

The Small Cyclades: Four Sparkling Gems



Iraklia



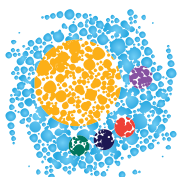
Schinoussa



Koufonissia

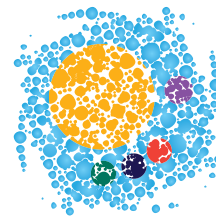


Donoussa



Small Cyclades

GREECE



*Small
Cyclades*



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Iraklia



Wild beauty

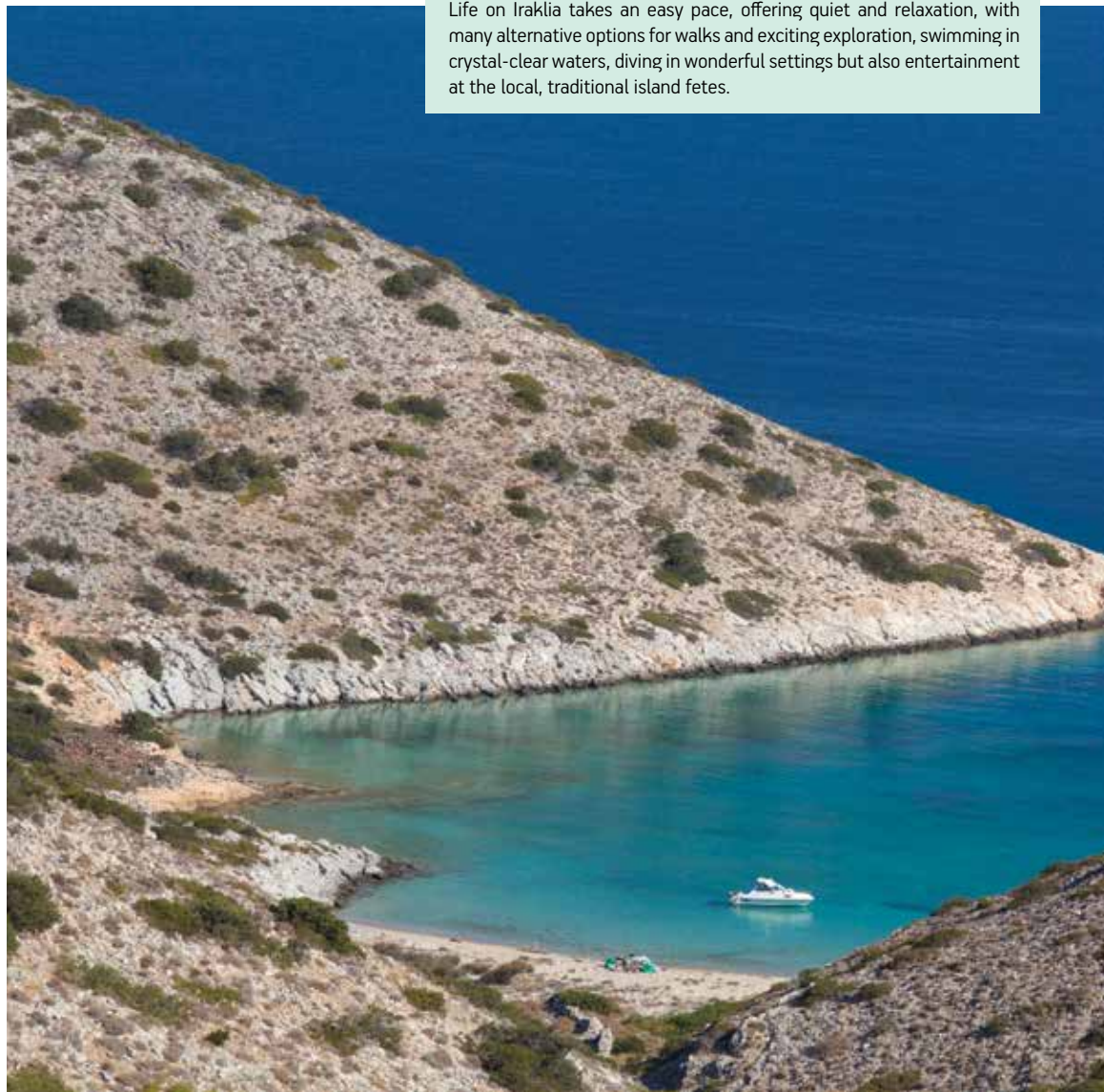
According to the Homeric legend, on their way back to Ithaca after the end of the Trojan War, Ulysses and his ship crew were taken hostage by the Cyclop Polyphemus - son of Poseidon - who lived in the large cave opposite that of Ai Giannis, on Iraklia. He imprisoned them in his cave, where he also kept his sheep. Resourceful as he was, Ulysses quickly devised an escape plan. He and his mates blinded Polyphemus' single eye and made a getaway out of the cave by hanging from the underbelly of the sheep. They ran to their ship, which was anchored at Iraklia's southwestern bay, Alimia, and raised the sails.

*When Polyphemus got wind of all this, he started throwing huge rocks, hoping to sink the ship. He missed the target and the rocks are known today as the **The Big Avelas** and **The Small Avelas** islets, or Avelonissia.*

Iraklia, unspoiled, featuring an impressive mountain massif and excellent beaches - protected from strong winds thanks to its proximity to the much larger, craggy islands of Naxos and Ios - may be described as the "wild beauty" among the Small Cyclades.

Part of the Natura 2000 network of natural habitats, it enchants with the superb views offered by its mountainous footpaths, the variety of its coastline and its own, unique sights.

Life on Iraklia takes an easy pace, offering quiet and relaxation, with many alternative options for walks and exciting exploration, swimming in crystal-clear waters, diving in wonderful settings but also entertainment at the local, traditional island fetes.



Nature and geography

Iraklia is the largest and least populated island of the Small Cyclades - with an area of 18.08 sq. km. Its geographical position, south of the Naxos massif, offers protection from the strong northerly winds of the Aegean Sea and its climate is mild, with little rain and plenty of sunshine. Iraklia's varied coastline has a length of 29km. and includes sandy or pebbly beaches as well as impressive rocky formations.

The entire island is included in the Natura 2000 network due to its widely varied and interesting flora and fauna.

The dominant trees are Phoenicean juniper, wild olive, fig and carob. There are also a few Aleppo pines, Italian cypresses, oleanders, tamarisk trees by the seaside and date palms –planted by the locals. One will also encounter small olive and almond groves and a few fruit orchards.

The range of shrubs mainly includes lentisc, thyme, heath, Jerusalem sage, hairy thorny broom, thorny burnet, asphodel, giant fennel, summer savory, pot marjoram, the

everlasting, curry plant, barbary fig and three-leaved sage.

In the coastal zone one encounters spiny chicory and sea daffodils. The cliffs are adorned with caper plants, while in a small part of the island one finds a form of wild cabbage. The islets and seaside cliffs host sea stocks, or gillyflowers.

In farm- and shrub-land vegetation follows rainfall and so wildflowers abound in the autumn and spring. The most common are one crocus species, the crown anemone, the common poppy and the crown daisy.

Gyps fulvus



Merops apiaster



Falco vespertinus



There is also an abundance of wild greens that come under local names.

Birds represent the most interesting part of Iraklia's fauna, with over 170 recorded species, some of which are endangered and protected on a worldwide scale.

All the above make for an impressive natural canvas.

The sea life found in Iraklia waters includes a variety of shellfish, corals, sponges, as well as numerous fish species, some of

which are endangered, such as blue-fin tuna, swordfish, and ocean sunfish. As for marine mammals, the most common here is the bottlenose dolphin. Far less frequent visits to these waters are made by the regular dolphin species, striped dolphins, and Mediterranean monk seals. The sea turtle *caretta caretta* appears frequently but does not lay eggs here. A dead young sperm whale was once found in this area. Its skeleton is kept in neighboring Naxos, at the Apiranthos zoological museum.

Pancratium maritimum



Ophrys aegaea



Agios Ioannis cave

The cave of Agios Ioannis is a revelation. It is one of the biggest in the Cycladic group of islands, featuring a rich and impressive maze of stalactites, stalagmites and columns, as well as a rare kind of stalagmitic substance dubbed "cave-milk". The first chamber of the cave is adorned with enormous and uniquely-shaped stalagmites and pillars in wonderful combinations. A full exploration takes more than two hours and visitors are advised to carry torches since there is no artificial lighting inside. The low entrance to the cave, which is negotiated with some

difficulty, is situated at a spot with panoramic views of the sea and nearby islands. It is about 30 minutes from the coast on foot and about an hour from the settlement of Panagia. On August 28, eve of St. John the Baptist, when vespers are held inside the cave, the big chamber is wonderfully lit by the candles of worshippers. According to traditional lore, the saint's icon was discovered inside the cave by a shepherd who had taken shelter in rough weather. The image of the saint was depicted on the back of his shirt when he returned to the village.



Pappas peak

With a height of 420m, Pappas is the highest point of Iraklia.

It is about a 2km-hike to the top on a recently cleared footpath, amid a stone-terraced landscape dotted with old threshing floors.

The top offers superb views of all neighboring islands and occasionally even the mountains of Crete are visible.

On the way up one can also watch predator birds which nest in the cavities of the rocks.



A place in history

Iraklia, like the other Small Cyclades islands, was already inhabited in the prehistoric age and has kept its name since antiquity.

Remains of two settlements and a cemetery dating to the 3rd millennium have been found at the locations of Kamos Agiou Athanassiou and Agios Mamas, while sanctuaries of the goddess Tyche (Fortune) and Lofitis Zeus have been identified in the Kastro area.

Tools made of obsidian - a volcanic rock material originating in Milos, in the western Cyclades - found in various parts of Iraklia testify to the island's participation in the region's commercial activity during the Protocycladic period (3rd millennium).

Although the ruins of the fort on Kastro hill have not been precisely dated, they include traces of habitation during Hellenistic and Roman times.

During Ottoman times, Iraklia's narrow and inaccessible coves became ideal hideouts for pirates, whose threat largely determined the everyday life and habits of the inhabitants.

In the 16th century, Iraklia came under the ownership and administration of the Monastery of Chozoviotissa, in the nearby island of Amorgos.

After Greek independence in the 1820's, Amorgians signed 10-year contracts with the monastery allowing them to settle on Iraklia, cultivate the land and keep 50% of the produce.

This regime survived well into the 20th century, when the tenants were given permanent ownership of the land, leaving a small part to the monastery for the needs of the monks.

During World War II, Iraklia initially came under Italian occupation but after Italy's capitulation in 1943 it was occupied by the Germans, until they left a year later. During this period, a clandestine radio was operated on Iraklia, transmitting valuable messages about German naval activity to the British headquarters in Cairo.



Around the island

Iraklia offers many interesting sights, while the hospitable locals readily welcome visitors into their everyday life.



Ferries call at **Agios Georgios**, a traditional settlement built in amphitheatric fashion around the port of Iraklia which features rooms to let, restaurants, grocery stores and two or three bars.

The place grew from a small fishing hamlet with the development of tourism in the 1980's, and is suitable for family holidays, being especially safe and friendly for children, who gather on the beach and the square. Adults can take a stroll or try their luck with angling.

The municipal office hosts a lending library. You can visit **the small church of Agios Georgios**, built in 1834 and featuring a wooden altar screen and traditional stone floor.

A fete is held in the courtyard on the saint's name day, usually after Easter, and food is offered to the congregation.

The private church of **Taxiarches** also features an excellent altar screen.

An asphalted, 4.5km road links the port with Chora or Panagia, a traditional settlement at the foot of Mt. Pappas, and 2km from the beach of **Tourkopigado**. It is especially quiet, even during the busy tourist season, and therefore an ideal place for anyone seeking tranquility.





Panagia was long Iraklia's largest settlement and main farming hub. Additionally, being at some distance from the sea offered relative protection from pirates.

Most houses - like the couple of alleyways - are stone-built and still have their traditional individual baking ovens which consist of a whole separate room. One can also see the old cisterns used to water the animals in the fields, as well as several threshing floors, one of which is still used today.

Panagia offers captivating views of neighboring islands (Naxos, Paros, Amorgos, Astypalea, Anafi and all the other Small Cyclades).

The village's landmark is the 1919, stone-built **Church of Isodia Theotokou (Virgin Mary)** - the island's largest.

The other attraction - worth walking to - is Pigi, a natural spring about 1km away that supplies water to the village.

The refreshing spot also offers visitors great views of the northern part of Iraklia and all nearby Cycladic islands.

A visit to **Agios Athanassios**, an old village with a breathtaking view and stone houses built according to the traditional Cycladic architectural style - using elements of the surrounding environment and taking into account the weather conditions - is recommended.

All the old stone houses were naturally insulated due to their broad stone walls and the wood-and-hay structure on the roof.

The chapel of Agios Athanassios is at the entry point to the village.



Merichas

Merichas Bay, on the southeastern side of Iraklia, makes an impressive sight. Its steep cliffs, more than 100m high, host many bird nests amid the wild caper plants. Two beautiful beaches lie below the cliffs, with crystal clear turquoise waters, ideal for snorkelling.



Kastro

Livadi Fort (Kastro) is the ruins of a Hellenistic era fortification (323-316 BC) that commands the top of a hill overlooking Livadi beach.

There are also finds dating to the Neolithic era, as well as remnants of a Temple of Zeus and a sanctuary of the goddess Tyche (Fortune).

The monument was inhabited in more recent years but was abandoned in 1930. It is accessed via a short footpath from the road linking Livadi with Panagia.



World War II plane at Alimia

The wreckage of a **German Arado AR196 shipboard** reconnaissance aircraft that sank during **World War II** can be seen close to the beach, at a depth of about 9m in Alimia bay, at Iraklia's southwestern tip. The plane sank after a German naval convoy sailing off Iraklia was engaged by British warplanes.

Locals from the village of Panagia watching the fierce battle from afar saw the seaplane come down and sink after a few minutes in the open sea.

The crew were saved.

Years later the seaplane was caught in

the nets of a local fisherman who pulled it close to shore.

A buoy marks its position today and it can be easily seen from the surface when the weather is good.

Over the years the wreckage has become **a habitat hosting a rich variety of marine organisms.**

Alimia is mainly accessible by boat and the land route is recommended only for avid trekkers.

During summertime a fast sea-bus does the trip almost daily.



The rock drawings of Iraklia

Some 25 ancient spiral or **circle drawings**, engraved on smooth rock or stone surfaces, can be seen in various parts of Iraklia.

The spirals, dating to the Early Bronze Age (3rd millennium BC), are sketches formed by shallow "fingertip" holes – known as cup marks.

They usually comprised either three concentric circles with a shallow hole at the center –from where a straight line ran outwards- sometimes other drawings in between the lines, or other signs carved on big rocks.

The drawings are mostly found on marble similar to that of Naxos but also on other types of rock, such as Cretaceous limestone. Some of these surfaces are movable.

The spiral motifs are thought to have been carved with tools made of emery –a hard rock found in abundance in

various parts of the island- but their role and function remain unknown.

According to an old popular belief, they were **signs left by pirates so that they could come back for treasures they had buried** on the island and retrieve them. Later it was thought they were **signs by early Cycladic astronomers** or even that they symbolized snakes which were thought to bring good luck.

More recently, some archaeologists have argued that they signaled a settlement, a graveyard or even a water source.

Some are found on dirt roads, which renders them vulnerable to erosion, others are located in inaccessible locations while more still may have not been discovered yet.

A few of Iraklia's spiral rock drawing can also be viewed at the Archaeological Museum of Apiranthos in Naxos.



Beaches

*Iraklia's beaches cater to all tastes. If you prefer sandy ones, try **Agios Georgios, Livadi, Vorini Spilia and Alimia** - this last one is reached by boat. Pebbly beaches are found at **Tourkopigado, Ammoudi tou Mericha and Karvounolakos**, and rocky ones at **Xylobatis, Vala and Kavos tou Thodorou**.*

Agios Georgios

Agios Georgios beach is very near the picturesque port of the island. It is endowed with thin sand and its main characteristic is the tall tamarisk trees that offer lots of shade and room for self-made kids' swings.

It is easily accessed on foot from any point of same-name settlement, where the majority of the island's tourist lodgings are located.



Livadi

Livadi (also referred to as Mourto cove in some maps) is Iraklia's largest beach and one of the most popular.

It is found on the northeastern coast, with the islet of Venetiko just opposite, and features an old fort (Kastro) behind it, wonderful white sand and shallow waters, some tamarisk trees which provide shade and a beach volley net.

A sea-turtle (named Giannis by his friends) has been making frequent appearances a short distance from the beach in the last few years.



Tourkopigado

Tourkopigado beach is located at the picturesque bay of the same name, roughly 2km from the village of Panagia. The view of the bay as one descends towards the beach is breathtaking.

The location's tranquillity is only broken by the sound of bells attached to the few goats at the hillside by the beach, or the occasional activity of two to three fishing boats anchored here.

Alimia

Alimia bay, on the island's southwestern coast, hosts two beautiful, sheltered beaches. They are both sandy, with superb waters that gain depth at a considerable distance from the coast. The smaller of the two beaches is ideal for small children since it's very shallow and sheltered from the sun by the cave-like formation till noon.

A major attraction is the wreckage of a German Arado AR196 shipboard reconnaissance aircraft that sank here during World War II at a depth of 9m and is visible from the surface.



Karvounolakos

Karvounolakos is a quite small, isolated beach on Iraklia's southern coast, surrounded by impressive rock formations with colors ranging from green to copper.

It features coarse pebbles, clear turquoise waters and an interesting seabed.



Vorini Spilia

A lovely beach in the island's north, close to Agios Georgios, Vorini Spilia takes its name from two small interesting rocky caves located at one side. (*Spilia means cave*). The beach is covered with fine sand and its waters are a gorgeous turquoise color.

Ammoudi

A small yet impressive beach in the bay of Merichas, Ammoudi is surrounded by imposing cliffs. The beach is covered by fine pebbles, and its crystal-clear waters are ideal for snorkeling.

Activities



Iraklia visitors are enchanted by footpaths crossing uniquely beautiful areas, can enjoy sandy or rocky beaches with wonderful waters and are struck by the friendly and hospitable disposition of the locals who are always willing to help. You can also scuba dive and enjoy the island's captivating seabed which includes shipwrecks. You can either dive yourself if you are sufficiently experienced or seek the help of professionals from diving schools on Naxos. Last, you can navigate around the island with sailing or motor boats.

Footpaths/Hiking

Iraklia is an ideal place for hiking fans –endowed with many hills and peaks featuring many of the endemic plants in the Cyclades. While walking on the old cobbled footpaths, visitors also enjoy superb views and frequently spot rare bird species. The entire island is part of the Natura 2000 network of natural habitats.

The recommended hiking routes are as follows:

1. Panagia - Agios Ioannis cave.

This is a 2.5km. southwest of Panagia, to the renowned cave of Agios Ioannis which features an impressive décor of stalactites, stalagmites and pillars, as well as the so-called "cave milk" –rare stalagmitic substance in watery form. The cave is one of the biggest in the Cyclades and one of Greece's most interesting. It also offers a wonderful view of the sea.

2. Panagia - Prophitis Ilias - Pappas peak.

This 2km., signposted footpath passes by the chapel of Prophitis Ilias and ends at the island's highest peak, Pappas, at 420m. The view from here takes in all the neighboring islands (Ios, Paros, Antiparos, Naxos, Donoussa, Ikaria, Koufonissia, Schinoussa, Amorgos, Anafi, Santorini), as well as virtually all of Iraklia's serrated coastline. The trail is on the whole of moderate difficulty but includes some more demanding stretches. On the way up you pass by traditional stone walls, terraces, old threshing floors and the pretty chapel of Prophitis Ilias, and see various predatory birds. Return the same way.

3. Panagia - Ftero Mericha.

This 1.5km. footpath (about 45 minutes) leads to a spot of particular natural beauty, Merichas bay, surrounded by precipitous cliffs more than 100m high. Wild pigeons and predatory birds make their nests here. The route is graded of low difficulty.

4. Agios Georgios - Agios Athanassios.

This 3km. route (about one hour) leads to the traditional settlement of Agios Athanassios via an old dirt road which crosses the small plain with the olive groves and seasonal farming produce. The now abandoned settlement features a particular architectural style while the chapel of the same name offers exceptional views.

5. Agios Athanassios - Selladi

Is a short, 1km. ascent on the slope of Pappas hill that takes about 45 min. The footpath, which is of moderated difficulty, starts at an elevation of 165m. and ends at 275m.



6. Agios Ioannis - Averou.

A 1,460m. trail (45 minutes) of moderate difficulty that takes you to the island's hinterland. It starts at an elevation of 150m. and ends at 100m. Spot rare flora species on the way.

7. Agios Athanassios - Averou.

This 3,330m. trek lasts one hour and 30 minutes. Starting at an elevation of 165m and ending at 105m., it is of moderate difficulty and crosses an area of unspoiled nature and excellent views.

8. Agios Georgios - Vorini Spilia.

This route is 1.3m. long and takes 30 minutes on a level road.

Vorini Spilia is a secluded bay that was utilized as a hideout by Allied ships during WWII, and features two small beaches.

Route highlights include olive groves, grazing goats and sheep, and wild flowers - depending on the season.

Sailing around Iraklia

If you don't own a boat, hire a local caique to take you to the unspoiled beaches of island, the isle of **Venetiko** opposite the beach of Livadi, and the rocky islets of **Mikros and Megalos Avelas** to the southwest.

With a sailing boat you can circumnavigate the island and swim in sheltered coves with turquoise waters. For anchorage, head to Agios Georgios bay - at the island's northeastern tip-which is Iraklia's port of call for ferries. The internal side of the pier has some 10 berths for sailing boats, with a depth of about 4m and a sandy seabed with good holding.

Although its entrance has a NE

orientation, the port is not much affected by the summer northerly winds (meltemia).

Berths have access to water and electricity, while the settlement of Agios Georgios has grocery stores and tavernas.

South of Agios Georgios, you can anchor at Livadi bay at sandy depths of 4-5m. with a good holding or, alternatively, at Pigadi (Tourkopigado) bay, at sandy depths of 6-10m., with also a good holding.

Both these bays are exposed to northeasterly and northerly winds but offer safe anchorage under all other weather conditions.



Diving

Endowed with a wonderful seabed, with a rich marine life and prairies of neptune grass, Iraklia offers great opportunities for diving. The area also provides refuge to the Mediterranean seal.

Alimia bay has an additional attraction, that of a German reconnaissance plane that sank during World War II at a depth of 9m and is visible from the surface.

Local products

High-quality thyme honey and cheeses (myzithra, xinomyzithra, anthotyro and hard cheese) figure prominently among Iraklia's range of local produce.

You will also find aranista (a type of frumenty or trahana) and pittaridia (homemade pasta). In the local taverns ask for locally grown fava, fish and tasteful local meat.

At Easter the culinary tradition dictates lamb or goat in the oven stuffed with liver, rice, spring onions and dill, while on festive days the range of desserts includes meletinia (small sweet cheese pies), xerotigana (fried dumplings) and the customary pastel (honey with sesame seeds bar).





Xerotigana - fried dumplings with honey

Old Iraklian Recipe



Ingredients:
For the dumplings:
1kg. flour
½ a cup of olive oil
enough water
to make a smooth dough
a pinch of salt
½ a cup of sesame seeds,
roasted and partly pounded
honey according to taste
olive oil for the frying pan



In a large bowl, place the flour with some salt and making a small hole in the centre add the olive oil and enough water to make a smooth but not too firm dough. Spread out the dough with a rolling pin and cut it into thin strips (about 5cm wide and 15-20cm long). Pinch three strips together at both ends. In a large frying pan, heat the oil until quite hot and fry the strips until golden. Place the fried curly strips on a piece of kitchen paper laid on a large platter to drain. While still warm, drench with honey and sprinkle with sesame seeds.

Aranista (frumenty)

Ingredients:
1kg wheat flour
water enough to get a smooth dough
milk
salt to taste

Put the flour in a basin and add little by little some water while making small ball-like pieces of dough. Immerse your hands in a bowl of water and sprinkle it on the flour while pinching off pieces of dough. As soon as the ball-like dough pieces are ready, you add them to a pan of boiling water and cook for a few minutes. Add some fresh milk (preferably goat's milk) and a little salt to taste and serve like porridge.

Events and folk fetes

Iraklia has a rich calendar of events, festivals and folk fetes. The main ones are as follows:



Fanis Gavallas festival, which includes three days of events (August 28-30) commemorating the Day of Agios Ioannis Prodromos (Saint John the Baptist). It usually includes concerts and feasting with traditional island music, theater performances and traditional games. The events take place at the square of the Communal Office and in the courtyard of the church in Panagia.

The Agoni Grammi Gonimi festival, usually held every March, features three days of free art and craft workshops appropriate for all, especially children. Fields covered include traditional dancing, music, traditional mosaic art, video, and jewelry making. The day's events are topped off by free-entrance concerts, theatrical performances, and screenings of award-winning films and documentaries. The events are usually held at the local school. The island's most important **folk fetes** are the two-day celebrations of the Assumption of the Virgin (August 15) in Chora, and the Days of Agios Georgios after Easter at the church's courtyard and of Agios Ioannis at the cave of the same name on August 28. A feast commemorating the Assumption is held at Panagia village, outside the Church of the Entrance of Virgin Mary into the Temple after service. Food, wine and desserts are offered to all. Further feasting, to the sound of traditional music, usually follows at one of the tavernas in the afternoon. **Agios Georgios** chapel in the village

of the same name stages a traditional celebration marking the day designated for the saint, either on April 23 or on Easter Monday if this is later. It is held at the church yard with food, wine and desserts for all. Feasting to the sounds of traditional music usually follows at one of the village tavernas. On August 28, the eve of the day commemorating the beheading of **Agios Ioannis (Saint John the Baptist)**, vespers are held in the big chamber of the cave by the same name. Worshippers start early in the day, carrying the saint's icon from the church, where it is kept, to the cave, bringing with them food for a picnic under the trees by the cave's entrance. They spend time exploring the cave and light candles that are placed at various points inside. The mood is festive ahead of the vespers, which begin around 4pm. Once the service is over, they return to the village as one big group and, quite spontaneously, carry on with a feast to the sounds of traditional music at one of the local tavernas. A traditional celebration is held every year on November 8 at Agios Georgios church in the village of the same name, marking Archangels' Day (**Taxiarchon**). The occasion's organizers offer food, wine and abundant homemade sweets. Last, **Agios Nektarios** chapel, located next to the Church of the Entrance of Virgin Mary into the Temple, holds its annual fete on November 9. Following church service, the parish offers free food, sweets and wine for all.

Useful telephones

(int. phone code +30)

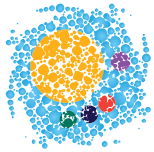
Community Office	2285071545 (G fax)
Citizen's Service	2285077004 (G fax)
Community clinic	2285071388, 2285071177

For updated information on accommodations, services, activities, cultural and other events on Iraklia, please visit our website at www.naxos.gr.

You may also find us on the following social media:

Facebook: **naxosislandgreece**, twitter: **@NaxosIslands**, Google+: **Naxos Island and Small Cyclades**, flickR: **Naxos Island and Small Cyclades**, YouTube: **Naxos Island and Small Cyclades**





Schinoussa



SCHINOUSSA



The quiet force

Featuring a strange, rugged beauty, and nature that beckons for exploration, Schinoussa is an island which promises unforgettable vacations to the visitor. It has many characteristics which make it a wonderful "refuge": Its harbor is well-known as a good shelter, the beaches with the golden sand are as a rule approached without any difficulty, and the climate of the island is so mild that is reminiscent of summer even in winter. Small Schinoussa wants to reward its visitors for their journey there, and so ensures that their stay is as pleasant as possible from the minute they anchor at its port.



Tucked between the isles of Iraklia and Koufonissia, off the southeastern coast of Naxos, Schinoussa promises unique experiences in the surrounding expanse of turquoise and deep blue waters, romantic sunsets, nights under the moonlight straight out of fairy tales, exciting hiking trails but also unforgettable gastronomic delights. It retains its traditional character unspoiled and offers you the relaxing holidays sought by those looking for isolated spots in the Aegean archipelago.

The island has no public transport facilities, which adds to its picturesque character. Besides, its small area and relatively smooth landscape allow easy access throughout on foot. But it is also possible to hire bicycles and mopeds to explore the hinterland, or a boat to explore the highly indented coastline.

Nature and geography

Scinoussa lacks any high-elevation massifs.

Its hills are low - the highest point being Vargies, at 133m.

Its coastline, however, is highly indented, with many bays and coves, sandy or rocky, that host beautiful beaches.

The entire island belongs to the Natura 2000 network of natural habitats and has a rare flora, with many trees and shrubs that constitute a different version of the Cycladic landscape.

Schinoussa's flora mainly comprises two types of Mediterranean vegetation, the maquis (tall bush which mainly includes Kermes oaks (*Quercus coccifera*) and lentiscs (*Pistacia lentiscus*)) and dwarf bush species collectively called «phrygana» (dry bush dominated by the broom *Genista acanthoclada* but including heather, sage, thyme, oregano and lavender).

But the island's flora also includes olive, arbutus and myrtle trees. Most beaches feature tamarisks, while beautiful lilies adorn the northern coast in August.

The entire Small Cyclades group of islands is important for migratory birds. The sea area provides refuge to the Monachus monachus seal, while two more marine mammals are occasionally sighted, the dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*) and the harbor porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*). Schinoussa's range of reptiles includes the *Elaphe quatuorlineata*, the *Hemidactylus turcicus*, the *Podarcis erhardii* and the *Cyrtodactylus kotschy*.

Maniatis cave

This interesting natural sight, a black rock cave, is found on the coast of Schinoussa's harbor. Tradition has it that a pirate from the Peloponnesian region of Mani once landed on the island and chose to rob the Church of Panagia. (Virgin Mary).

During the robbery, however, he had a sense that the icon of Panagia was continuously watching him. Angered, he took out his gun and shot a hole through the icon. After grabbing his booty, he made a quick getaway but slipped, and the gun went off and killed him.

Since then the cave has a black color and even today the rocks are totally black.



A place in history

The name of Schinoussa is found in texts of Roman philosopher Pliny the Elder. According to linguists, the name is derived from the shrub schinos (lentisc, *Pistacia lentiscus*), which abounds on the island.

According to another version, it was named after Schinoza, a Venetian nobleman. Although the island does not have any organized archaeological sites or listed monuments, the finds, such as statuettes and parts of marble columns –most of which are on display at the Naxos Archaeological Museum, confirm that Schinoussa participated in the creation of the Proto-Cycladic civilization (3200-2800 BC) and continued to be inhabited in later antiquity.

German-born Ludwig Ross (1806-1859), who became the first archaeology professor in the University of Athens, reported finds of various periods on the island, ranging from antiquity to the period of the Venetian ascendancy on the island, including ancient farm terraces. The farming character of island appears to have changed little since antiquity, and olive oil presses and windmills operated until recent times.

Important antiquities of the Hellenistic and Roman eras were discovered during construction of the new port at Livadi, resulting in a halting of the works until the excavation would be completed and construction plans were modified.

Abundant ceramic finds and many ruined medieval chapels (Ai Giannis, Agios Antonios, Profitis Ilias, Stavros, Agia Triada) suggest that Schinoussa developed a brisk commercial activity during Byzantine times. The island is

also referred to as a haunt of pirates, who used the coves of Mersini, Sifneiko, Liolios, Bazeos and Gerolimionas as anchorages. During Ottoman times Schinoussa was deserted and became the property of Chozoviotissa Monastery, on the neighboring island of Amorgos.

After Greek independence in the 1820's, the monastery granted the right of settlement to some families from Amorgos to cultivate the land.

The settlers' community gradually grew into settlements with schools and churches, and despite adverse conditions, the inhabitants managed to develop trade with the neighboring islands. In later decades, poverty forced a large number of them to emigrate.

The growth of tourism and the creation of secondary schools in the last 20 years seem to have made a significant contribution to a growth of the permanent population.



Settlements and sights

*The island's harbor, **Merssini**, is considered one of the best small boat shelters in the Aegean archipelago.*

*A few houses, a pretty, small beach shaded by five or six tamarisk trees and the whitewashed chapel of **Agios Nikolaos** compose the initial, frugal impression on the visitor.*



Merssini has some rooms to let, and a couple of good fish tavernas and grocery stores.

Panagia, or Chora, is the largest of the two settlements on the island, situated roughly in its center and about 1.2km. from Merssini. The village, which owes its name to the **Church of Panagia** (Virgin Mary), grew on a hilltop with sea views during times when the fear of pirate raids was still real, so that the inhabitants would be afforded early warning.

Panagia is relatively densely built, along both sides of a cement-paved road. Architectural features are mixed, with a fair number of old, Cycladic-style houses adorned with basil and bougainvilleas, but also a few new constructions. The church, also known as **Eisodia Theotokou**, and featuring an icon with a rare depiction of Virgin Mary, is at the center of the village.

There are several shops along the main street, including cafes and tavernas with good food, while the settlement also has several accommodation facilities.

Two dirt tracks start at the eastern end of the village, one leading north to the beaches of **Almyros, Liolios and Aligaria**, and the other to **Livadi**. All routes are connected via a circular road



so as to prevent the entry of vehicles into the settlement.

The second settlement of the island, **Messaria**, is about 2km. on the northbound tarmac road from Chora. A relatively small number of families live here in the winter but in the summer season the population multiplies.

The hamlet has mixed architectural features. Most houses are old, traditional Cycladic style but the growth of tourism in recent years has largely spurred new construction activity.

The old windmill and the church of Evangelistria, with the becoming, colored altar screen of 1909, are certainly

worth a visit. At the higher, rocky area of Messaria, there is a second windmill and a few old, abandoned stone-built houses that set a time backdrop.

Past Messaria, there are vineyards and the large, almost flat plain of Kampos which is cultivated and is a good grazing area. Tracks from the hamlet will take you to the beaches of **Gerolimnionas, Fykie, Avlaki tou Papa and Psili Ammos** – which some consider the most beautiful of the island.

The road network is limited, mainly connecting the port with Chora and Messaria, and most beaches are accessible via short dirt tracks.



Beaches

Schinoussa is endowed with many beautiful beaches.

Sandy or pebbly, they are all easily accessible, at distances requiring no more than 20 to 30 minutes on foot.

They are suitable for water sports (especially windsurfing) and spear gun fishing, while the coves on the southern and southeastern coast are considered good anchorages.

The nearby islets of Ofidoussa, Agrilos and Aspronissi have been designated as areas of particular natural beauty and are good for excursions and scuba diving.

Tsigouri

This is Schinoussa's most popular beach, located about 450m. from Chora.

It is 350m. wide, shaded by tall tamarisk trees, sandy and with crystal-clear waters. Behind the beach there are café - restaurants, beach bars and excellent rooms to let, with superb views of the isles of Venetiko, Ofidoussa, Iraklia and the promontory of Agios Vassilios.

It is accessed via a steep dirt road or 5 minutes on foot from Chora.

Parking space is limited.



Livadi

This sandy beach is on Schinoussa's southwestern coast, just 850m. from Chora. It is some 230m. long, with deep blue waters and tall tamarisk trees. Facilities include rooms to let and tavernas with excellent food. The spot is the starting point of the promontory of Agios Vassilios and has superb views of the islets of Agrilos and Ofidoussa. Access is via a dirt road or a footpath (10 minutes), both beginning from Chora. There is ample parking space.



Tholari

This is a small, treeless beach near Livadi, ideal for couples and nature lovers. It is 5 minutes on foot from Livadi beach.

Ammoudaki tou Garbi

A tiny sandy beach, with crystal-clear waters, near Livadi. It is barren but suitable for quiet and seclusion. It is accessed via the footpath beginning below the dove cote at the end of Livadi beach.

Lioliou

Featuring alternating sandy and rocky patches, Lioliou beach is suitable for all but especially for kids, given its crystal-clear, shallow waters. It is not very big but it is wide with many tamarisk trees for shadow. It has road access from gravel road 2.7 kilometers, starting from Chora and has space for parking. There are rooms and restaurant with traditional food on the beach.

Bazeou

This is the continuation of Liolios beach, with a rocky stretch of coast in between. Only about 80m. wide, it is lush with lentisc shrubs (*Pistacia lentiscus*) right down to its superbly turquoise waters. A small sea cave offers shade. It is accessed via 2.8km of dirt road starting at Chora. Parking area is available.

Fidou

Sandy beach without trees for shade but with an inviting seabed and turquoise waters on the isle next to Schinoussa, from which it is separated by a narrow sea pass. Ideal for seclusion and spear gun fishing. Accessed only from the sea.

Meressini (Pisso Ammos)

This is the sandy beach adjacent to the island's port, shaded by tamarisk trees. Two café/ restaurants offer tasty specialties and attractive sea views.



Fountana

Two small, sandy beaches in Fountana bay, on the island's northeastern coast, feature superb turquoise waters and views of the islands of Kato Koufonissi, Keros and Amorgos to the right. **A small Venetian fort** is visible from the beach, which you reach either by following the road to Almyros and taking a left at the small pier, or via a 1.5km. footpath from Chora.

Gerolimnionas

Tiny (just 15m. wide) but very pretty beach with coarse sand and turquoise waters in Gerolimnionas bay, on the island's northwest. Especially suitable for nature lovers and couples, and ideal for spear gun fishing. To get there, follow the road to Messaria. Shortly before you get there, turn left in a dirt road and then take the first left again. The last 300m of this track are a bit rough for a car, so many choose to do it on foot.



Avlaki tou Papa

Small sandy beach without trees for shade near Psili Ammos, on Schinoussa's northeastern side. Ideal for those seeking quiet and seclusion, as well as for spear gun fishing. It is reached via a 350m. footpath from Psili Ammos beach, which is accessed by car.

Aligaria 1

This is a beautiful beach - the first of three in Aligaria bay, on the southern coast. Endowed with thin golden sand and transparent turquoise waters. Ideal for nature lovers and couples. Access is via a 1.7km. dirt road from Chora. Parking space available nearby.



Aligaria 2 (Gagavi)

The second of three beaches in Aligaria bay is smaller than the first - 30m. long, with transparent blue waters and small sea caves that offer shade. Access is via a 2.2km. dirt road from Chora, and then another 60m. on foot.



Aligaria 3 (Kamos)

The last of three beaches in Aligaria bay is rather small (40m. long) and sandy, surrounded by rocks, with crystal-clear waters and an interesting seabed. Ideal for scuba diving and spear gun fishing. It is accessed via a 2.6km. dirt road from Chora.

Agios Vassilios

A beautiful beach with thin pebbles at the end of Agios Vassilios peninsula. It is 110m. long, with wonderful turquoise waters, ideal for spear gun fishing. Access is only from the sea.

Moli

An attractive, sandy beach without trees for shade at the promontory of Agios Vassilios. Ideal for speargun fishing, it is accessed only from the sea.

Santorineiko

This is a superb sandy beach on the promontory of Agios Vassilios, with a wonderful seabed. Access is only from the sea.

Fykie

A small, sandy beach, 30m. long, with low tamarisk trees and turquoise waters, on the island's northeastern coast. Ideal for speargun fishing. Access is via 2km. asphalt road starting at Chora, and then 1.1km of dirt road. Parking space available.

Almyros

This extended beach, 350m. long, with golden sand, trees for shade and crystal-clear, shallow waters, is ideal for children and windsurfers - being exposed to northeasterly winds. It is about 2km. from Chora and divided in two by a rock formation in the middle. A small bar operates near the beach in the summer. Access is via a 2km. dirt road from Chora and a parking area is available. It is also reached via a footpath from Chora.

Pori

This is a small, sandy stretch surrounded by rocks which form a cave at some point, offering shade throughout the day. It has thin sand and turquoise, crystal-clear waters and offers a view of the neighboring island of Amorgos. Ideal for quiet and seclusion. Access is by road to Almyros beach and then on foot for another 150m. from the end of that beach.

Psili Ammos

This is one of Schinoussa's most attractive beaches, near the Messaria settlement, on the island's northeastern coast. Relatively small (60m. long), it is in a unique setting, with golden sand and dunes, crystal-clear waters and trees for shade. Visitors are well-compensated for the exposure to northerly winds. Accessed via a 2.8km asphalt road from Chora and a 450m. dirt road from Messaria.



Sifneiko

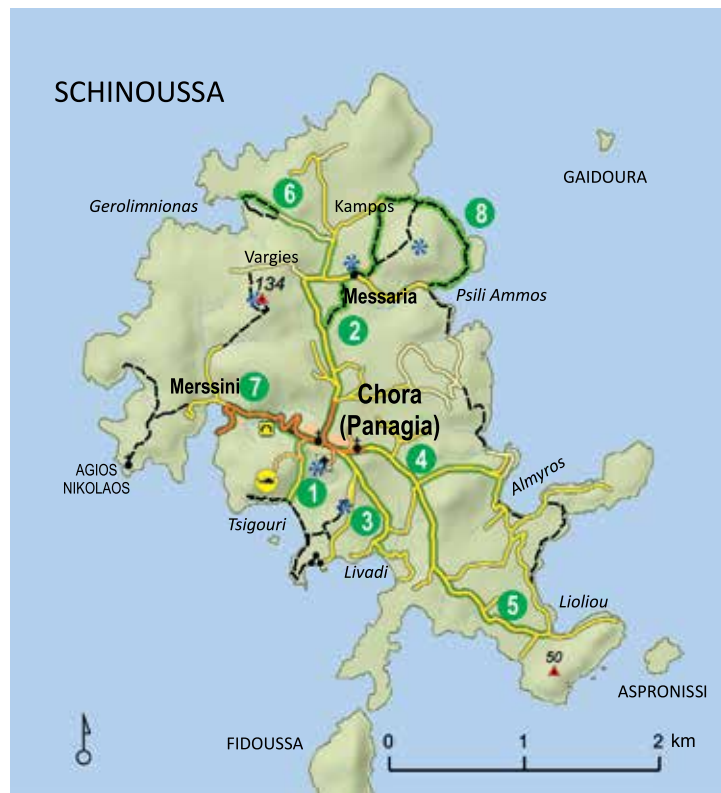
This is an isolated cove of wild beauty on Schinoussa's west. A haunt of pirates in the days of old, it features **the cave of Marouso** and is now a popular anchorage for sailing boats. Sifneiko is 2.2km. from Chora. The first kilometer is tarmac-paved and the rest is dirt road ending in a rough trail.

Beaches at Michalis's cape

Three small beaches with all-white pebbles and superb waters are found near Lioliou beach, on Schinoussa's eastern part. Continue on foot after Lioliou, following the footpath along the cape on your right.

Activities

Hiking



Schinoussa's low and smooth slopes are replete with stone-paved or ordinary footpaths suitable for hiking. A walk round the island takes up to 2h 30min, even if walking is not your strong point. Various routes begin from the port, Chora and Messaria, ending at beautiful beaches or enchanting spots with unlimited views of the Aegean blue.

The following routes are recommended for walking:

1. Chora-Tsigouri

A short trail ending at the cosmopolitan beach of Tsigouri, which offers superb views of neighboring islands.

The ruins of a Hellenistic and Roman period settlement and a paleo-Christian basilica, which can be reached on foot, have been found in this area.

2. Chora-Messaria

An easy route, 2km. long, which crosses the island's interior.

3. Chora-Livadi

An uphill, 1km trail with superb views of Ofidoussa and Agrilos islets, ending at Livadi beach. The Agios Vassilios promontory, with the Byzantine, all-white church and the beach of the same name at its end, starts here. The walk takes about 15 minutes.

4. Chora-Almyros

An easy, 1.5km. route crossing the now abandoned settlement of Stavros before leading to the top of Prophetis Ilias hill, site of a Classical era fort. It ends at the pretty beach of Almyros.

5. Chora-Lioliou

A 2.7km. trail, starting at Chora and ending at Lioliou beach.

6. Chora - Vargies peak - Gerolimnionas

This 3.5km. hike leads to the island's highest peak, Vargies - at an elevation of 133m. - which features one of Schinoussa's three windmills and offers stunning views of surrounding islands. The pretty beach of Gerolimnionas is nearby.

7. Chora - Port

A walk from Chora to the port is easy and does not last more than 10 minutes. It takes in the black rock cave, associated with the legend of the pirate who fell in it to his death after robbing the church of Panagia. The beautiful, stone-paved trail is illuminated at night and is recommended for an afternoon walk.

8. Messaria-Kampos-Psili Ammos

From Messaria follow the trail leading to the vineyards and the large, almost flat plain of Kampos.

The route ends at Psili Ammos beach, with the superb sand dunes.



Sailing

Schinoussa's indented coastline is a sailor's haven. **Mersini**, the island's port - deep in a bay with a southwestern orientation - is considered one of the best shelters for small boats in the entire Aegean Sea and is a good option for a starting point.

The mouth of the cove is signaled by a small chapel on its western side. You can dock at the western end of the seafront, at depths of 6-7 meters.

A low docking facility, with depths of no more than 2 meters, is located in the middle of the beach. The seabed is sandy, with seaweed and mud, and quite a good anchor holding ground.

Most boats anchor off the shore, at depths of 4-8 meters, in front of the small beach, but it is advisable to test the holding.

The cove is well-sheltered from northerly winds but relatively exposed to those from the southeast and southwest. Mersini is connected with Chora via an asphalt road and beautiful, stone-paved footpath which is illuminated at night.

There are two more coves south of Mersini that offer shelter from northerly winds, at **Tsigouri and Livadi**, while further south still is the islet of Ofidoussa (Fidou), which has a sheltered beach.

On the eastern side of the island, protected from northerly and northwesterly winds, are the coves of **Almyros and Lioliou**, with a sandy seabed around 5 meters deep and a good anchor holding.



Sea Tours

Visitors who enjoy sea excursions will have the opportunity to see sights of interest on Schinoussa by a passenger boat that also serves as a sea taxi and is available for private tours.

The sea taxi takes visitors to several of

the island's beaches, many of which are accessible only by sea. In addition, there are timetables to nearby islands (Iraklia and Koufonissia) that return in the afternoon and a day cruise to the isles of Keros and Kato Koufonissi.

Scuba diving

The nearby islets of Ofidoussa, Agrilos and Aspronissi have been designated as areas of particular natural beauty and are suitable for scuba diving.

Rock Climbing

In the summer of 2012, an effort began to develop the adventure activity of rock climbing at the gorge known as Charaka.

Since then 40 climbing routes have opened at various levels of length and difficulty. The rock surface of limestone is sharp and varies holes depending on the route and consists of some loose areas in which climbers should be careful and proceed with caution.

The activity has shed light on the natural beauty of the gorge such as the forest and the areas known as the tunnel (metro) and the balcony (casino) with views of Tsigouri beach and the islet Fidou.



Local products

Schinoussa produces excellent farming products (*beef, pork, cheeses such as ladotyri, xinotyro and kopanisti, and honey*) but is especially famed for its **goat's meat, split peas, cowpea pods and its dry farming cucumbers** –which have a very particular taste. They are all served in tavernas but are also available in local shops.

Top of the list of local dishes are **patatato** (*goat's meat with potatoes and herbs casserole*), **chtapodi giouvetsi** (*baked octopus with pasta*) and **pitaridia**

(*home-made pasta boiled in goat's milk*).

At Easter, **lamb is baked in an earth oven with rice and herbs**, and is accompanied by **melitinia** (*pies with cream cheese, egg and sugar*).

In weddings, they offer **pasteli** (*sesame seed and honey candy*), **xerotigana** (*fried dumplings with honey*) and **rakomelo** (*raki spirit with honey*) –which is also served in local establishments.



Fava (split peas)

Ingredients:

1 kg of fava
2 onions
olive oil
salt
lemon
capers

Wash the fava thoroughly and place it in a pan with two liters of water.

Turn the heat on high and whisk the froth once it comes to the boil. Lower the heat, sprinkle some salt and throw in a whole onion.

Add warm water if needed during the boil. Stir frequently with a wooden spoon.

The fava is ready when it starts setting.

Serve with olive oil and chopped onion.

Add lemon juice and capers depending on taste.

Events - Folk fetes

The people of Schinoussa are warm - and open-hearted, with a love of their folk feasts, customs and traditions. Besides religious fetes, the local cultural association also organizes other events every year which you would be unlikely to forget.

The major religious and social event is the **fete of Panagia** (Virgin Mary) in Chora, which takes place on the last Saturday of Lent.

Church service is followed by feasting at the cultural center, where octopus or cuttlefish with rice is usually served.

A school parade is held after service at the **Church of Evangelistria in Messaria on March 25 (National Day)**. Fried cod with garlic sauce is served for everyone at the church courtyard afterwards, while schoolchildren recite poems and participate in a theater performance in the afternoon.

The **Dormition of the Virgin, Greece's** second most important religious holiday after Easter, is celebrated annually on August 15.

The church offers local delicacies and feasting continues with traditional live music and dancing in the tavernas in the evening.

The chapel of Agios Nikolaos at Faros celebrates annually on December 6. Pilgrims and visitors are treated to the traditional dish of fried cod with garlic sauce in the chapel courtyard. The chapel is accessible from the port, either by local boats or on foot - a 20-minute pleasant walk.

On Easter day, locals gather at the square in Chora and play **bilious**, a game thought

to be an ancient precursor of bowling. Donkeys were the only means of transportation on the island until the 1980's, when roads were constructed and cars first appeared on Schinoussa. Since then the number of donkeys has dwindled sharply and they tend to be hard to find these days. As a tribute to their contribution to the island's economy and society, Schinoussa holds annual **donkey races** in August. The event starts with a parade of riders and their donkeys and the race follows. Spectators are offered gifts and local delicacies by local businesses.

The Schinoussa Cultural Association in co-operation with the split pea local producers and the businesspeople hold an annual **split pea feast** at the school courtyard in Chora. The specialty is offered by the local producers. The feast, featuring traditional music, food and drink, lasts until the early morning hours.

In August, the association also organizes a three-day **bazaar** with local handicrafts and a **photography exhibition** with old pictures and portraits, at the picturesque alley in front of the Church of Panagia in Chora. Films and documentaries for young and old are also screened in the church courtyard.

The same period in the **small theater "Katina Polemi"** the association is organizing another event with live music and traditional dances.

Useful telephones

(int. phone code +30)

Community	2285071170
Citizen's service center	2285074250
Community clinic	2285071385
School	2285074255
Post office	2285071160 fax: 2285071957

Cultural Association e mail: info@schinoussa.net **site:** www.schinoussa.net

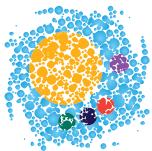
facebook: SyllogosSxoinousioton

For updated information on accommodations, services, activities, cultural and other events on Schinoussa, please visit our website at www.naxos.gr.

You may also find us on the following social media:

Facebook: **naxisislandgreece**, twitter: **@NaxosIslands**, Google+: **Naxos Island and Small Cyclades**, flickR: **Naxos Island and Small Cyclades**, YouTube: **Naxos Island and Small Cyclades**





Koufonissia



Awakening the senses

No matter how much you have been prepared from what you have heard about the beaches of Koufonissia, what you will actually feel when you get there cannot be easily described. Coves with emerald waters that look like natural pools and a background of rocks uniquely sculpted by the waves compose a magical picture that fires the senses right away. For many years these two little isles were the refuge of the few that had discovered them. Today, they are favorite tourist destination but have kept their exotic charm.



Nature and geography

Koufonissia comprise two isles, Ano (Epano or Apano) and Kato Koufonissi (5.7sq. km. and 4.4sq.km. respectively), which are separated by a narrow strait 200m wide and the island of Keros.

They are both part of the Natura 2000 Network of natural habitats and feature a varied coastline of soft limestone that has been eroded by the sea and the rain, making impressive geological formations. The landscape is smooth and stony, with low vegetation that becomes thicker in the eastern part of Ano Koufonissi. According to one view their name is due to the cavities and caves along the coast (koufio=hollow) that appeared huge to the eyes of pirates that roamed the area, making them believe that the islands were hollow.

Presently, these geological formations, sometimes playful and sometimes forbidding, are impressive natural sights interjected among enchanting beaches.

Sea caves

At the northeastern tip of Ano Koufonissi, north of Pori beach, in the area «Xylobatis» are the two **caves of Xylobatis**, tucked away in the cove of the same name. The first is tube-shaped and open at both ends, while the second has a small beach inside - ideal for cooling off.

A footpath starting at Pori leads to **Gala** - a strange geological formation that ends at a tiny beach which continues under the rock, creating a natural pool. The

actual name of that place is «Triptiti». The island's visitors named it «Gala» because of the color tint of the water, due to soil composition.

Next to the beach of Pori, in the opposite direction from «Gala» you will come to **Mati tou Diavoulou (Devil's Eye)**. This is a rocky cave with a huge hole inside that lets the waves pass through due to the sea currents. The area also features other geological formations but Mati tou Diavoulou is the most impressive.

Another natural sight between Platia Pounta and Pori is «**Pissina**». Quite a spacious area surrounded by rocks, it communicates with the sea, and becomes natural swimming-pool.



A place in history

Inhabited since prehistoric times, Koufonissia were centers of the Cycladic Civilization - as proven by the archaeological finds in the Epano Myli area of Ano Koufonissi

A frying pan-shaped vessel, with a nine-point star carved on it, is considered the most important of these finds - kept at the Naxos Archaeological Museum. Also, two **Protocycladic settlements** have been found on Ano Koufonissi, the first on the eastern side of the present-day village and the second near the chapel of Agios Nikolaos, at Potamia position. The only excavation that has been carried out at Kato Koufonissi is at a position of the **later Cycladic period**. Nevertheless, finds on the ground surface prove the existence of Protocycladic housing and burial installations at Panagia and Nero - at the northern and southern parts of the isle respectively.

The ancient names of Koufonissia are not known with certainty, even though they are referred to as "**Fakkoussae Islands**" in the Corpus of Inscriptions. The sea area between Ano and Kato Koufonissi was known as Kofos Limin (Deaf Harbor) - a name that defines a location that is sheltered and secure.

Apart from two Roman burial inscriptions, kept today at the Archaeological Collection of Chora, Amorgos, there are no written sources referring to the inhabitation of the isles in historical times. Nevertheless, broken fragments of Roman vessels have been found and housing remains are still

visible at Loutra position, next to the sea. The finds on presently uninhabited **Keros**, the isle opposite Koufonissia, are significant. In antiquity it was called Keria and the first reference to this name dates to 425 BC, on an inscription of the taxpaying allies of the Athenian Republic. According to the inscription, the isle was inhabited during **Classical antiquity**.

During the **Middle Ages** until the establishment of the new Greek state it was used as a base for pirates. The oldest known archaeological reference is that of U. Kohler (1884), who attributes to a tomb on the island (but without determining the precise location) the two famous figurines kept at the National Archaeological Museum in Athens, of the harpist and of the flute player, together with two female figurines of the common type with folded arms - which we now know to belong to the Protocycladic II period. One more harpist's figurine, at the Metropolitan Museum of New York today, is thought to originate in Keros, while the large head of another figurine is exhibited at the Louvre, Paris. The rest of the history of Koufonissia is in common with that of the rest of the Cyclades. They came under the occupation of the Venetians and the Turks who clashed several times, mainly in the 17th century, for control of the Aegean islands. The inhabitants, sometimes out of need and other times out of option, often collaborated with Maniots (from the Peloponnesian district of Mani) or other pirates who used the strait between Ano and Kato Koufonissi as a safe haven. The two isles were liberated and incorporated into the modern Greek state with the rest of the Cyclades in 1830.

Touring the island

Ano Koufonissi

Transportation is not needed on Koufonissi. The island can be walked around in just a few hours, or, if preferred, one may rent a bicycle, or do the round by boat, either private or through boat services on offer.



The island's road network begins from the port. During the summer season, a small privately run bus offers regular routes to and from the port, and covers most beaches. **Agios Georgios, or Chora** – Koufonissi's only official settlement - is a typical Cycladic fishing village with white-washed houses and picturesque alleyways around the port, where the characteristic windmill stands vigil.

In and around the settlement, on the island's southwestern coast, one can see the ruins of Roman baths, a traditional boat-building and repair yard and picturesque windmills. The center is adorned by the pretty **Church of Agios Georgios**, Koufonissi's patron saint. Chora accounts for about 90% of the island's tourism infrastructure, with an array of rooms-to-let facilities, hotels, tavernas, bars and cafeterias, as well as a postal office with an ATM.

Make it a point to visit the **Koufonissi Folklore Collection**, located along the town's main alley. Voluntary work by friends of the island and donations of items



from local households over many years helped establish this collection, aimed at preserving the island's history and cultural heritage. It includes cooking utensils, farming tools, traditional costumes, furniture, embroidery, and decorative items contributed by locals.

The Nikitas Simos Folklore & Archaeological Collection, exhibited in the garden of Villa Ostria in Agios Georgios, may be small, but it provides a great deal of information about the area's past. In a well-preserved stone building of 1852, which used to be the first primary school of Koufonissi, now houses the cafe - bar «School». The place offers lots of information about the architecture of the period.

The remains of **Roman baths** can be seen in the Loutro area of Agios Georgios. Excavations in the settlement and other parts of the island have brought to light objects dating to the Hellenistic and Roman periods.

Archaeologists have concluded that Chora lies on the site of a large Roman settlement which extended as far as



the cove of Loutro, the location of **Agios Nikolaos chapel**, a charming little church, close to an old and picturesque windmill.

The **boat-building and repair yard** (carnagio in Greek) is also located in this area. It began operating early in 1980 after a preceding shipyard on the island ceased operating as a result of its owner's retirement. A visit to this facility promises to take you back to another era, as work on fishing vessels is carried out in exactly the same way as several decades ago.

The next settlement to be met is **Charakopou**, located on the island's southern coast and developed around the beaches of the same name and Fanos. Despite being quite old, this spot has not been officially classified as a settlement. There are several new additions to the few

old houses, rooms to let and tavernas.

Pori, a hamlet on Koufonissi's northeastern side, is amphitheatrically shaped above the beach of the same name. Like the preceding settlements, it is not officially classified. It comprises a small number of old and newer holiday homes. A couple of café - restaurants operate in the summer.

Parianos is the fishing shelter of the island, in the south western coast. The cove is also a shelter for fishing boats in winter. The hamlet has a few old houses, some newer holiday homes, a few rooms to let and one tavern.

Another spot worth visiting on Koufonissi is **Prophitis Ilias church**, built at the highest point on the island at an altitude of 114 meters, over the remains of an older church dating back to pre-Byzantine times.

The Holy Altar of the present-day church features two columns and a piece of marble hailing from the old church, while the wall on which the icon of Prophitis Ilias hangs was constructed with stones from the old church. Local residents walk to this point every year on the day dedicated to the saint for vespers service and dispensing of holy bread.

Full-moon evenings on Koufonissi offer yet another unique experience, **a view of the crest of neighboring Keros**, which, under the moonlight, seems like a couple lying down. The outline depicts a pregnant woman, languid and lying down, with her head resting on her male partner's head, also clearly depicted. Though this image is visible from all points on Koufonissi, the ideal spot for viewing is the area above the marina.



Kato Koufonissi

Kato Koufonissi is virtually deserted, but has a small port and numerous small and isolated beaches.

The chapel of Panagia (Virgining Mary), built close to an older Byzantine church, is a worthwhile site.

Built in 1561, it originally stood barely above ground level to avoid problems with the Ottoman authorities and minimize its visibility from afar for the fear of pirates.

The area around it was expanded only in 1970, and in 1990 a patio, toilets and a bell stand were built.

A big feast is held at the port of Kato Koufonissi after mass on the religious holiday of Panagia, August 15.

Visitors may reach the island by chartered boat service from Ano Koufonissi.

Routes run regularly on a daily basis during the summer.



Keros

Located between the two Koufonissi islands and Schinoussa, Keros was as prominent during the period of the early Cycladic civilization as Delos was during Classical antiquity.

Rich in white, finely grained marble, the island stood as an important center of Cycladic culture. The ancient city was built at a spot connecting the island with the neighboring islet of Daskalio, nowadays sunken in the sea. Excavation work carried out on the island's western side have brought to light finds of exceptional importance, including over **100 marble figurines, among them ancient harpist and flute players**, kept at the National Archaeological Museum of Athens, as well as an impressively sized statuette, 1.40m in height, of the Grand Mother deity. During classical times, the island was known as Keria and was a member of the Athenian Alliance. In medieval times it served as a base for pirates, while, later on, it was owned by the monastery of Panagia Chozoviotissa of Amorgos. These days, the island is used as pasture land for grazing and belongs to Koufonissi. The island may be accessed by chartered boat service from Ano Koufonissi.

Beaches

Ano Koufonissi

One beach succeeds another along the island's southern coastline, from Parianos in the west to Pori in the east, and they are all spellbinding. A track running parallel to the island's southern coastline allows visitors to see and select the beach of their choice, which is no easy matter. The seaside track, a longer walk than it looks on the map, is definitely a far more delightful route to take than the road running deep through the island's hinterland. Alternatively there is the equally beautiful overland route from the village to the east side on the beach 'Pori. The route offers stunning views of the Interior of the island.

Ammos

The main settlement's beach, located next to the port, offers shallow turquoise waters and is usually favored by locals for their swims.

It is one of the island's largest beaches, with a wonderful sandy stretch and several small shops behind it.

Loutro

A small pebbly beach on the island's southern coast.

Charakopou

This is the first beach to be encountered when following the island's seaside track from the main settlement. Large and busy, and featuring a golden sandy beach and emerald waters.



Fanos

This large, sandy and popular beach is next to Charakopou, on the eastern coast of the island.

As a result of a beach bar operating here it attracts mostly young people.



Pori

This is the island's farthest and most beautiful beach.

Long, with white sand and emerald waters, it is justifiably considered one of the top beaches in the entire Cycladic

region.

It is a favorite for surfers, sand artists and nature lovers in general.

Two café-bar-eateries, and some small shops, cover the needs of visitors.



Chondros Kavos

A small stony beach in the island's east, Chondros Kavos is ideal for individuals preferring tranquility and isolation.

Porta

Small and quiet sandy beach with fine pebbles on the island's eastern side.

Parianos

Wide, sandy beach in the sheltered bay of Parianos, on the southwestern side of the island. It features clear, shallow waters and the fishing boats anchored there make quite a picturesque setting.

Spilia

Small beach covered with coarse pebbles on the island's west side.

Platia Pounta or «Italida»

This is the island's most popular beach, just five minutes on foot from Fanos. It is also widely known by the name of Italida - the nickname of the owner of the house behind the beach, meaning 'the Italian lady'.

Though not a long beach but definitely beautiful, it offers golden sand and clear waters. The small cove at one end (Italidaki) is more secluded.



Kato Koufonissi

The beaches at Kato Koufonissi, featuring coarse sand and wonderful turquoise waters, are ideal spots for isolation and an even greater connection with nature.

May be accessed by private boat or chartered boat from Ano Koufonissi, running daily during the summer months.

Nero

The island's largest beach, on its eastern coast. A popular spot, it is layered with coarse sand and very fine pebbles along the beach, and fine sand in the water.

Detis

The nearest beach to the port of the island. Relatively small, but it has the advantage of proximity to the tavern that is open during the summer months.

Pezoulia

All roads head south to Pezoulia, one of the island's most beautiful beaches. Surrounded by impressive rocks and crystal-clear waters, it is ideal for isolation. Within close proximity, Aloni, a large plateau, reminds of an ancient theatre.

Fykie

By boat, one may anchor here. On foot, the Detis-Pezoulia track reaches this point.

Lakki

This small but impressive pebbly beach on the island's southern coast has crystal-clear waters and is ideal for those seeking seclusion.



Activities

Walking trails



An island that can be toured on foot within a few hours beckons even the most "lazy" visitor to walk it. Besides, there is no better way to acquaint yourself with Ano Koufonissi's unique beaches.

Proposed routes:

1. Chora - Loutro - Parianos - Limenari - Xylobatis - Pori - Platia Pounta (Italida) - Fanos - Finikas - Charakopou - Gialos.

This walking route goes around the island, along the coastline. It begins at Loutro - a very picturesque place next to Chora, with a traditional

boatbuilding yard where you can watch the craftsmen working in the traditional way. Following a westerly direction, the second



stop is the cove of Parianos, where you can admire the island's fishing fleet.

In proportion to its population, Koufonissi has, in fact, the largest fishing fleet in Greece!

Moving on, you come to some magical sandy beaches alternating with caves the sea has carved out of the rocks. You are sure to be enchanted by the sand dunes

with the white lilies along the path.

Xylobatis beach features a wonderful sea cave that hosts wild pigeons, while after Platia Pounta with the turquoise waters you will come to the **"pools"** - small, virtually enclosed coves with openings in the rocks where swimming is a special experience.



2. Chora - Prophitis Ilias - Pano Meria

This is a route with a fantastic view that follows the footpaths in the hinterland of the island and leads to the highest point where the chapel of Prophitis Ilias is situated.



Whether you love sailing or the more solitary sea sports Koufonissi will not disappoint you.

For the enthusiasts of onshore sports there are footpaths for trekking in beautiful spots.

There are also pitches for 5x5 soccer, basketball and volleyball.



The rocky coasts of Ano and Kato Koufonissi are ideal grounds for **amateur fishermen**. The seabed becomes all the more fascinating as you approach Keros, with a special allure for **divers**.

The beaches of Pori and Platia Pounta are considered ideal for **windsurfing**.

Sailing

With your own boat you can visit **Cape Xylobatis**, on the northern coast, which features many sea caves, the isolated beaches of **Kato Koufonissi**, the pretty **islets of Prassoura, Plakes, Tsouloufi, Voulgaris, Lazaros and Glaronissi**, which have been designated

as areas of special natural beauty, and the archaeological site of nearby **Keros**. You can moor the boat at the port, which has a bunker fuel supply station, or Parianos – a picturesque bay at the southwestern side of the island with a safe refuge next to the boat building yard.

Local products

Fresh fish and sea food are the two islands' main products and a major pole of attraction for visitors from the nearby islands who come to enjoy all-fresh and well-prepared dishes.

Farming production is limited - the main product being **xynomyzithra cheese**.

Koufonissi cuisine has been considerably influenced by those of Naxos and Amorgos.

Patatato (beef casserole in tomato sauce with potatoes) is very popular during festive days and dinners, as are the **traditional sweets pasteli on lemon leaves and xerotigana** (dumplings).



Koufonissian xerotigana

Ingredients:

- 1 kg all-purpose flour
- water enough for a smooth dough
- 1 small cup olive oil
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp sugar
- Pinches of cloves and cinnamon

Preparation:

Put the flour in a large bowl and start pouring the water little by little, mixing until you have a relatively firm dough. Leave to rest for 30 minutes. Then take a piece of dough, roll out into thin pastry and cut into strips with a knife. Cut off balls of dough, roll out into thin sheets, cut them into thin strips and form into bow shapes. In a large frying pan, heat the oil until quite hot and fry the bows until golden.

SYRUP: Boil 1 kg honey with some water, sugar, cloves and cinnamon for 15 minutes. Add some lemon juice at the end. Place the fried bows on a piece of kitchen paper laid on a large platter to drain.

While still warm, drench with the honey and sprinkle with ½ kg of sesame seeds that have previously roasted.

Events and fetes

Koufonissians, skilled fishermen, are also hospitable and open-hearted people who do not miss an opportunity for a feast.

After mass on the Day of **Agios Georgios** (Saint George) - the islands' patron saint - a specially designated local person who has taken vows in the saint, makes the round of the island holding the icon while the local boats (caiques) accompany him, sailing along the coast. The procession ends at the village where a traditional feast with food and drink follows. Feasting is resumed in the local tavernas in the evening.

The **Fisherman's Feast** is held on the last Saturday of June, with excellent sea food tidbits and wine, while people dance in the streets and the square to the sound of live music.

On **Prophitis Ilias** Day, July 20, those named after the prophet (Iliades) give treats to everyone and set up island dances to the tune of violins and lyres.

On the **Day of the Assumption of the Virgin** (Panagia), August 15, all the islanders go by boat to Kato Koufonissi. After mass, they feast and offer local dishes. A boat (caique) race is held on the return journey to port and more treats follow to the sound of violins.

On **Agios Nikolaos** Day, December 6, sea food tidbits and raki spirit with honey and herbs are offered after mass - an introduction to the wholesome feast that follows.

Easter is celebrated with special splendor in the local island tradition. The procession of the Epitaph takes place in the port area - illuminated with torches, while the announcement of the Resurrection 24 hours later is accompanied by a barrage of fireworks and firecrackers.

Weddings used to be a more colorful occasion in Koufonissi in the old days. The matchmakers would set to work and the engagement would follow. Then preparations for the wedding would start. The bride's and the groom's relatives would contribute their products in equal quantities (meat, sweets, traditional sesame and honey bars, dumplings) and would go out and invite people on the wedding day. They would first enlist the musicians, then the best man and woman, and finally the bride and groom and would all enter the church together. The feast lasted for two days. Eight days later the feast was repeated - the occasion being named "anti-wedding".



Useful telephones

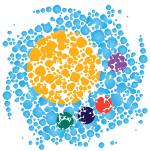
(int. phone code +30)

Community	22850 71379
Citizen's service center	22850 29243 - 74188
Police station	22850 71375
Port authority of naxos	22850 22300
Community clinic	22850 71370
Pharmacy	6947929292
Post office	22850 74214

For updated information on accommodations, services, activities, cultural and other events on Koufonissia, please visit our website at www.naxos.gr. You may also find us on the following social media:

Facebook: **naxisislandgreece**, twitter: **@NaxosIslands**, Google+: **Naxos Island and Small Cyclades**, flickR: **Naxos Island and Small Cyclades**, YouTube: **Naxos Island and Small Cyclades**





Donoussa



Small and authentic



This small island, that seems to be swimming alone at the edge of the Cycladic group, exudes a unique aura. This is perhaps why Dionysus, the ancient god of wine and merriment, chose it to hide Ariadne, the Cretan princess he was in love with, and why most people visiting it will claim they are in love. Hospitable, multifaceted and spontaneous, Donoussa bucks the trends prevailing in the busy tourist resorts and still offers the authenticity, tranquility and simplicity that were once synonymous with vacations in the Cyclades. Picturesque villages, idyllic locations, a breathtaking coastline and beaches where you cannot fail to relax compose a paradise on earth that will truly charm you.



The island measures 13sq.km. and its approximately 140 permanent residents - mostly engaged in fishing, animal farming and, more recently, tourism- state happy about living here. The main road, that connects Stavros - port and main settlement- with the three other hamlets, Messaria, Merssini and Kalotaritissa, is 13km. long.

A shorter road runs along the island's western side. However, the best way to acquaint yourself with Donoussa is by venturing along its walking trails and by circumnavigating it.

The tourism infrastructure that has been developed in recent times -

and so far seems adequate for its requirements- has not altered its authenticity in the least. Most tavernas and ouzo places that offer memorable sea food and a great deal more are found at the port but there are also others at Merssini and at some of the beaches.

The days are gone when getting to Donoussa was so difficult that it might have compared with Ulysses' legendary return to Ithaca.

The island now has daily boat connections with Naxos and the other Small Cyclades, and with Piraeus during the summer months.

Nature and geography

Donoussa has a semi-mountainous and stony terrain covered mostly with shrubs, and its highest peak is Papas, at 385m. The minimal amount of flat land is tucked within gullies and ravines featuring terraces, where mostly olive trees, vines and fresh garden produce are cultivated.

Iron, copper, bauxite and emery used to be mined on the island. Its coastline offers an incredible variety of images, alternating between rocky and precipitous capes where rock doves, hawks and cormorants nest, on one hand, and hospitable coves with beautiful beaches crystal-clear waters, on the other.

In the area of **Cape Moschonas**, on Donoussa's eastern coast, the rocks feature a geological rift that has created a cave of superb natural beauty, **Fokospilia**. This is a huge triangular gap 40m wide and 10m high, with transparent waters and sides adorned with "corals".

It was a pirates' haunt in the Middle Ages and used to be a refuge for seals. Its unique ambience and pirate past has long fueled the imagination of the locals and its name is associated with many legends.

If you do not have a boat of your own, local caiques can be hired to bring you here.

Another natural sight of great geological interest is **Spilia tou Tichou** (Wall Cave), in the Aspros Cavos area in the northeast. This is a sea cave more than 20m high from the water level. Impressive stalactites hang from the perfectly curved dome, over transparent waters that give the impression of a natural pool. It is only accessible from the sea and can be visited by hired boat. A number of uninhabited rocky islets of particular interest dot the sea area around Donoussa: to the east is **Skoulonissi**, an islet of triangular shape which, according to the prevailing view, was named after the bulb skoulos that is found in abundance on its slopes.

On the western side are the **three Makares islets**, on the largest of which, **Agios Nikolaos** or **Megalo Nissi**, Donoussa farmers used to cultivate wheat in the old days. A large subterranean cistern where rain water was collected via self-designed, slate-paved pipes. Slate slabs, known as Makarianes, were quarried here.

The second islet, **Prassini** or **Agia Paraskevi**, is separated from Agios Nikolaos by a narrow strip of water only 1.5m deep. The waters here are wonderful but the shallow depth allows passage only to small boats, at low speed and with particular care. The third islet, **Stroggylis**, is evidently named after its round shape.

Finally, northeast of Donoussa, are **Melantii** or **Chtenia** or **Vouves islets** - ideal fishing grounds for professionals and amateurs alike.

A place in history

The first signs of habitation on Donoussa, going back to the 3rd millennium, have been found at **Achtia ton Agrilion** and **Myti tou Trachyla** - which seem to have been the locations of two Protocycladic communities relying on animal farming and fishing.

During the ensuing millennia, the island became best known as an anchorage in Aegean sea routes. It flourished during the Geometric Period (10th - 7th century BC), when it became a trading post for goods moved between mainland Greece to the Dodecanese and the coast of Asia Minor. The fortified settlement, remains of which have been found at Vathy Limenari, very near Myti tou Trachyla, in the island's southeastern part, was a trading station during this period.

The important finds, showing a stronger influence from the Dodecanese rather than the Cycladic area, include a large variety of ceramics and are kept at the **Naxos Archaeological Museum**.

It seems, however, that this settlement was abandoned relatively quickly for a better post along the same sea route, perhaps on the western coast of Andros.

In the second half of the 1st century BC the Romans ceded Donoussa to Rhodes, that used it as a naval anchorage. Virgil mentions the island as a stopover during Aeneas' journey from Troy to Italy. During the Middle Ages and the subsequent Ottoman domination it became a pirate hideout.

A telling example of how isolated the island remained after Greek independence in the 19th century is that when King George I visited it in 1876 the inhabitants were surprised to hear that his predecessor, Othon, had been ousted 14 years earlier.

During World War I Donoussa's Cape Aspros Kavos became a coal supply station for German destroyers.

During the Axis occupation of World War II, the island was initially placed under Italian administration but came under German control after Italy's capitulation in 1943 and until liberation in the following year.

A 2,500-ton German cargo ship was sunk by RAF bombers during this time and its remains can be seen off Kedros beach today.



Touring the island

*An acquaintance with Donoussa starts from **Stavros (or Kampos, as the locals call it),** which is the island's port and main settlement.*



Situated around a sheltered bay on the island's northwestern coast, it exudes a hospitable ambience that makes you feel welcome right away. With whitewashed houses and slab-paved alleyways that start from the sea and climb to the highest points of the surrounding hills, it has an authentic Cycladic character and accounts for the largest part of the island's tourist business.

The pretty **churches of Timios Stavros (Holy Cross) and Panagia - Ai Giannis** add to the picturesque character of Stavros. Big fetes are held on their annual celebration days, September 14 and August 15 respectively.

Timios Stavros -the island's holy patron- is a whitewashed church of sparse architectural style, with a blue dome and an ornate bell stand, in the center of the settlement. It was built in 1902 after a fund-raising campaign organized by Dimitrios Skopelitis in order to replace the original church of Timios Stavros that stood further downhill and was destroyed by a strong storm at the end of the 19th century. It is said that the only thing that was saved from the old church was the icon of the Cross -found on a sandy beach on the neighboring island of Amorgos by local fishermen.

The church of Panagia (Virgin Mary)-Ai Giannis is an uncommon architectural



combination of two basilicas under a single bell, dominating a hilltop east of the settlement of Stavros.

The chapel of Panagia was built first at the end of the 19th century while Ai Giannis (Agios Ioannis) was added adjacently later.

Stavros is the island's tourism hub, with many rooms to let, tavernas, bars and all public services.

The smaller pier inside the harbor offers very safe anchorage for boats, while Stavros beach, next to the port, is among Donoussa's prettiest.

The island's main road connects Stavros with three other settlements, **Messaria**, **Mersini** and **Kalotaritissa**. Also, several footpaths begin from Stavros, ending in various parts of Donoussa. The longest is the one that takes you to Kalotaritissa in the north. Another leads to **Troulos**, an upland settlement a short distance from Stavros almost abandoned now, with just one inhabited house.

From the port of Stavros, either via the main road or a beautiful, old cobbled

footpath, you reach the traditional settlement of **Messaria**, which enjoys a singular view of Amorgos, Makares islets and Naxos' eastern side. Many of the village's low-leveled stone houses are nowadays dilapidated, while its winter residents are numbered.

However, it was a different story up until 1970, when Messaria, then known as Charavgi, stood as the island's main settlement with a forge facility for metalworking and a wood-burning oven that catered to the needs of all locals.

Two abandoned windmills just outside the village, out of use since the '70s, stand as reminders of the past. They are accessible via footpaths that start from the village –the best preserved one being the one above Vathy Limenari position.

On the peninsula east of **Vathy Limenari**, which you will reach if you continue along the same footpath that leads to the windmill, lie the ruins of a Geometric era settlement that was built on the remains of an older, Bronze era hamlet. The excavations, carried out between 1968 and 1973, brought to light part of the defensive wall and 12 rectangular

buildings, most of which were two-spaced with a flat roof.

The particular settlement is one of the few fortified ones of this period that have been discovered in the Cyclades, while a large part of it on the southern side appears to have sunk in the sea. The rich collection of ceramic items found here includes large vessels for the storage and transportation of liquids, smaller table vessels, cooking utensils etc, and is kept at the Naxos Archaeological Museum.

The main road then leads to **Mersini**, an upland village perched on a steep slope on the eastern side, with gorgeous views of the sea and Amorgos. With low, flat-roofed houses and idyllic spots all around, Mersini attracts many visitors who, besides the beauty of the place, can enjoy good food at the two tavernas that are open throughout the day in the summer months.

Mersini's standout feature –rare in the Cyclades- is a water spring next to an age-old plane tree, where the annual celebration of the village church, **Agia Sophia**, is held on September 17. The

church, whitewashed with a blue dome, stands on a hilltop with superb views on the edge of the settlement, and can be seen from afar. The old folk used to say that the water of the spring came from as far as the island of Ikaria to the east.

A footpath from Mersini leads to two of the island's most attractive beaches, **Livadi and Fytkio**.

The road ends at **Kalotaritissa**, a small, picturesque fishing village at the foot of Mt. Papas, in Donoussa's northeastern tip. It has a few low, stone-built houses with blue and green doors and windows, and adorned with basils and bougainvilleas. A particular feature is the impressive old juniper trees on the hills around the village. The whitewashed church of Agios Georgios, built in 1985 and featuring a pretty bell tower, is in the same frugal style. A traditional tavern operates in the summer months.

The bay of Kalotaritissa features the pretty beaches of **Sapounochoma**, **Vlycho**, **Messa Ammos** and **Trypiti**, while **Skoulonissi** islet is off its northeastern tip.



Beaches

Donoussa's pretty beaches - sandy to the south and pebbly to the north, are a far cry from the style of organized bathing spots, and offer unique contact with nature, crystal-clear waters and a wonderful seabed. Even more isolated and unspoiled are the beaches on the nearby islets of Skoulonissi, Makares and Melantii, which are also ideal for fishing and diving, and can be reached by private or hired boat.

Stavros

It is the beach next to the port of the same name - sandy, with crystal-clear waters and partly shaded by tamarisk trees. It is easily accessible and one of the most popular on the island. A number of catering establishments operate in the area while swimmers can have a little extra fun at the cement platform that's ideal for diving.



A tranquil and remote spot on the island's south, Vathy Limenari is a small, quiet beach featuring deep turquoise waters and white-pebbled sand. **The remains of an ancient fortified Geometric Period settlement** have been found in the surrounding hills. One of the island's two windmills is visible from this beach.

Difficult to reach, it attracts only a few, mostly romantic visitors.

May be reached via either the sea or a track beginning from the main road in Messaria, approximately a 20-minute walk. A track also links Vathy Limenari with Kedros beach.

Kedros

Ranking as one of the most beautiful beaches on Donoussa, Kedros is protected by a small bay in the island's south.

Quite a popular sandy beach, with crystal-clear waters.

The wreck of a German ship that was sunk by the Allies during World War II is visible roughly in the middle of the bay.

It may be driven to via the coastal road that ends at an elevated spot over the beach and, from there, down a stone-covered track that reaches the shore line.

Local caiques, or small traditional boats, can also transport visitors to the beach. Also accessible via a track connecting the beach with Messaria village.



Livadi

Featuring superb deep turquoise waters and a white sandy beach, Livadi is widely considered as being the most beautiful beach on Donoussa. Well protected from adverse weather, it is located amid a bay where the locals pull out their boats in winter makes an enchanting spot.

May be reached either by caique (small traditional boats) or on foot via tracks, one of which begins at Merssini and reaches the beach following a walk lasting about 10 minutes. Another track headed here starts at Messaria.



Limni

Surrounded by rocks, covered with coarse pebbles and offering clean waters that turn choppy during the August northerly winds, Limni is a small and isolated beach on the island's southwestern side.

Isolated and quiet, it is suitable for resolved getaway seekers that reach it via a track beginning at Stavros.



Fykie

Fykie is a small and quiet beach on Donoussa's southeastern edge, within close proximity of Livadi beach. The two locations are connected by a short-distanced track. Surrounded by rocks with caves, the beach is sandy with crystal-clear turquoise waters. Ideal for individuals seeking tranquility and isolation.

Accessible from the sea or via a track beginning at Merssini.



Messa Ammos

Messa Ammos is the largest and most remote of the three beaches at Kalotaritissa bay. Sandy, endowed with superb waters and offering a view of Donoussa's most elevated point, Papas, it is especially suitable for those in romance.

Not the best option when northerly winds blow.

May be reached via the sea or road leading to the Kalotaritissa settlement, followed by a track beginning at Vlycho beach.



Sapounochoma

Sapounochoma is one of three beaches tucked away in the hospitable cove of Kalotaritissa, located on the island's northeast. No more than 40m. wide, the beach is covered by coarse pebbles. Its

waters are crystal-clear and cool, making it an ideal spot for a hot summer day.

Easily accessed from the island's main road ending at the Kalotaritissa settlement.

Vlycho

The middle of three beaches in Kalotaritissa cove, Vlycho is covered with fine pebbles and features tranquil and turquoise waters. Usually windless, it is an ideal anchorage spot and suitable for families with children.

Easily accessed via the main road that ends at Kalotaritissa, or from the sea with private or locally hired boat.

Activities

Trekking



Trails

Replete with picturesque trails used by the locals daily in the old days. Donoussa is ideal for walking and exploration. Authentic Cycladic landscapes, scented by summer savory and sage, and offering superb views will reward you for any fatigue you may experience and give you the opportunity to acquaint yourself with the island intimately. Most trails have been marked, signposted and easy to follow. Here are some suggestions:

Proposed routes:

1. Stavros-Kalotaritissa

This trail is marked with a red/white sign and number 1, has a length of 4.4km. and it takes about 1h 30min. to walk it. This is the longest and perhaps most interesting walking route on the island. The trail starts from the main square of Stavros, crosses the entire northern and northwestern side of the island before ending at the picturesque settlement of Kalotaritissa.

About halfway along the route follow a leftward course to enjoy the unbelievable view offered by the bay of Xylobatis.

Then, after entering a dirt road, you will see on the right the entrances to the old mines of iron, bauxite, copper and emery.

Toward the end of the trail and before you descend to Kalotaritissa, on your

right, is the island's highest peak, Papas, at 385m. An ascent to the top offers some of the most breathtaking views of the Aegean Sea.

The route to the settlement is perhaps the most impressive of the island,

running along the Ftera ridge, with Papas's vertical slope on the right.

The footpath continues after Kalotaritissa and the beach of Vlycho, ending at Trypiti beach, which is named after the cavities of its rocks.

2. Kedros-Messaria

This trekking route is marked with a red/white sign and number 2, has a length of 1.1km and it takes about half-an-hour to walk it.

It used to be part of the route that connected Kampos and Merssini, with the settlements of Ano and Kato Messaria as intermediate stops.

It begins from the main road a little further after the turn into the dirt road that leads to Kedros beach, and ascends in a Z form to the peak of Bitilis.

The peak is susceptible to particularly strong winds and caution is required.

The route then unfolds smoothly to the settlements of Ano and Kato Messaria. The two villages were once particularly densely inhabited, as the area was the island's "manufacturing" hub, with two windmills milling a mixture of wheat and barley and an iron works.

The end of the trail features a stone staircase that brings you onto the main road of the island from where you can continue to Merssini and Livadi beach.

3. Merssini - Livadi

This trail, which connects Merssini with Livadi beach, is marked with a red/white sign and number 3, is 0.9km. long and the trek takes about 30 minutes.

It has large elevation differences and is quite steep in places.

An offshoot leads to the small beach of Fytkio and the small harbor of Merssini.

A detour to the left at the beginning of the trail is recommended for a visit to Merssini's water spring with the huge plane tree and the stone arch.

The stone-paved footpath to the spring and the scaled-down access to Livadi beach were constructed in 2010.

4. Kedros - Kato Mylos

This route is marked with a red/white sign and number 4, is 1.8km. long and the trek takes about 40 minutes.

The beautiful trail was once used by the inhabitants of Kampos to transport the blend of wheat and barley to Kato Mylos for milling.

It starts from the eastern side of Kedros beach and crosses the eastern side of the bay before it ends at Mylos.

The hull of a German ship sunk during World War II is clearly visible on Kedros's seabed.

Along the route you will come to the

iron furnace where the mine ores were transported to and loaded onto ships.

You will then pass by the small cove with the caves of Gerantonis and the superb waters, before ascending to Choristaria, where the millers used to keep their boats in the old days.

Last, after a short ascent you will end at Mylos.

From there, you can see on your left Vathy Limenari bay and the Geometric Period settlement that was excavated by archaeologist Fotini Zaphiropoulou in 1967.



5. Stavros-Limni - Aspros Cavos

Trail number 5 is marked with a red/white sign, has a length of 2.1km. and takes about 40 minutes to walk.

It crosses the entire western side of the island and ends at Limni—a closed natural bay with a small sandy beach pebbly seabed that served as an anchorage for local boats before the port was constructed.

It starts from the island's main road at the point where it turns towards the

waste landfill. On both sides of the road are the remains of the old settlement of Zali. Exiting the dirt road, the trail passes above the Plakes area and crosses Sykia. On the left is Gerogiannis bay and you shortly arrive at Limni. After Limni the route leads to Cape Aspros Kavos—one of the most otherworldly spots in the archipelago. Wander around the all-white landscape and enjoy the view to Donoussa's northern coastline.

Sailing

The Donoussa area is ideal for touring with a sailing boat as, besides its fragmented coastline and inlets, a number of rocky islets around it have been officially designated as of particular natural beauty (**Makares, Moschonas, Skoulonissi and Melantii**).

In Stavros bay, on the island's western coast, where the port is, one can anchor offshore in good holding ground with a depth of 4-5m. On the inside of the pier where ships dock there are few mooring positions and depths are shallow (1.5-2.5m.), suitable only for small boats.

The bay is generally pleasant but not adequately sheltered from strong winds. Offshore you can replenish your water

supplies and find grocery stores, cafes and tavernas.

Dendro (or Kedros) bay, east of Stavros, offers better protection from northerly winds but is still affected by strong gusts. At Cape Dendro, in the middle of the western coast of the bay, there are reefs while the inlet hosts a shipwreck at a depth of about 5m. You can anchor offshore at depths of 5-8m., with a sandy but good holding ground.

At the island's northeastern tip, **Roussa or Kalotaritissa** bay offers a relatively good refuge from northerly winds. It is better to anchor well inside the inlet on the western coast, at depths of 8-10m. with a relatively good holding.



Local products

Distinct among the local specialties is **patatato** (goat casserole in tomato sauce), which apart from traditional taverns you will also find it to be served at local festivals and other events such as weddings and baptisms.

Very good is also the local red semi-sweet wine and raki that locals serve with dried figs. On celebration days they offer **xerotigana** (dumplings with honey) and **pasteli** (the traditional sweet of the Cyclades, made of sesame seeds and honey).



Patatato (goat's meat with potatoes and herbs casserole)

Ingredients:

2 ½ kg goat
(shoulder or leg)
cut in chunks
with the bone

1 cup extra virgin olive oil

2 onions,
chopped finely

6 cloves garlic, crushed

2 potatoes,
peeled and coarsely cut

2 cups of tomatoes cut in cubes

2 bay leaves

salt and pepper

Apply the salt and pepper all over the meat and brown it well in a deep saucepan with olive oil.

Sautee the onions, add the garlic and the potatoes and stir thoroughly.

Add the tomatoes and bay leaves, and enough water to just cover the meat.

Simmer for 1 ½ - 2 hours, or until meat is tender.

Add more salt and pepper if needed, remove from heat and serve shortly.

Celebrations and fetes

Donoussa's folk fetes, many of which take place in August and September when the island comes alive, are a special experience for visitors.



The biggest of them all takes place on August 15, when the **Church of Panagia** at Stavros celebrates **the Assumption of the Virgin**. After morning mass, bread, raki spirit and wine are offered in the church courtyard and a big feast is held at the port in the evening. Besides those already on Donoussa, many pilgrims from the nearby Small Cyclades flock to the island for the event - to feast on the excellent patatato, drink plenty of wine and revel with live traditional music and dance until the early morning hours. The event is organized by the local association "Poseidon".

A big celebration is also held in **Stavros** on September 13 –eve of the **Day of Timios Stavros** (Holy Cross) –the patron of the island. After vespers in the church, bread, raki spirit and wine are offered in the courtyard and the traditional patatato is served in the cultural center of the church. A big feast with traditional music and dance organized by the Donoussa Association follows in the port area. A

litany of the holy icon of the Cross takes place on the following day, ending at the port. The icon is then carried into all the boats and caiques moored at the harbor for a blessing. The event is attended by many pilgrims from all the nearby islands, as the holy icon is considered miraculous.

Agia Sophia Day on September 17, is celebrated at a particularly idyllic spot in **Merssini**. After morning mass bread and food (boiled meat) is offered in the church courtyard and feasting follows with food, music and dance at the picturesque spot under the plane tree with the water spring.

Hotelier's Day is held on June 27, including exhibitions of photography and folk traditions of the island, and the distribution of promotion material for accommodation facilities.

Last, if you happen to be on Donoussa in July, you can take part in the **"Treasure Hunt"** and may be lucky to discover the pirates' booty yourself!

Useful telephones

(int. phone code +30)

	TELEPHONE	FAX	E-MAIL
Community	2285051600	2285051639	
Citizen's service center	2285029107	2285051639	k.donousis@kep.gov.gr
Community clinic	2285051506	2285051506	
Church	2285051595	2285051595	
Primary school/ Kindergarten	2285051572	2285051295	mail@dim-donous.kyk.sch.gr
High school / Lyceum	2285051826	2285051596	mail@gym-donous.kyk.sch.gr
Police station	2285073320	2285073320	
Lagadas of Amorgos			
Port authority of Naxos	2285022300	2285024549	

For updated information on accommodations, services, activities, cultural and other events on Donoussa, please visit our website at www.naxos.gr.

You may also find us on the following social media:

Facebook: [naxislandgreece](https://www.facebook.com/naxislandgreece), twitter: [@NaxosIslands](https://twitter.com/NaxosIslands), Google+: [Naxos Island and Small Cyclades](https://plus.google.com/+NaxosIslandandSmallCyclades), flickR: [Naxos Island and Small Cyclades](https://www.flickr.com/photos/naxislandandsmallcyclades/), YouTube: [Naxos Island and Small Cyclades](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)



The Basics: Getting to the isles of the Small Cyclades

Ok so you've decided to explore one or all of the beautiful islands of the Small Cyclades: Iraklia, Schinoussa, Koufonissia, Donoussa - the four gems of the Aegean - that are part of the municipality of Naxos and Small Cyclades.

Some closer to Naxos than others, they all offer something a little different. Of course, one thing they all share in common, is gorgeous beaches and a more relaxed, remote holiday experience. If you're visiting Naxos, consider the option of visiting these tiny islands as well. Here is a quick guide to assist you in planning your trip.

These four tiny islands, surrounding Naxos, are accessible only by sea with the exception of Koufonissia and Schinoussa that each also have a helipad.

Iraklia

The closest island to Naxos is Iraklia, the largest of the Small Cyclades. You can get to Iraklia (from Naxos) via daily local ferry lines with a travel time of approximately one hour and 30 minutes. In addition, a few times per week, there is scheduled ferry timetable from Piraeus to Iraklia via Naxos with a travel time of 55 min. (from Naxos).

Schinoussa

Next stop on the local ferry line from Naxos (after Iraklia) is Schinoussa. The

travel time (from Naxos) is about 1 hr and 50 minutes. A couple of times per week, the ferry line coming from Piraeus, also makes the stop (after Iraklia) with a travel time (from Naxos) of about 1 hour and 15 minutes.

Koufonissia

After Schinoussa, the local ferry from Naxos stops at Koufonissia. The travel time (from Naxos) is about 2 hrs and 30 minutes. The ferry line from Piraeus also makes the stop (Schinoussa) a few times per week with a travel time (from Naxos) of about 2 hrs.

Donoussa

Donoussa, the farthest of the group from Naxos, is accessible via the local ferry a few times per week with a travel time of about 4 hours. The ferry line from Piraeus stops at Donoussa also has scheduled stops and has a travel time (from Naxos) of about 1 hr. 15min.

Keep in mind that private companies on Naxos provide additional access/tours to these and other islands of the Cyclades.

**Please note: Always contact your travel agent and/or the airline/sea transport line for the latest schedule information as schedules/timetables are subject to change.*

The duration of the trip from Piraeus to Naxos varies from 4 to 6 hours depending on the type of ship you choose.





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