

A nighttime photograph of the harbor of Igoumenitsa, Greece. The scene is illuminated by the warm lights of the town and the harbor, which are reflected in the calm water. A large ferry ship is docked on the right side of the harbor. In the background, dark, rugged mountains rise against a deep blue twilight sky. The overall atmosphere is serene and picturesque.

# IGOUMENITSA

OPENS UP

A WHOLE **NEW GREECE**



A wide-angle photograph of Igoumenitsa, Greece, at night. The town is built on a hillside, with its lights reflecting in the calm water of the harbor. In the background, large, dark mountains rise against a deep blue twilight sky. The overall scene is serene and picturesque.

It will be our great pleasure to welcome your esteemed passengers to Igoumenitsa and offer our warm hospitality as they come ashore to discover the ancient land of Epirus and some of Greece's best kept secrets.





# Here are some good reasons for choosing Igoumenitsa as a port of call:

- Located along the way of very established cruise itineraries.
- Modern port and passenger terminal infrastructure.
- Win-win energy saving option - adding originality without adding fuel cost.
- Extensive passenger handling experience.
- Strong destination experience with high selling tour potential.
- Excellent accessibility by road to all main attractions.





# the port

## BRIEF HISTORY

The modern day history of our port begins in 1939, shortly after the city of Igoumenitsa was declared capital of Thesprotia Prefecture. The first regular ferry services were established here in the 1950s', linking Greece's northwest mainland to Corfu and Paxoi islands. In those days there was little by way of port infrastructure and only small ships could approach and had to remain at anchor while passengers were tendered and cargo was moved with barges. In the 1960s' the historic Hellenic Mediterranean Lines inaugurated regular ferry services to Italy and a pier was

constructed in what today is the "Old Port". From then on business grew rapidly and before long Igoumenitsa was well on its way to becoming one of the largest ro/pax ports in the Mediterranean. Meanwhile, by the late 90s' a three-phased development project was already on the way towards expanding our infrastructure and in 2001, our Port Authority was incorporated and restructured to meet modern international standards. Currently about 3 million passengers, 650,000 private cars and 250,000 trucks travel through our port each year.

## Toward a bright future

The completion of our development project's Phase B in 2011 greatly increases our port's capabilities, particularly with regard to passenger shipping services, and this encourages an optimistic view of the future. Among our highest priorities is to become an important Mediterranean cruise port. Certainly, the bulk of our year round business will continue to be ferries and cargo, but we have designed our New Port in such a way so as to be able to operate diverse activities without disruptions between them. This is why we have allocated the docking area closest to the city centre and one of our new terminals for serving cruise calls, keeping ferry and cargo activities well separated.

When it comes to cruising, our philosophy is based on flexibility and our willingness to customize our services to each different brand, working closely with operators to achieve their fullest possible satisfaction.



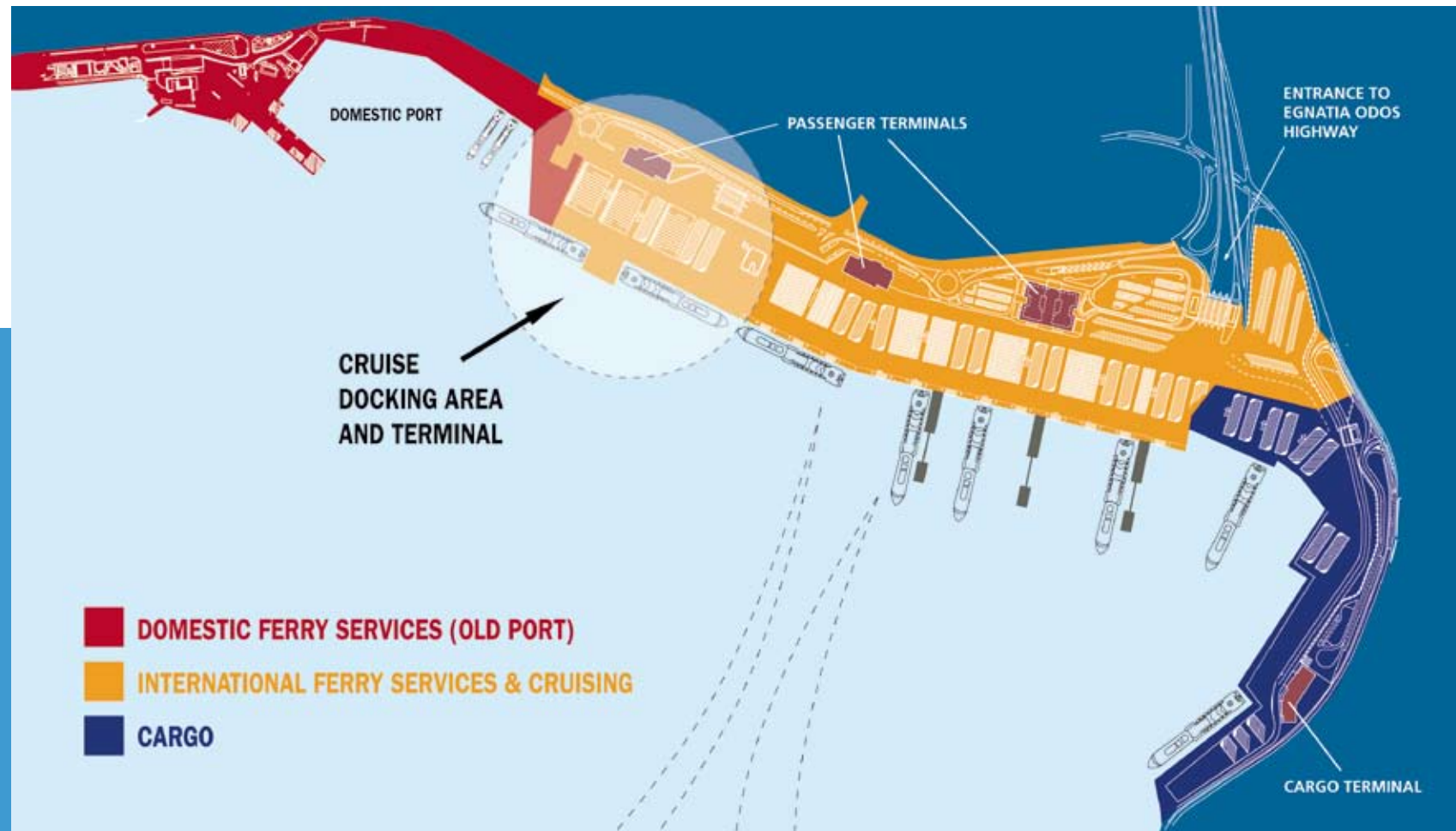
We believe that certain competitive advantages with regard to passenger shipping that made us one of the European Union's Category A ports are also applicable to cruising. They are:

- Strategic position that offers a convenient call option for eastbound and westbound East Mediterranean itineraries with home ports in the Adriatic or further west.
- Immediate access from the port to a new highway system that opens up an entire range of tourist attractions previously inaccessible to the cruise lines.
- Adequate infrastructure for vessels of all sizes, contemporary port facilities and extensive passenger handling experience.

# Why cruising?



# a modern PORT



**Location:** 39° 32' N & 20° 18' E

**Maximum Ship Dimensions:**  
Gross tonnage: 54,310  
LOA: 225m / Breadth: 30.39  
Draught: 10m / A1-A2-A3

**Quays**  
Total number of quays: 12  
Total length of quays: 781 m  
Quay depth: 10.5 m  
Passenger terminals: 3

**Approach Information:**  
From canal's entry to port 15'  
**Entry Canal:** 1,700 m length / 170 m width / 10.5 m depth  
**Maneuvering area:** 12-18 m depth

**Tidal movement/range:** No tides  
**Wind Conditions:** Prevailing Northwesternly

**Pilot:** No  
**Tugs:** Yes one (1) tug boat  
**Fenders:** Yes, on each pier  
**Waste Handling:** Yes, solid and liquid waste handling  
**Water:** Yes  
**Bunkering:** Yes  
**ISPS:** Yes

**Anchorage:** Yes  
**Ship tenders allowed:** Yes  
**Ferry Services:**

**Domestic:**  
Kerkyra (Corfu) / Paxoi / Cefallonia  
**International:**  
Venice / Ancona / Bari / Brindisi  
**Distances / Transportation**  
City centre: 1 Km  
Airport: 80 Km (Ioannina) 92 Km (Aktion)

**Port Operating Hours:**  
24 hours

**Harbor Master:**  
+30 26650 99400

**Address:**  
Igoumenitsa Port Authority  
Central Passenger Terminal  
New Port, 461 00 Igoumenitsa  
Greece / Tel: +30 26650 99300  
E-mail: [olig@olig.gr](mailto:olig@olig.gr) / [www.olig.gr](http://www.olig.gr)





# the city



## EARLY HISTORY

Although Thesprotia was inhabited since prehistoric times, there is no archaeological evidence to support the existence of an organized settlement on the site of modern Igoumenitsa during archaic, classical and Hellenistic times. Also, there was never a port in that location during antiquity. However, many ancient settlements were discovered in the greater area of Igoumenitsa and among the most notable are Gitana, Elea, Doliani (Fanoti) and Dymocastro, all founded by Thesprotian tribes around 4th Century BC. Among the later settlements in the area is Toroni, a sizeable colony of Kerkyra (Corfu) that flourished during the Classical period.

Most of these ancient cities were destroyed by the Romans in 167 BC, during the vindictive campaign that followed a major Macedonian defeat. Thesprotia was finally annexed by Rome in the 1st Century AD and it was during that period that a relatively extensive Early Christian settlement developed at Ladochori, now a part of the city of Igoumenitsa. A Roman villa and elaborately carved sarcophagi were discovered there and it seems that this settlement managed to survive the fall of Rome and continue through to the 3rd Century AD. During Roman times, the Gulf of Igoumenitsa was used as an occasional anchorage and bridgehead to Epirus.



## BEYOND ANTIQUITY

With the dissolution of the “Pax Romana”, Thesprotia and all of Epirus suffered constant barbaric invasions until the Byzantines managed to take full control of the area in late 9th Century AD. In 1204, a successor state known as the Despotate of Epirus emerged in the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade and ruled the region until it surrendered to the Byzantine Empire in 1337. In the late 13th Century there are again references to the Gulf of Igoumenitsa as a safe anchorage, but still no mention of a port.

In the period between medieval times and the 20th Century, the much prized coast of Thesprotia changed hands several times, alternating between Venetian, Ottoman, English and French rule. In fact, the Venetians were first to make reference to a “Porto delle Gomenizze”, from which the name Igoumenitsa was probably later derived. Throughout the Ottoman era and into the 20th Century the gulf of Igoumenitsa was frequently used by the Sultan’s fleet and a small coastal fort was built there, still visible on the hill above today’s mod-

ern city. The Ottomans also built a regional Command Post near today’s port and although Igoumenitsa did not yet exist, the site of its future centre was already considered a sort of regional administrative capital.

When Thesprotia was liberated by the Greek forces in 1913, there was still no organised town as such where today’s city is located, nor was there a nearby settlement named Igoumenitsa. Instead, the surrounding area was peppered with tiny villages, the largest being Grava with barely 300 inhabitants. With liberation, all these small settlements began to gravitate towards the Turkish Command Post, drawn by its former administrative importance and the modest trading activity that had been established around it in the late Ottoman years. As the area grew and local populations converged, a town began to emerge that was soon to be named Igoumenitsa. Though still a small newborn town of 750 inhabitants in 1936, Igoumenitsa’s potential was considered promising enough to declare it capital of the Prefecture of Thesprotia.



# modern times



In 1944, Igoumenitsa was reduced to cinders by retreating German troops and began its post war life struggling to hold on. Fortunately it wasn't long before the gifted location of its harbour attracted shipping interest and in the 1950s' the first ferry services linking Greece's northwest mainland to the islands of Corfu and Paxoi were inaugurated. In the 1960s' a regular ferry link with Italy was established, triggering the rapid economic growth that followed. During this fortuitous period Igoumenitsa went from shambles to city in leaps and bounds, quickly reaching its present size of 32,000 hectares and over 15,000 inhabitants. Evidently, the pressing expediency of such explosive development took a toll on city planning and architectural values, but one must not forget that Igoumenitsa was rebuilt from ground zero and unlike many coastal towns in this region, it never really had an historic quarter to fall back on. Still, the marvellous natural setting that surrounds it and its bustling liveliness are saving graces that give Igoumenitsa a certain character of its own.

## a cruise friendly port city

There are excellent beaches in and around the city and in the summer there is much seaside activity and passing tourism. However, unlike most sea transport hubs, trucks & other ferry related traffic does not flood the city thanks to the port's immediate exit to Egnatia Highway. This unique feature is a benefit for the cruise lines, since it allows for a quick and efficient dispatch of long tours, without the delay of a city drive-through. In addition, it is important to note the port's close proximity to the city centre. Just a short walk from dockside there are many cafés, bars, shops and restaurants ready to welcome cruise passengers who opt not to go on tours or crew members seeking a short break ashore.







# egnatia highway

Egnatia Highway opens up a wide range of exciting destinations, previously inaccessible to cruise lines. Its direct access to the port also allows for a quick and efficient dispatch of distant shore excursions without the risk of a city drive-through delay.





METEORA

ZAGORI & VIKOS GORGE

METSOVO

IOANNINA & DODONI THEATRE

IGOUMENITSA & THESPROTIA

PARGA & NECROMANTEION

ARTA, PREVEZA & NICOPOLIS

A map of Greece showing various travel destinations marked with red dots. Lines connect these dots to labels in a sidebar on the left. The destinations include Meteora, Zagori & Vikos Gorge, Metsovo, Ioannina & Dodoni Theatre, Igoumenitsa & Thesprotia, Parga & Necromanteion, and Arta, Preveza & Nicopolis. The map also shows major cities like Venice, Dubrovnik, Durrës, Athens, Thessaloniki, and others across the Balkans and the Aegean Sea.

**METEORA**

- UNESCO World Heritage Site
- Curious geological formation
- Hermit caves
- Byzantine pinnacle monasteries
- Great Meteoron Museum

**IGOUMENITSA & THESPROTIA**

- Archaeological Museum
- Monastery of Giromeri
- Yacht havens of Syvota & Platania
- Filiates and other traditional villages
- Byzantine churches
- Unusual ancient sites
- Beautiful countryside

**ZAGORI & VIKOS GORGE**

- Superb natural setting
- Magnificent mountain villages
- Great architectural and cultural value
- Folkloric & historical museum
- Churches and Monasteries
- Unique Stone Bridges
- Voidomatis River

**PARGA & NECROMANTEION**

- Scenic coastal drive
- Charming seaside resort
- 16th Century Castle
- Acheron River Delta
- Ancient “Oracle of the Dead”

**METSOVO**

- Historic Epirus market town
- Traditional architecture
- Averoff Art Gallery
- Monastery of Saint Nicholas
- Museum of Folk Art
- Katogi Winery
- Churches of Agia Paraskevi & Virgin Mary
- Tositsa Foundation & Cheese Dairy

**ARTA, PREVEZA & NICOPOLIS**

- Byzantine Arta
- Stone Bridge of Arta
- Coastal Preveza
- Old Quarter & Seytan Bazaar
- Ali Pasha’s Castles
- Roman Nicopolis
- Archaeological Museum

**IOANNINA & DODONI THEATRE**

- Beautiful lakeside setting
- Byzantine & Ottoman walled city
- Many museums
- Traditional silversmiths
- Lake island village
- Byzantine Monasteries & Churches
- Theatre of Dodoni

**Genuine Destination Originality**

Excellent access to the region’s highlights via the new Egnatia Highway





# Meteora

UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE

Meteora literally means “suspended in mid air”, which is probably the best way to describe this sublime merging of geological drama and religious spirituality. The amazingly imposing rocks of Meteora were formed about 60 million years ago and evidence dates human presence there as far back as 50,000 years. Christian hermitage probably started around the 12th Century, but it was not until the 14th Century that these precariously perched monasteries began to emerge. By this time, older forms of one-man ascetic hermitages had given way to more organized groups of monks, who formed orders and proceeded with the seemingly impossible task of constructing buildings on these steep and inaccessible peaks. Typically, each monastery would comprise of a church, cloistered living quarters or cells, a refectory, a library and in some cases, a treasury. For many centuries, travelers and monks had to be hauled up to these remote sanctuaries in a basket or net at the end of a rope. Of the six monasteries still active today, Great Meteoron and Varlaam are the two largest and most visited.

Igoumenitsa  
to Kalambaka

180 Km

## PRESERVING THE LEGACY OF BYZANTIUM

The decline of the Byzantine Empire and the parallel rise of the Serbian kingdom in the 14th Century ushered in a period of unrest that urged an increasing number of hermits, anchorites and fugitive monks to seek refuge in the safety of the “stone forest” at Kalambaka. This eventually led to the founding of about thirty monasteries and the establishment of the largest monastic cluster in Greece after Mt. Athos. Access to the six surviving monasteries that can be visited is a lot less challenging these days. Gone are the rickety wooden ladders and the hoisted net baskets, but at Great Meteoron one can still see the small tower-like structure that housed the windlass that helped connect the monastery to the outside world. During the often steep drive to the contemporary access points, the otherworldliness of the surrounding scenery is completely astounding. In some abrupt rock faces one can still see recesses and small caves that were used as dwellings by early hermits, some dating back to the 12th Century. The small church of Panagia Doupiani is also along the way, once the catholicon of the convent that claimed primacy over the region before the founding of Great Meteoron





It is probably the earliest monastery in Meteora founded by the Athonite monk Athanassius around 1356. The main church or catholicon is dedicated to the Transfiguration and has a typical 14th Century edifice with some later additions, while the apse carries a pattern strongly reminiscent of Mt. Athos. The interior of the church is painted in a Byzantine manner, with many scenes from the life of Jesus, and there is a delightfully elaborate wood carved iconostases. Around the catholicon there are several monastic buildings, such as a 16th Century double domed refectory, a fifty cell cloister, a library and two chapels.



# Great Meteoron



# Moni Varlaam

Situated in an adjacent summit to the Great Meteoron, it was founded in the 16th Century by the brothers Nektarios and Theophanis Apsarades of Ioannina. It is actually built on the site of a 14th Century hermitage that was occupied by the apocryphal Varlaam, a saint whose legendary life somehow resembles that of the Buddha. The All Saints catholicon is decorated with remarkable 16th Century frescoes and there is a particularly splendid depiction of the Last Judgment. There are also several other well preserved monastic buildings, as well as a library and a well appointed guest house.







Among other monasteries worth visiting are Agios Nikolaos Anapafsàs, with wonderful frescoes by the famous 16th Century Cretan School artist Theophanes, the photogenic and most precariously perched Rousanou and Agios Stephanos, now a convent.



REACHING FOR THE  
HEAVENS





# Metsovo

## A TRADITIONAL EPIRUS MARKET TOWN



There are references to Metsovo dating back to the 13th Century AD and it was always an affluent regional market town, thanks to its strategic location on the road to Ioannina. It later came to play an important national role, as wealthy Metsovites contributed vast sums toward the state building effort that followed Greece's liberation from Ottoman rule.

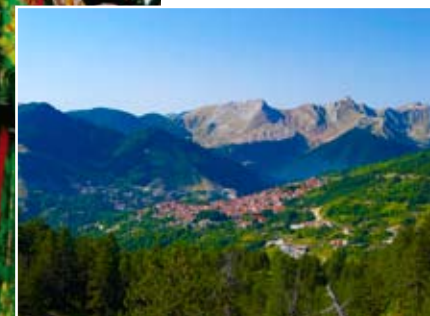
Sprawling on the steep slopes of Mt Pindos amidst stunning alpine countryside, Metsovo is truly one of the jewels of Epirus and living testament to the region's fame for skilled stonemasonry. Apart from the Averoff Art Gallery, there is a small folkloric museum, the churches of Agia Paraskevi and the Virgin Mary, the Monastery of St Nicholas and a remarkable winery. In the town's main square there are many restaurants to sample authentic local cuisine and several shops that sell local products, including the famous Metsovone smoked cheese and traditional crafts.

Igoumenitsa  
to Metsovo

112 Km

## THE MONASTERY OF AGIOS NIKOLAOS

Southwest of Metsovo, this small 14th Century monastery was completely refurbished in 1700, with a further restoration in 1960. The catholicon frescoes are mostly the work of the early 18th Century painter Eustathius, with some later contributions that display a more western influence. A chapel was created on the east side of the portico, dedicated to the local saint Agios Nikolaos who martyred in the hands of the Turks in 1617. On the western wall of this chapel there is an unusual 19th Century secular depiction of the town of Metsovo, painted in folk style. Many of the older icons from this church can be seen in the Tositsa Museum.







# Katogi Averoff

This winery produces particularly fine wines and as it also operates a hotel within its premises, it is the perfect venue for a wine tasting event. A wide variety of grape is used in the winemaking, such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Pinot Noir and Traminer. The vines are grown in various parts of Epirus, the closest being the “Poor Saint’s vineyard”, which is tied to the legend of the Metsovite martyr Agios Nikolaos.

## a taste of wine



## Other places to visit

In the town of Metsovo there is the Averoff Art Gallery that displays modern work by Greek artists and the Tositsa Folkloric Museum. Metsovites are Vlachs, known for their skills in various crafts such as wood carving, weaving and a particularly fine style of gold thread embroidery that can be seen in the museum’s costume exhibition. Metsovo is also famous for its superb cheeses and visiting the cheese making plant of the Tositsa Foundation is both interesting and delicious.







# Ioannina



According to many historians, Ioannina was probably founded during the reign of Justinian (6th Century AD), who is also said to have built the original walls that still surround the old quarter. An important city throughout the Byzantine era, Ioannina continued to flourish under the Ottomans. They left a strong mark both on its architecture and its lore, mostly thanks to the illustrious Ali Pasha who ruled the area from Ioannina's Its Kale Castle.

Modern Ioannina – or Yannena as it is known locally - is a charming tapestry of many different historic periods and cultures. It has a number of interesting museums, as well as a major University, which accounts for the town's youthful and lively atmosphere. There are bustling lakeside cafés, good restaurants and several trendy shops that coexist with the city's historic craft market, famous for its fine silversmiths. Accessible by short boat ride is the island in the middle of Lake Pamvotis, with its traditional village, narrow paved alleys, Byzantine churches and monasteries. The natural setting is breathtakingly beautiful and very characteristic of Epirus.

Igoumenitsa  
to Ioannina

67 Km

## Old Yannena

The main historic highlight in Ioannina is "Its Kale", the late 18th Century **castle and acropolis** by Lake Pamvotis. All fortifications, mosques and state buildings were constructed by the notorious Albanian potentate Ali Pasha, who created a palatial safe haven from which he ruled a vast territory. When he defied the Sultan to establish his own breakaway state, an avenging Ottoman campaign was sent to crush him. In the bloody conflict that ensued he was defeated, incarcerated and executed, but had unwittingly created enough distraction in the Empire for the Greeks to revolt and take control of the Peloponnese. The site is well preserved and offers a valuable sightseeing experience, complemented by a wealth of exhibits in the Folkloric and Byzantine Museums, both within the castle. There is also a gallery exhibiting silver artefacts, appropriately housed in Ali's Treasury. A walk through the narrow alleys and among the period houses in the old town enhances the visit, rendering a fuller impression of life in an 18th Century Ottoman citadel. Also worth visiting are the important **Archaeological Museum of Ioannina** and a number of smaller museums and galleries displaying various historic, folkloric, and craft related exhibits.







# Jewish Yannena

The city once had a large community of Romaniotes who, unlike most Greek Jews, were not Sephardic. It is believed that they had moved to Ioannina from the Roman city of Nicopolis sometime in the 8th Century and spoke a Greek-based dialect known as Yevanic. Successful traders and craftsmen, they played an important role in the city's economic and cultural life and resided mostly in an area inside the castle. Of their two synagogues, only the 19th Century "Kehila Kadosha Yashan" or "Mesa Sinagoga" survived WWII. It is located in the Jewish Quarter inside the castle and is part of the city's architectural heritage. The Romaniotes also built the "Alliance Israelite" school and several elegant houses, some of which still survive and grace the old town with their presence. At the beginning of the 20th Century there were four thousand Romaniotes living in Ioannina, but in the years leading up to WWII their population had dwindled to about two thousand, as many moved to other parts of Greece and abroad. The Holocaust took a very heavy toll on the Ioannina Romaniotes and tragically, only about 112 survived.



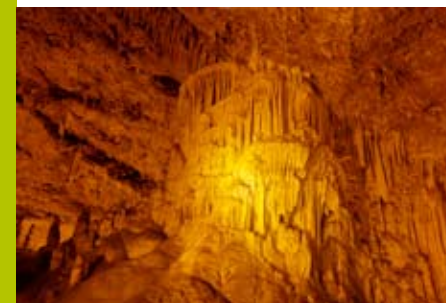
Ioannina really has the kind of street life where one can encounter people from all ages or walks of life. University students, tradesmen, mountain dwellers, businessmen and passing tourists, all seem to mix well in this bustling place. The market is full of exciting wares ranging from brass sheep bells to high fashion. True to its long history as a regional trade centre, it is one of those places that you can find practically anything. The silver smith workshop displays are

laden with fine examples of a Byzantine tradition that dates back to the 13th Century's Despotate of Epirus. Ioannina is also famous among the sweet toothed, with its many delightful variations of baklava type pastries. There are many bars and cafés in the backstreets and waterfront, proof of a thriving nightlife. Also, Ioannina is interesting gastronomically, with some very good restaurants both traditional and trendy.

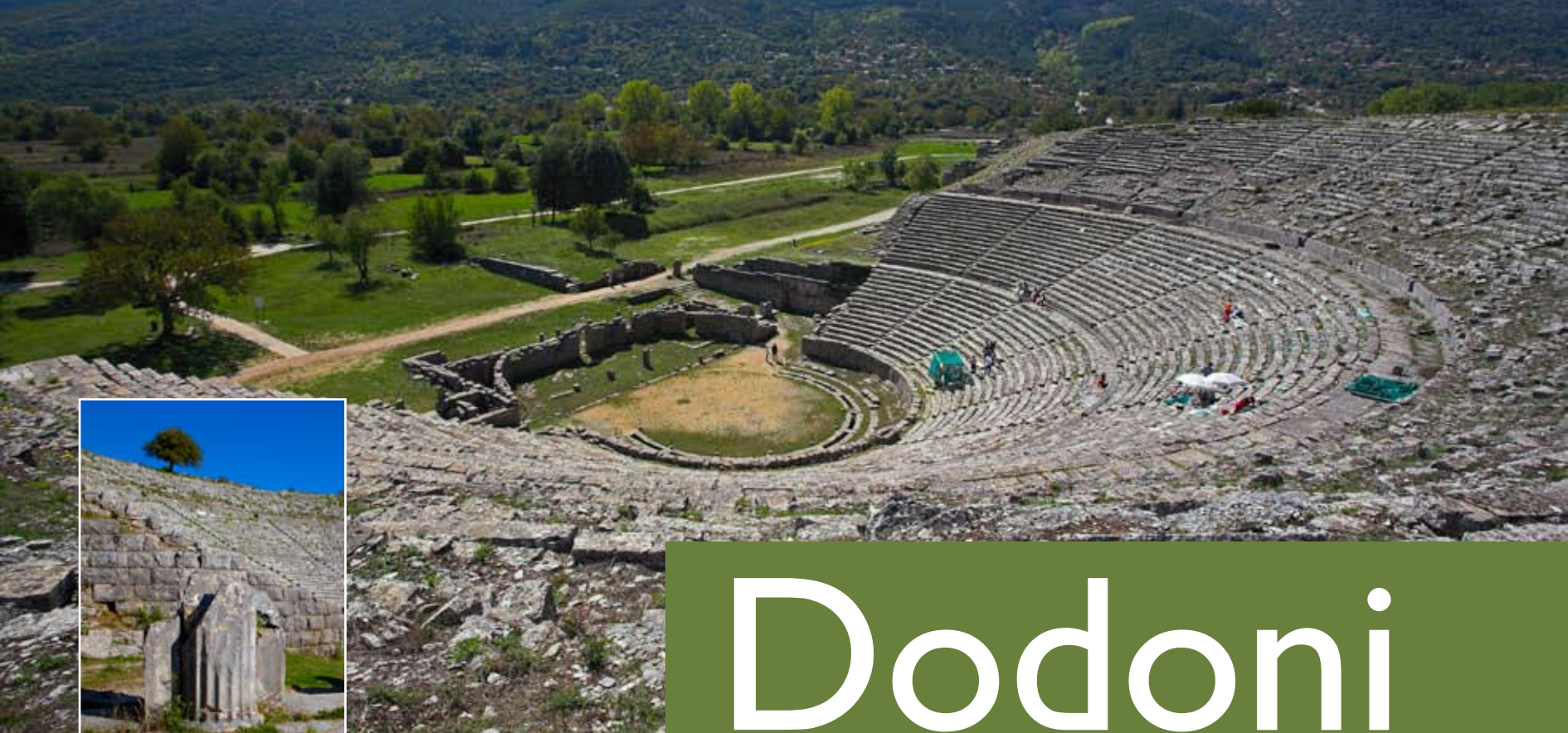
# the modern city

## Nearby attractions

Just a short boat trip across from Ioannina is a small lake island. A rather relaxing place, it lends itself for a leisurely stroll through its quaint little village and possibly a meal at one of the many restaurants that serve freshly caught fish from the lake. One can also visit the two post-Byzantine monasteries on the island and the house where Ali Pasha was assassinated, now housing a small Museum with exhibits from the period leading up to the Greek 19th Century Revolution. For cave enthusiasts, just 4 kms away from Ioannina there is the truly magnificent Cave of Perama, formed about 1.5 million years ago and full of stunningly beautiful stalagmite and stalactite formations. It is in fact considered one of the most impressive caves in the Mediterranean.







# Dodoni

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

It lies 22 km southeast of Ioannina and is definitely the most remarkable ancient site in Epirus. As a sanctuary it dates back to 2500 BC and its oracle was the oldest and most important in all ancient Greece. Originally dedicated to an early fertility goddess, it was the Thesprotians who replaced the original cult with the worship of Zeus and the Sacred Oak. Priests would divine signs by listening to the oak leaves as they shivered in the wind and by observing the flight of doves. The building of the first structures date back to the 4th Century BC, but most of the ruins we see today are from the monumental additions that were built in the early 3rd Century BC to expand the sanctuary and its functions. This included the largest ancient theatre in Greece, with 18,000 seats, now the site's most recognizable feature. The sanctuary was first destroyed in 219 BC by Aetolians and never regained its original stature. It was later restored only to be destroyed again in 167 BC by Romans and during the 1st Century BC reign of Augustus, the theatre was converted into a gladiator arena. Today, this magnificent structure is the best preserved ancient theatre in Greece and is still used for summer drama festivals. Though less visually impressive, the rest of this large site is interesting in that it reveals an ancient sanctuary complex of a very grand scale. Apart from the main temple of Zeus, there are also ruins of four more temples dedicated to Dioni, Themis, Aphrodite and Hercules. Other ruins include the Prytaneion, the Holy Residence and the Bouleuterion, used as a kind of parliament by the Epirote League. There is also a stadium and at the top of the hill, the acropolis of the Dodonean citadel, a place of refuge for the area's inhabitants in time of peril.



## The heartland of Epirus

Surrounding the city of Ioannina is one of the most fascinating regions in Greece. Rich in cultural and historic heritage and set in dramatic landscapes, it is also one of the few regions where rural life remained so faithful to traditional ways. Tucked away in the mountains and valleys, there are scores of villages that can only be described as true gems, both architecturally and culturally. Apart from Zagori, which is covered in more detail in this manual, there are several other options to be aware of. Among them is the "stately village" of Syrrako, the sweet wine producing Zitsa of Lord Byron fame and the Joumerka village cluster of Kastanochoria. There is something magical about the way these charming stone built settlements integrate with their surroundings, forming a perfect bond between nature and human habitation. Touring in this area can only be described as a strong destination experience, particularly for those with interests that go a little beyond the mainstream.



# ABOUT THE SETTLEMENTS OF ZAGORI

## Zagori

### THE EAGLE NEST VILLAGES

Situated north of Ioannina, Zagori is a cluster of 46 villages, perched amphitheatrically on steep slopes and ridges. The ruggedness of the surrounding countryside is as beautiful as it is invigorating, with its virgin forests, deep gorges, cool waters and majestic mountains.

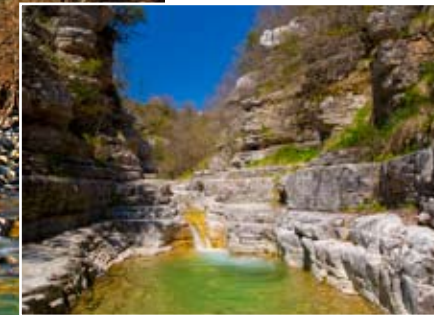
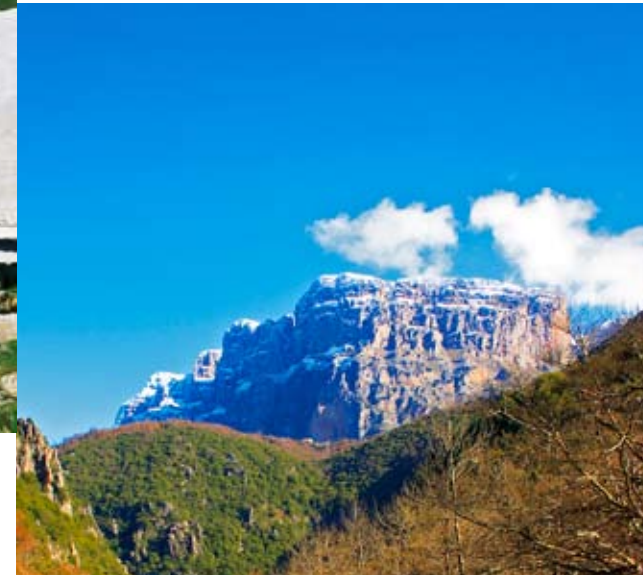
Since it would probably be too much of an undertaking to conquer, Zagori was granted special autonomy by the Ottomans and between the 16th and 19th Centuries it developed a flourishing trade with Russia and Europe. Affluence and self determination brought about social and intellectual advancement, success in letters and a high level of cultural refinement. A number of important schools were built, as well as roads, bridges, terraced paths and fountains. Architecturally, the stone built settlements of Zagori are unique not only in style and workmanship, but as an overall example of human habitation in perfect aesthetic harmony with nature. There are also a number of interesting churches and monasteries of Byzantine and post Byzantine periods, the latter displaying the definitive style of Zagorian iconography. Thanks to an abundance of rare flora, Zagorians also developed herbal medicine and by the 19th Century, the “Vikos doctors” were famous throughout the Ottoman Empire, Central Europe and Russia.

Arranged amphitheatrically on sundrenched and wind protected mountain slopes, these villages were built mainly with safety in mind. The region's harsh terrain provided adequate protection against bandit raids and invasions, allowing Zagorians to freely conduct their trade with Romania and Serbia. Generally, all villages have a distinct centre or “mesochori”, where all public buildings are concentrated. Houses are typically two storied and designed for comfort and functionality. They are also very well built for weather, as well as for security and privacy, with high walled courtyards and sturdy gates. Zagori is subdivided in three village clusters, western, central and eastern. It is a true showcase of Northern Greek rural architecture and this region's particularly skillful stonemasonry. Whichever village one chooses to go to, even in the lesser known eastern cluster, each place has individual charm and offers its very own vantage to probably the most breathtaking countryside in Northern Greece.



Igoumenitsa to  
Vikos/Monodendri

116 Km





# Papingo



Among the most famous villages in Zagori, it is situated in the western cluster and at an altitude of 980 meters. Known to exist since the 14th Century, it is set in an area of astonishing natural beauty and has two distinct districts called Megalo and Mikro Papingo. Like most Zagorian villages, wealth from lucrative trading between the 16th and 19th Centuries is reflected in the extensive beautification, notable public buildings and an infrastructure that includes fountains, paved paths and remarkable stone bridges. It has twelve churches, a number of schools and particularly elegant homes. Some of the highlights are the rare frescoes in the 17th Century church of Agios Vlassios and the nearby 16th Century monastery of Spilotissa. Other interesting villages in the western cluster are Aristi, Vikos and Agios Minas. Close by is Voidomatis River, famous among rafters and Vikos Gorge, with its rugged appeal, rare vegetation and unusual wild life.



# Kapesovo

Situated in the central cluster and at an altitude of 1100 meters, this village is also graced with remarkable buildings. The main highlights are the 18th Century church of Agios Nikolaos, a Library and a Folkloric Museum, housed in the once famous Paschalios School building. Kapesovo is also known for its tradition in a particularly austere Byzantine style iconography, many examples of which can be viewed in the area's monasteries and churches. The central cluster is the most numerous with its 25 villages, Vitsa being the largest. Among other villages to see are the quaint Elafotopos and Kipi, the oldest of all the settlements and once capital of Zagori. Both also have small folkloric museums worthy of a visit. Many of the inhabitants in this region belong to the Saracatsan group, who were once nomadic herders that travelled around Epirus, Macedonia and Thessaly. They have an individual culture and are known for their elaborate traditional costumes, still worn in local festivities.







# Igoumenitsa

## & THESPROTIA

First historic references to Thesprotia go back to the Bronze Age. In the 14th Century BC the Mycenaean, attracted to the area because of its safe harbor and anchorage, established fortified settlements there. Since then Thesprotia has seen successive occupations from Romans, Slavs and Ottomans, until 1913 when it was liberated by the Greek armed forces.

Apart from its lively waterfront and vibrant shopping district, modern Igoumenitsa offers a glimpse of its long history at the new Archaeological Museum. The port and city have greatly benefited from the extensive Egnantia Highway network, now connecting the whole of Northern Greece from Igoumenitsa in the west to the border with Turkey in the East. Previously Mt Pindos and the mountainous region of Epirus had kept this part of Greece quite isolated.

One of the most important Byzantine monuments of Thesprotia is the 14th Century Monastery of Giromeri located north of the town of Filiates. Of particular note are the unique 16th Century frescoes, the gilded woodcut templon and the plethora of ecclesiastical artifacts.

Thesprotia is also a summer vacation choice. Washed by the aqua green waters of the Ionian Sea, the beautiful coastline is a series of secluded bays dotted with tiny islets and seaside villages. Long popular with yachtsmen, quaint Syvota is just such a resort. Its busy marina, waterfront tavernas and cafés and pristine beaches nearby are just a few reasons for visiting Syvota.

## The Archaeological Museum of Igoumenitsa

This small but very modern museum is well worth a visit. It covers the history of Thesprotia from Prehistoric to Byzantine times in well designed thematic sections, presenting finds from the region's most important archaeological sites.



## Gitana

Situated north of Igoumenitsa, it was once the economic and political centre of the Thesprotian tribes. This 4th Century BC city was surrounded by 2.5 km of huge polygonal walls and was internally divided by a sickle shaped partition. It also had a well fortified acropolis, as evidenced by the still visible round tower at the top of its hill. Since the River Kalamas was navigable all the way to Gitana, trade flourished and brought great wealth to the city. The high quality of workmanship on buildings and artefacts discovered there implies a luxurious and very sophisticated lifestyle. Excavations also revealed the ruins of a 5,000-seat theatre, an extensive agora and two temples. At its peak, Gitana had 6,000 inhabitants and played a central role in the Epirote League, a coalition established around 370 BC to unify the three main tribes of ancient Epirus. Also worth mentioning are the archaeological sites of Fanoti, another Thesprotian walled city with an imposing arched gate that is still standing and Dymokastro, a fortified Classical and Hellenistic coastal settlement that also offers stunning sea views. These are all extremely interesting sites, but more suitable for special interest visitors or as tour enhancing quick stops.





# The Tower of Ragio

Northwest of Igoumenitsa is Lygia Peninsula, site of a Classical period settlement. It is most probably the city of Toroni, a colony established by ancient Kerkyra (Corfu)\*. This considerable walled settlement reached over 5,000 inhabitants and was probably destroyed by the Romans in 167 BC, during their rampage through Epirus. The main attraction is the city's inland castle on top of a low hill, where an almost intact military structure of the Ottoman period - known as the Tower of Ragio - can be visited. In the vicinity, archaeologists have also uncovered a number of graves from the Hellenistic period.



Dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, according to some historians it was founded in the 12th Century, during the reign of Byzantine Emperor Manuel Komnenos. Because of its rather vulnerable location, it was burned and looted several times, but somehow managed to endure through the centuries. At one time it possessed a significant library, operated two schools in the area and financed local health care. The only structures that have survived reasonably intact from the 12th Century are the church and a rain collection cistern. The rest of what we see today is of 19th Century vintage, which is when an extensive refurbishment took place over the ruins of the original monastic complex. All in all, it is a charming and easily accessible attraction, especially for those interested in the Byzantine period.

## The Holy Monastery of Ragio



# The town of Filiates and nearby traditional villages

This historic town is situated northeast of Igoumenitsa and is surrounded by beautiful countryside. Apart from an interesting old quarter consisting of buildings from the Ottoman era, Filiates is close to some remarkable traditional villages, such as Foiniki, Faneromeni and Plaisio. Foiniki in particular has an interesting folkloric museum that offers an insight to the way of life in this wondrous rural region.





# The monasteries at Giromeri and Kokkinolithari



Situated very close to Filiates the splendid 14th Century Byzantine monastery at Giromeri was once a Patriarchal Exarchate with 12 villages and the town of Filiates under its diocese. Dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, it was a centre of learning and operated two schools and a seminary. The architecture of the church is of particular interest, as are its frescoes and 19th Century carved wooden templon. The monastery at Kokkinolithari is a dependant of Giromeri dedicated to Agios Minas. It is also known as the "Meteoro of Epirus" because of its similarities to the famous monastic site of Meteora.



## Paramythià

Located east of Igoumenitsa and at an altitude of 750 meters, it is the second largest city in Thesprotia. The site was inhabited since Neolithic times and many Stone Age tools and artefacts were found there. The main attraction in Paramythià itself is the 13th Century Church of the Virgin Mary, originally a monastery catholicon and until the 1960s', the region's metropolitan cathedral. A typical example of the period's Byzantine architectural style, it has a two column cruciform with an inscribed narthex. Its most remarkable artefact is a magnificent 1587 gold embroidered Epitaph, said to be the work of the famous Meteora monk Arsenios. In addition, the area surrounding Paramythià is rich in historic and architectural sights, among them the ancient Thesprotian fortified settlement of Elea, a number of Byzantine monasteries and churches, Byzantine baths and various other medieval structures, including two castles.



# IONIAN'S TURQUOISE WATERS

## Syvota

### A YACHT HAVEN

Moving south from Igoumenitsa along the coastal road with views of fjord like coves, turquoise blue waters and lush Mediterranean countryside, it soon becomes evident that the drive to Syvota is a perfect opportunity to experience the singular beauty of the Thesprotian headland. As for the destination itself, this small seaside town with its pretty waterfront seems the perfect stop for a glimpse at the laid back lifestyle of Ionian yachting. Syvota is a very popular tourist spot during summer, particularly among sailing enthusiasts, but it always manages to maintain its relaxing and peaceful character.

The crystal clear waters of the Ionian Sea and the many sandy beaches of Thesprotia's coastline offer lovers of the sea endless choices for sport and relaxation. Close to Igoumenitsa are pristine beaches with facilities for windsurfing, snorkeling, water skiing as well as canoeing and sailing. For the less adventurous, a casual stroll by the sea, a cold drink and a sun bed with a beach umbrella are probably more inviting options.







# Parga



Parga is a charming seaside town set in an attractive bay with a small green islet at its centre. Like Preveza, the old quarter is reminiscent of a Greek island settlement and its waterfront is lively with cafés, taverns and shops. Among its features there is a 17th Century Venetian Castle, originally built by the Normans in the 14th Century, a number of churches and an ecclesiastical and folkloric museum.

Not far from Parga lies the important archaeological site of Necromanteio (Oracle of the Dead), near the Acheron River. According to ancient belief, it is close to where the souls of the dead would begin their journey up river to reach Lake Acherusia and the Gates of Hades. The oracle is mentioned in Homer's *Odyssey* and its cult clearly existed for millennia, with findings at the site dating back to prehistoric times. It is a place of unique serenity and mystical power.

Igoumenitsa  
to Parga

49 Km

## THE ORACLE BEFORE THE GATES OF HADES



Considered one of the Ionian's prettiest seaside towns, Parga combines a wealth of history with a relaxing holiday atmosphere. There's a charming old quarter to wander in, an attractive waterfront with a view to the green islet of Panagia and a medieval castle up the hill, all within reasonable walking distance. The highlights are the churches of Agioi Apostoloi and Panagia Vlahernon, and an ecclesiastical museum with rare icons, religious artifacts and various interesting folkloric exhibits. Near Parga is the intriguing site of the Nekromanteion, an ancient oracle where the dead were invoked to foretell future events. It was discovered in 1958 beneath the ruins of the 18th Century monastery of Agios Ioannis Prodromos and uncannily, spreading under a modern graveyard. The ruins are early Hellenistic and reveal a central hall, a complicated arrangement of rooms, corridors and passages, and a small labyrinth leading to the main sanctuary. Below the latter there is a crypt of equal size hewn out of rock with an imposing arched ceiling, known as the Hall of Hades. This is the probable site of the original prehistoric cult cave.





# Arta



Amvrakia, as Arta was known in antiquity, dates back to the 7th Century BC. Although it survived successive occupations by Romans, Normans, Serbs and Ottomans, it is its fine Byzantine heritage that is more evident today. Most notable is the 13th Century cube shaped church of Virgin Mary the Consoler (Panagia Parigoritissa), an unusual building with three tiers of columns supporting a splendid mosaic clad dome. Among the endless orange groves outside the city there is another famous Epirus landmark, the stone built Bridge of Arta. With foundations going back to the 3rd Century BC, this bridge is inextricably bound to local legend, with colorful myths surrounding its construction.

Igoumenitsa  
to Arta

95 Km



Without doubt, Arta's main strength is as a showcase for some of the most exquisite and well preserved examples of 13th Century Byzantine ecclesiastical art and architecture. In 1204 Arta became capital of the Despotate of Epirus, a Byzantine successor state founded by the imperial cousin Michael Komnenos Doukas, following the sacking of Constantinople by Crusaders. Among the main highlights from this heritage are the city's splendid Byzantine Castle, the church of Agia Theodora, originally an 11th Century convent catholicon, the magnificent church of Panagia Parigoritissa, the monastery of Kato Panagià and the church of Agios Vassilios. There is also ample visible evidence of the ancient city of Amvrakia pretty much all around Arta, particularly sections of walls dating back to the 6th and 4th Centuries BC and a 3rd Century BC theatre. Ancient Amvrakia was founded by the Dryops, but in 625 BC it was taken over by Corinthian colonizers who built

heavy walls and fortifications. The city then grew to a population of 100,000, making it the largest in Epirus, and took part in both the Persian and the Peloponnesian wars. It was later conquered by the Macedonians, but they soon ceded it to King Pyrrhos of Epirus who made it his capital in 295 BC. The arrival of the Romans was really the end for Amvrakia, as the city was pillaged in 167 BC and in 31 BC its inhabitants were forcibly moved to populate Octavian's new city of Nicopolis. Amvrakia's long and fascinating history is reflected in the exhibits of Arta's modern and well designed Archaeological Museum that also includes a section dedicated to prehistoric times. There are some other museums worth noting in Arta, such as the Classical Antiquities Museum in the monastic refectory of Panagia Parigoritissa, the Karali Folkloric Museum, the Skoufa Historic Museum and some smaller art, history and folklore collections and galleries.



# NICOPOLIS

# Preveza

Preveza is first mentioned by name in a 13th Century record of its conquest by the Genoese, then allied to the Byzantine Empire. It was probably founded sometime in the 11th Century AD, following the desertion of nearby Nicopolis. Situated at the entrance of Ambracian Gulf, the town's waterfront has a certain Greek island feel about it. There are many traditional buildings and a charming old quarter, with narrow cobbled streets, cafés and taverns. Other features include an 18th Century Venetian clock tower and Ali Pasha's 19th Century castle complex, from where one can enjoy splendid views, particularly at sunset.

Close to Preveza is the fascinating archaeological site of Nicopolis. Literally "Victory City", it was founded by Octavian after crushing Mark Anthony's fleet in the Battle of Actium (31 BC). Nicopolis flourished as capital of the Roman province Epirus Vetus, but from the 9th Century AD onward barbarian invasions drove it to decline. Visitors can see the city walls, a monument to Octavian, a theatre, an Odeon, the Nymphaeum, early Christian basilicas and a nearby archaeological museum.







# Special Excursions & enhancing features

Interacting with Epirus – In and around the destinations presented in this manual there is a wide variety of alternative experiences on offer. For the active and adventurous there are well organized activities such as trekking, hiking, river and mountain sports, paragliding, cycling and horseback riding. For nature buffs, there are large expanses of virgin wilderness full of rare flora and fauna to explore either with guides or following posted paths. Also, there are some truly unique bird watching locations, such as the Ambracian wetlands that boast 280 species! For beach lovers, the stunning Ionian coast surpasses anyone's expectations and practically every kind of sea sport is easily available. For those interested in culture and local customs, the region's folkloric wealth can be enjoyed through specially organized events or at village festivities known as "panigyria". Epirus has an intriguing musical idiom with roots in antiquity and many different local dances and costumes that reflect centuries of multicultural merging. The region also has a living traditional arts and crafts industry and a fantastic variety of utilitarian and decorative products can be found in its villages and market towns, such as colourful woven fabrics and kilims, delicate embroideries, attractive glazed pottery, fine silver objects and jewellery, and charming hammered brass artifacts. Finally, Epirus is also very satisfying to the palate, with many high quality gastronomic products, superb pastries and fruit preserves, excellent cheeses and a rather varied cuisine. As an accompaniment fine wines are also produced and a deceptively smooth spirit called tsipouro.





Bird watcher's paradise...  
the Ambracian Wetlands &  
Kalamas Delta



Many rivers  
to cross...  
Kalamas,  
Achaeron  
and  
Voidomatis







After a day rich with new experiences, it is time for us to bid you farewell and Kala Taxidia until the time comes to welcome you again, on your next visit to our port.

**IGOUMENITSA**  
*Greece's Newest Cruise Port*





# IGOUMENITSA PORT AUTHORITY S.A.

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Developed by: CTM Hellas, International Cruise Consultants / [www.ctmhellas.com](http://www.ctmhellas.com)

Design - Print Production: Chameleon Visual Communication / [www.chameleon.gr](http://www.chameleon.gr)