anywhere else in Greece.

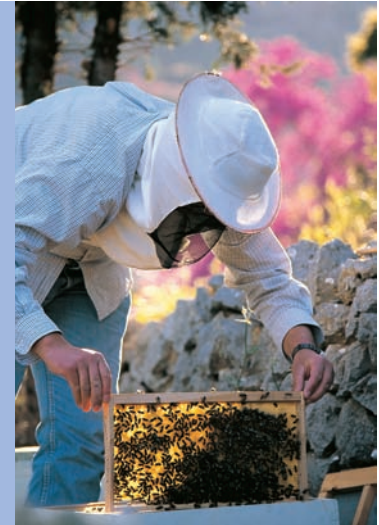
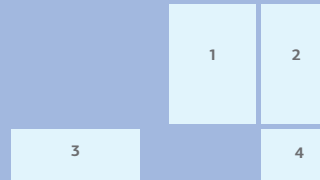


photo: THANOS PAPADOPOULOS www.pragma.gr

- 1. The Fish farm in the lagoon
- 2. A beekeeper at Karya
- 3. The Vertzami grape variety
- 4. Returning home after fishing





## Useful Information

### HOW TO GET THERE

**By road:** Lefkada is an island you can get to by car without paying ferry boat fares by using the causeway that links the island to Akarnania. Lefkada Town lies 378 Km from Athens with 5 Inter-City bus itineraries a day (the bus trip takes 5 hours). Thessaloniki lies 420 km away and there are 2 daily itineraries per week (7 hours).

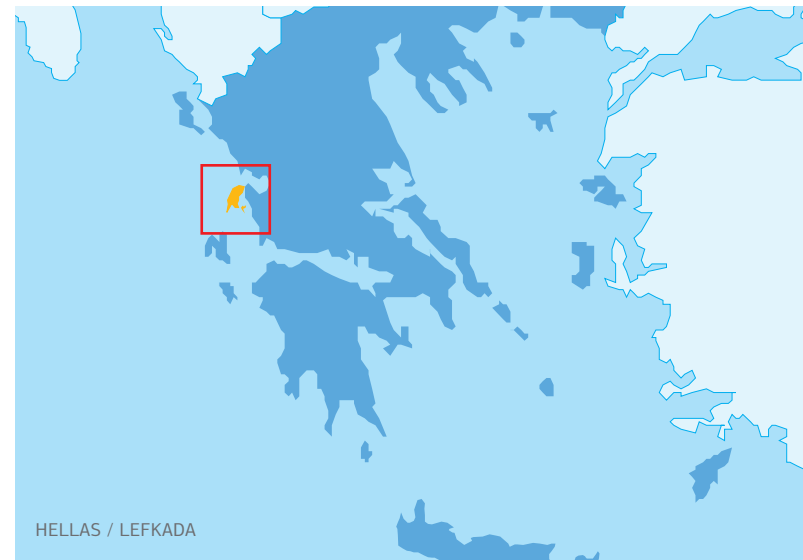
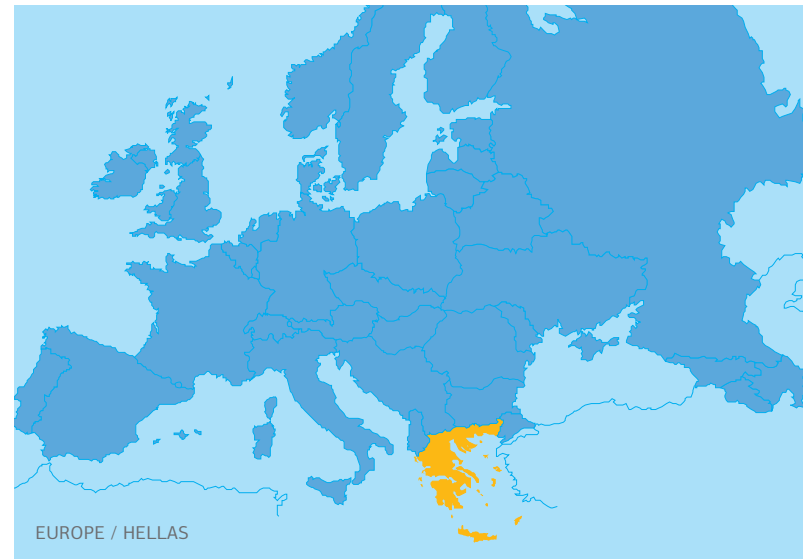
The Preveza – Aktio Submerged Tunnel makes access to the island easy from Northwest Greece and from the port of Igoumenitsa (100 km) which is a major gateway to Western and Central Europe.

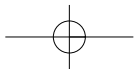
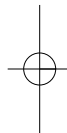
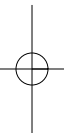
The opening of the Rio – Antirrio Bridge will significantly improve connections between Lefkada and the rest of Greece and the port of Patra (170 km) which is the second major gateway to Europe.

**By Air:** From Athens to the Aktio International Airport which lies 18 km from Lefkada Town (daily flights). There are also flights from Thessaloniki and Crete (Sitia) twice a week. During the summer there are direct flights from Europe to Aktio.

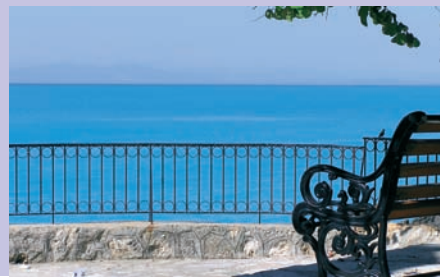
### Links to surrounding islands

There are daily ferry boat itineraries from Nydhri and Vasiliki to Cephalonia (Fiscardo), Ithaca (Frikes), and Meganissi. Also small tour boats sail to nearby islands and beaches. There are also flights from Lefkada to the islands of Corfu, Zakynthos and Cephalonia.





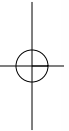






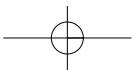
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LOCAL DIALLING CODE:	26450	ASSOCIATION OF RENTED ROOMS:	21266-7, 21608
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