

TNH

Gateway

To Greece

Welcome to Epirus



Experience
the Incomparable Hospitality
of Epirus

Epirus:
A Secret Paradise
in Greece

Paramythia:
Natural Beauty,
History & Food



Epirus: An Undiscovered Treasure

When someone thinks of Greece, even people of Greek descent, it is easier than not to daydream of sandy beaches, island life, and the nightlife that comes with it. What if I told you that there was more to Greece than just the islands, with their iconic white roofs and blue shutters? Admittedly, it's hard, even for me, due to my family on both sides being from islands in the north and south of the Aegean. Nevertheless mainland Greece is a place I must share with you, a treasure that is yet to be fully discovered, something that during the global health pandemic can be music to one's ears. We all want a change of scenery after being cooped up due to COVID fears, and maybe if some of those fears, even if you are vaccinated, have not subsided then Epirus is absolutely a prime destination for you and your family. An uncrowded, culturally and historically rich region tucked in the top left corner of mainland Greece has been overlooked for far too long.

Due to the fact that Epirus receives the most rain in winter months of any other mainland region in Greece, one can be captivated by the lush green and the lively collision of the agricultural and urban life in the capital of the region, Ioannina. Sometimes the choice between beach or mountains is a false. Epirus, for example, possesses both and is therefore the perfect destination for those that are up for outdoor adventures and lazy, relaxing holidays sprinkled with cultural visits to museums and historic sites.

Epirus also presents fascinating stories, particularly to the people of the Greek diaspora. Some of the most prominent Epirotes of the last centuries were the Zosimas brothers who made their trade fortunes in Livorno Italy, Ukraine, and later Moscow. Like Diaspora Hellenes, they never forgot their roots, and so, when they 'made it' financially they returned to Epirus and committed to the educational development of their hometown of Ioannina. They built multiple schools, contributed heavily to the first National Library of Greece, and built orphanages and homeless shelters in their ancestral homeland. This is the spirit of Epirus, and those who go are forever bound to the land. There is no doubt that these feelings apply not only to national benefactors like the Zosimas brothers, but to visitors too.

Eraklis A. Diamataris
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The Regional Governor Invites Everyone to Experience the Incomparable Hospitality of Epirus

By Constantine S. Sirigos

Alexandros Kachrimanis knows and loves Epirus as well as anyone, so as Regional Governor his invitation to the world is serious and passionate. He was born and raised in Ioannina. After earning his degree as a Mechanical - Electrical Engineer at the National (Metsovian) Polytechnic University he has worked in Ioannina since 1982, where he lives with his wife and three children.

He entered public service when he was elected municipal councilor for the Metsovo Municipality in 1983. In 2010 he was first elected regional governor of Epirus. He recently spoke to our newspaper about his beloved homeland.

The National Herald: How is Epirus dealing with the pandemic and preparing for visitors?

Alexandros Kachrimanis: Epirus managed to deal with the pandemic much better than other parts of the country. In fact, last summer Epirus was one of the areas of Greece that attracted large numbers – according to the data we have for the period – of visitors to the seaside resorts, as it was reported to be a healthy, safe region. Based on these data, we are preparing for the upcoming summer season, as well as for the winter season, which this year we hope will return to the dynamics of the past. The positive thing is that vaccinations are progressing rapidly and by summer the necessary wall of immunity will have been set up. At the same time, tourism businesses are being opened in strict compliance with the health protocols – those who plan to visit Epirus should keep in mind the fact that a very organized Public Health program has been developed to deal with the pandemic.

TNH: What are the major recent infrastructure projects that have impacted tourism?

AK: Epirus is accessible through modern highways, the port of Igoumenitsa, and the airports of Aktio and Ioannina. The region's isolation ended with the construction of the Egnatia and the Ionian highways, which provide safe and fast transportation from Thessaloniki and Athens. Visitors can quickly reach the mainland's beaches or mountain resorts for holidays, tours, sports, and leisure activities.

Through the port of Igoumenitsa, Greece and Epirus are connected to Italy and Western Europe, welcoming thousands of tourists every year. Hundreds of charter flights from many European countries enter and depart from the airport of Aktio, which serves the coastal areas of Epirus. The modernization of the airport of Ioannina has opened it to charter flights. After last year's decline in tourism due to COVID 19, a dynamic restart is expected this year – we are expecting many flights from Scandinavia, Israel, etc.

TNH: How is culture included in the general tourism plan of Epirus?

AK: For us, tourism and culture are interrelated – and they are integrated through the promotion and utilization of local quality agricultural products. I want to emphasize that Epirus has a rich cultural heritage from Ancient Greece, including the ancient theaters of Dodoni, Amvrakia, Gitanon, Kassiopi, and Nikopolis, which the Region of Epirus has included in an innovative restoration and promotion program, making them absolutely accessible to every visitor. But they are not our only archaeological treasures. Epirus has famous stone bridges and other monuments, like the many famous monasteries which are scattered throughout the region.

In addition to architecture, our cultural heritage includes a rich folk tradition: music, dance, and costumes, which are presented at events that attract the interest of visitors. What we want is for the visitor who comes to Epirus to have multiple options and this is helped by the fact that the distances are relatively short and one can visit



Bridge of Kokkoris or Noutsos: This stone bridge with its unique arch is situated between the villages Koukouli, Dilofo and Kipoi in Central Zagori. It was first built in 1750 with money of Noutsos Kontodimos, but it had to be repaired or even built from the beginning many times. Many people participated in its maintainance, such as the miller Grigorios Kokkoris from whom it took one of its two names. The bridge is in very good condition today and there is no way you won't see and admire it since it is situated on the central road for Zagori. Next to it, there is the cave where the famous robber Ntavelis was hiding, when he was in pursuit by a Turkish military unit in the summer of 1881. Ntavelis believed that Agia Paraskevi saved him because a chapel dedicated to the Saint is located near the bridge. For this reason, the robber made an icon in honor of the Saint which can still be found in the small cave.

many areas in one day.

TNH: What are some things you love about Epirus?

AK: Having grown up in Metsovo, I feel a powerful love for nature and I am thrilled by the fact that I live in an area rich in vegetation, seashores, lakes, and rivers. I am also drawn to people who continue to practice traditional professions, which are slowly disappearing. I was saddened to see that historical or religious monuments were being abandoned due to the flight of the population, and despite the

fact that they are not the responsibility of local government, we have developed a substantial program for their maintenance-restoration-promotion, having saved many of them.

TNH: What are your favorite foods and songs?

AK: I mainly like the songs of traditional folk music and especially the Vlachs. I usually enjoy them at special events or festivals which each summer take place in almost every village of Epirus – I hope they will be repeated this year if the problems stemming from COVID-19 are overcome.

When I have free time, I also listen to the modern popular music of the great Greek composers, especially those whose origins are in Epirus, such as the late Vassilis Tsitsanis, Apostolos Kaldaras, Takis Mousafirris, etc.

As for the food, I do not have a particular preference, but I like the classic Epirotika, without gourmet flavoring, always cooked with olive oil, i.e. pies, meat, local vegetables and cheeses – which are of guaranteed quality, and I invite all visitors, especially those from America, to enjoy them, along with the incomparable hospitality of Epirus.

Discover the Charismatic, Blessed, Hospitable Place Called Epirus

For those in the know, Epirus is a precious secret, to which they remain faithful, and for those who do not know, it is an unexpected surprise.

By Ioulia Markoula

Whoever dives deeply into the region of Epirus will surely soon find that he is on a new ... continent – he will discover a new world. Epirus’ longtime isolation, due to historically difficult access, left its nature intact and the signs of history alive. For those in the know, Epirus is a precious secret, to which they remain faithful, and for those who do not know, it is an unexpected surprise.

Epirus, one of the thirteen regions of Greece, is located in the northwest corner of the country, and is an ideal year-round destination. It is now easily accessible, having two modern roadways, the Egnatia and Ionia highways, one international port at Igoumenitsa, and two international airports, at Ioannina and at Aktio. You can also come to Epirus through the international airport of the nearby island of Corfu.

Epirus has the diversity of a country, containing, in a relatively small area, beautiful mountains, lakes, and rivers, and land filled with forests and olive groves, beautiful cities, rare archeological sites, and fantastic beaches.

Epirus: Untouched Beauty, Full of Energy

The network of mountains caused the region’s isolation but its rich history and the love of the people of Epirus for nature are powerful incentives for preserving an incomparable environment, untouched and unchanged.

Visitors come to enjoy animals, rare birds and fish, and a dazzling array of flora through organized activities or simple contact with nature that calm the soul.

Vikos-Aoos Geopark is a national park and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is a refuge for a large number of plants, herbs, and animals that attract the interest of scientists worldwide.

Epirus means high mountains, deep gorges, rushing rivers, rare flora, mountain lakes, and forested slopes! From Vikos Gorge, listed as the world’s “deepest relative to its width” by the Guinness Book of Records, to the magnificent Valia Calda National Park, Epirus is the ultimate destination for nature lovers every season.

Epirus, with its rivers, its unchanging natural environs of forests, mountains, and seas, is an ideal place for adventure lovers. It is charmed and blessed place for those who passionately seek alternative tourism, that is, tourism that brings man into the embrace of nature, introduces him to its secrets and hidden lures, entertains him, relaxes him, fascinates him, stimulates him, and liberates him.

A great attraction is hiking on beautiful trails, such as the Epirus Trail of 400 km built by the Epirus Regional Government which will be the largest hiking route designed in Greece.

Epirus is a ‘complete destination’, with all the weight and variety that the phrase implies. Epirus enchants the visitor, in every part of it, every season of the year.

Winter: All roads lead to the snow slopes of Anilio, Metsovo, and Vasilitsa for skiing and snowboarding!

Spring: The perfect season for trekking in Mavrovouni in Metsovo with great natural beauty and an impressive mountain route from Theodoriana in Tzoumerka to the double waterfalls of Souda!

The 47 villages of Tzoumerka are located between the regional units of Ioannina and Arta. Here there is unchanged nature with magical landscapes, caves, monasteries, and picturesque villages untouched by ill-conceived human intervention.

Enjoy the sunrise on the shores of Alpine Dragonlake, and rafting in the Voidomatis and Arachthos rivers.

Summer: Sailing the beautiful shores, partaking of water sports on the enchanting beaches of Thesprotia and Preveza, diving in the spectacular underwater sites or river trekking along the legendary Acheron – it is your choice!

Autumn: The season with gorgeous colors! Enjoy a bike

ride around Aoos springs lake or taking photos of rare birds in the Amvrakikos Gulf! Visit Zagori, one of the most beautiful areas of Greece that consists of 46 mountainous stone villages to the north of Ioannina, between the



Mitsikeli and Tymfi mountains, against the backdrop of the imposing Vikos Gorge

Epirus : A Journey To Big Blue

The Epirus coastline is undoubtedly one of these magnificent places, offering amazing beaches, crystal clear waters, and secret coves. Here the beaches are truly unique, since they cover 100 kilometers of crystal clear blue sea. This huge coastline extends from Preveza to the borders of Thesprotia.

You must visit the colorful town of Parga with its lacy clear-blue shores and picturesque narrow alleys, and cosmopolitan Syvota with its stunning beaches, turquoise waters, and quiet bays! Enjoy the sea, the sun, swimming and water sports on the longest sandy beach of the European Union, Monolithi.

Preveza is a lovely low-key port featuring cobble stone paths and alleys with flourishing balconies and a unique atmosphere. The city’s neoclassical buildings provide the perfect backdrop for idyllic walks.

Also impressive and a point of attraction for young and old are the beaches of Vrachos, Loutsa, and Ammoudia with crystal waters and fine sand. Few places in Greece and in the world have such shores, so ideal for swimming and water sports, so unchanged by human intervention.

Epirus : A Complete Cultural Experience

When you find such a rich cultural heritage in one place, you can’t escape a visit. In Epirus there are traces of the Paleolithic era and substantial remains of Greek antiquity, the Roman and Byzantine periods, the Ottoman and Venetian occupations, and important elements of the history of modern Greece.

The archaeological sites, especially the ancient theaters of Epirus, will take you on a journey back in time. You can admire great architecture and to feel the pulse, energy, and culture of people who lived centuries ago!

The Ancient Theatre of Dodona is one of the largest and best-preserved ancient theaters in Greece. Ancient Nicopolis is today the largest surviving ancient city of Greece, and the Necromancy of Acheron is the most famous temple of necromancy of the ancient Greek world. Furthermore, ancient Kassopi, ancient Amvrakia, ancient Gitana complete the cultural route of Epirus!

The Byzantine castle of Ioannina and Byzantine churches and monasteries, traditional villages, and stone bridges throughout the region are all of immense cultural interest.

Epirus : A Journey To Religion

The monasteries of Epirus evoke awe and religious devotion in the visitor. The religious feeling of the people of Epirus is intense and led to the creation of some of the most remarkable monasteries and churches in Greece, which they preserved over the centuries. The visitor will feel awe and be moved before the Byzantine chapels and monasteries

The city of Arta is famous for its Byzantine richness. Our Lady of Arta – ‘Panagia Parigoritissa’ as it is known to the locals, is renowned for its architecture and rich sculptured decoration. The Monastery of Kipina, near the village Kalarrytes in Tzoumerka, is one of the most impressive monasteries in Epirus! The Monastery of Philanthropenoi is the most important monastery on the island in the lake of Ioannina. What is of particular interest is the representation of the ancient Greek philosophers, who are painted on the wall of the southern paranarthex.

One of the most beautiful men’s monasteries, built in the 14th century, is the Monastery of Giromeri in Thesprotia – and don’t forget to visit the Monastery of St. Nikolas in Metsovo, surviving and standing in an admirable state.



Gastronomy Epirus

In recent years, a network of modern tourist infrastructure has been built in the service of the warm ‘homely’ Epirote hospitality and its traditional flavors. The tourism sector has managed to put a spotlight on the delicious local cuisine, a gastronomic experience based on the excellent, top-quality local produce: lamb, goat, sheep, beef, wild boar, chicken cooked on the spit or in the traditional ‘gastro’ or clay pots, concealed in pies or soups, and combined with local wild greens, herbs and dairy products. All are transformed into exceptional gastronomic experiences, particularly when paired with locally distilled spirits – tsipouro and ouzo – or wine. There are also fresh pies of all kinds to sample, spoon sweets, a variety of excellent cheeses, the famous Amvrakikos ‘avgotaraho’ grey mullet, fish roe (also known as bottarga), ‘sardela’ (sardines), and a rich variety of seafood.

The best thing visitors can do is to surrender to the local culinary options and be initiated into the secrets of the rich and distinctive cuisine of Epirus!

Apart from its incomparable natural beauty, Epirus is the cradle of the Greek tradition, which remains unadulterated and alive in music, in dances, in the daily life of people. Epirus is the people, people who give real meaning to the word ‘hospitality’... though the hospitality of Epirus!

We invite and challenge you to discover this charismatic, blessed, and hospitable place that is called Epirus. Visit us at www.epirusforallseasons.gr. Epirus is here and is waiting for you...!

Ioulia Markoula is the Director of Tourism for the Epirus Regional Government



By Stamatina Mylonas

The northern border of Greece is a mountainous and forested escape that has an intricate history. Officially called the region of Epirus, this part of Greece stretches from the most northern border touching Albania and extends along the southwest coast. A less frequented region for tourists, Epirus has an entirely different atmosphere and vibe compared to the more advertised islands in the Aegean Sea. One of the most mountainous parts of Greece, Epirus offers a look into the diverse natural landscape of the country, but its significance goes deeper than its natural beauty, as this part of the Greek border has been fought for and contested ferociously.

Habitation of Epirus dates back to antiquity and has been home to legendary tribes. The extent of the ancient Mycenaean civilization could be tracked by the artifacts found in the Epirus region. One of the most powerful and influential civilizations, the Myceneans imprinted their legacy on Epirus. After their decline, Epirus was subject to invasions from other Greek tribes who saw an opportunity to seize the fertile and powerful strongholds.

First, the Dorians, followed by smaller tribes like the Thesproti, Molossi, and Chaones created settlements in Epirus. In contrast to the big city of Athens, people here lived in humble villages with only the simple necessities. For this reason, there were many misconceptions and stereotypes about Epirotes such as they lack a sense of civility. But this was far from the truth, in fact Epirus was home to one of the most valued and revered oracles in Greece. Besides the oracle of Delphi, the oracle of Dodona was deeply loved and was mentioned in detail by great authors like Herodotus and Homer, who wrote of it in his famed Iliad and Odyssey. The oracle of Dodona was believed to be dedicated to the king of the Gods, Zeus, and was therefore one of the most ancient in Greece. But evidence in archeological findings suggest that the worship that took place there was even more ancient than Zeus. Worship of the Great Goddess of fertility took place at Dodona, with an emphasis on

the oak tree that was seen as sacred.

Despite its elevated status, this oracle was also approached by average citizens who sought guidance for everyday occurrences and challenges, whereas the oracle at Delphi was sought for to answer the heavier questions pressing the Greeke states.

As the centuries passed, the sacred site became more sophisticated in terms of its structures and architecture. Temples were built to honor different gods and goddesses as well as cultural centers like theaters, stadiums, and government gathering places. These temples and buildings were destroyed and restored several times, but thankfully, many surviving structures were able to be excavated and restored in the early 1900's. The archeological site of Dodona or Dodoni is located about twenty-five minutes south of the modern day city of Ioannina. The sacred oak tree was torn up around 393 BC, but you can still marvel at the restored theater, the foundations of the temples of Aphrodite and Hercules, and the site of the oracle.

In the modern period, the Greek border in Epirus was often challenged by neighboring countries and governments. During the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, Greece and its neighbors continued to fight against the invading Ottomans Turks. In the first half of the war the Balkan countries succeeded in pushing back the Ottomans but further conflict erupted between them while determining where their respective borders should lay. Despite the turmoil, during this war is when much of what we see with modern Greek borders was won back. Many of the major cities in Epirus were a part of this reclamation campaign.

Along with Ioannina in the center of Epirus, other major cities are Igoumenitsa on the northwesternmost border, and Preveza some kilometers away along the southwestern sea coast. Igoumenitsa has a major port with regular ferry service to and from neighboring Italy, a trade and now tourism route that has persisted for millennia. Ioannina is smaller but no less developed. Situated on the banks of Lake Pamvotida and more inland, Ioannina is the capital city of Epirus. Although it is home to regular residents it is also a popular winter destination for people from

other cities around Greece. The lake provides a different kind of connection to the water, a more calm and grounded experience compared to those at sea. Influence from the many cultures and occupiers can still be seen in the various architectural artifacts around the city, like the ruins of a Byzantine fortress.

Unlike travel trends in the Aegean on the other side of Greece, many people come to Epirus for the mountain escape it provides. While the sea is beautiful and refreshingly cool in the coastal towns, there is a wide selection of excursions and adventures into the mountains. Along the Voidomatis River north of Ioannina city are a handful of ancient stone bridges worth seeing, and there are several tour guide stations for unique experiences like white water rafting and even horseback riding in the river. Within the Pindus mountain range that dominates Epirus are seemingly endless peaks and gorges, perfect for those who seek to go hiking and exploring in nature. As the rivers and their streams wind through the mountains, do not be surprised if you come across one of their wild waterfalls. The ecosystem in the Pindus mountains of Epirus is comprised of volcanic and metamorphic rock such as granite. It is populated mostly with the sacred oak trees like that of the oracle of Dodona, and pine and beech trees as can be found in other mountainous parts of Greece and the Balkans. On the eastern border of Epirus towards central Greece are scattered villages along the hillsides. The large village of Metsovo is popular in the wintertime due to its picturesque buildings and panoramic views of the surrounding mountain peaks, which always feels like Christmas. The nearby lake Techniti Aoou is yet another hidden gem nestled in the valleys between the towering mountains. It seems that there is something special around every turn in Epirus. While there are the standard beach towns along the west coast, there are also deep and ancient forests up in the mountains toward the east.

Take a dip in the stone-cooled sea or take a drive high into the Pindus range where you can see the Milk Way high up in the sky. Either way, Epirus is a secret paradise in Greece that we may want to keep that way.

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Traditional Foods and Flavors

There are savory and sweet pie options to try any time of day when you visit Epirus, from sweet custard pies for breakfast to various cheese pies throughout the day as a snack, there is a pie for every taste.

By Eleni Sakellis

The traditional cuisine of Epirus features delicious pites (pies), an integral part of the local gastronomic experience. Local, natural ingredients and phyllo pastry are the keys to these flavorful pies. The traditional Zagori pies can be found throughout Epirus and are relatively simple to make, but full of the rich flavors of the region.

Kourkoutopita, also known as alevropita, zymaropita or zarkopita, is made with flour, feta cheese and olive oil. The simple recipe is stirred together and baked until golden brown. Pita tis tembelas or lazy pie is another favorite in the region and relatively simple to prepare and bake. Meat pies and pies made with leafy greens and many layers of thinly rolled out sheets of phyllo dough are also staples of the cuisine of Epirus. The pies are traditionally made in large tins called sinia, round copper baking trays, and then

baked in wood-burning ovens.

There are savory and sweet pie options to try any time of day when you visit Epirus, from sweet custard pies for breakfast to various cheese pies throughout the day as a snack, there is a pie for every taste.

Kourkoutopita

- ▶ 3 cups all-purpose flour
- ▶ 1 cup Greek yogurt
- ▶ 3 cups water
- ▶ A pinch of Greek sea salt
- ▶ 1/2 cup Greek extra virgin olive oil
- ▶ 3 cups feta, Dodonis

In a mixing bowl, stir together the flour, yogurt, water, salt and about half the olive oil. Use the remaining oil to

grease a large round or 13 by 9-inch baking pan. Transfer the flour mixture to the prepared pan and top with the crumbled feta. Bake in a preheated 400-degree oven until golden. Remove from oven and serve warm or at room temperature.

Pita tis Tembelas (Lazy Woman’s Pie)

- ▶ 1 package horiatiko phyllo, thawed (Zagorisio preferred)
- ▶ 2/3 cup milk
- ▶ 2 eggs
- ▶ 2 cups feta, Dodonis
- ▶ Greek olive oil for brushing the phyllo, as needed
- ▶ 1 teaspoon dried Greek oregano
- ▶ A pinch of red pepper flakes, optional

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Place the phyllo sheet(s) on a parchment lined, rimmed 13 by 9-inch or 10-inch



round baking pan. Brush the parchment paper with olive oil in the pan. In a bowl, whisk together the milk and eggs and set aside while working with the phyllo. Lay one sheet of phyllo on the baking sheet, brush with olive oil, and, then lay another sheet of phyllo on top and brush with olive oil. Sprinkle half of the feta over the second sheet and pour half of the egg mixture on top. Sprinkle with the oregano and red pepper flakes, if using.

Place a third sheet on top, brush with olive oil, sprinkle with the remaining

Parmesan, then lay the last sheet on top and brush with olive oil. Sprinkle the remaining feta on top and drizzle with the remaining egg mixture. Sprinkle with more red pepper flakes, to taste, if using. Bake in a preheated 425-degree oven for 25 minutes or until golden brown and crisp. If the top browns too quickly, cover the pie loosely with foil and continue baking. If it is browned underneath but the top is not yet crispy enough, heat the broiler and bake for a few minutes right under the broiler. Serve immediately, using a pizza cutter to slice the pie into pieces.

Shrimp with Tomatoes and Feta

- ▶ 4 tablespoons Greek extra-virgin olive oil
- ▶ 4 cloves garlic, minced
- ▶ 4 scallions, minced
- ▶ 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- ▶ 1/2 cup white wine
- ▶ 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- ▶ 1/2 teaspoon sugar
- ▶ 1/4 teaspoon crushed red chili flakes
- ▶ 4 medium tomatoes, grated
- ▶ 3 tablespoons chopped fresh mint
- ▶ 16 large shrimp (about ¾ lb.), peeled and deveined
- ▶ Greek sea salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- ▶ 4 ounces feta, Dodonis
- ▶ 1 lemon, halved
- ▶ 1 tablespoon minced fresh parsley

Heat oven to broil. Heat oil in a ten-inch oven-proof skillet over medium heat. Add the garlic and scallions; cook, until soft, 3 to 4 minutes. Stir in the tomato paste; cook for 2 minutes. Add the wine and cook until reduced by half, about 5 minutes. Add oregano, sugar, chili flakes, and tomatoes and bring to a boil.

Reduce heat to medium and cook, stirring often, until the sauce thickens slightly, about 12 minutes. Add the mint and shrimp, stir, and season with salt and pepper to taste. Crumble feta on top. Broil 5 minutes, until bubbling. Serve immediately with a squeeze of fresh lemon on top and garnish with parsley.

The Chestnut and Tsipouro Festival, Kastanopita Recipe

By Eleni Sakellis

The Annual Chestnut and Tsipouro Festival takes place in Rodavgi, Arta, Greece, in October, organized by the Cultural Association of Rodavgi in collaboration with the local community, the Women's Association, and the Friends of Ammos, in the village square.

Chestnuts (grilled and boiled), tiganites (pancakes), and Rodavgiotiko tsipouro are offered to all who attend. The traditional distillation cauldron for tsipouro is on display and visitors have the opportunity to see how tsipouro is made. The fragrant tsipouro is made from zampela – a local grape variety, which everyone enjoys against the majestic backdrop of the Pin-dus mountain range and the man-made Lake Arachthos.

For those unfamiliar with this Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) product, tsipouro is a strong distilled spirit containing 40–45% alcohol by volume and is produced from either the pomace (the residue of the wine press) or from the wine after the grapes and juice have been separated. Tsipouro is usually served in shot glasses with a variety of meze.

Chestnut and tsipouro festivals take place in many regions of Greece with braziers to roast chestnuts and distillation boilers for tsipouro set up early in the day in village squares and in the afternoon the locals offer traditional pies and sweets such as pancakes, loukoumades, baklava, ravani, kourambiedes, and spoon sweets.

Visitors can enjoy the local chestnuts and traditional pies with a glass of tsipouro. Among the many recipes with chestnuts, kastanopita (chestnut pie) is a classic, especially in the winter months.

Kastanopita

- ▶ 5 1/2 cups milk
- ▶ 1/2 cup sugar
- ▶ 1 cup fine semolina
- ▶ 2 teaspoons vanilla extract

- ▶ 4 beaten eggs
- ▶ 1/2 cup cold unsalted butter, cut into cubes
- ▶ 1 lb. boiled or roasted chestnuts, peeled and roughly chopped
- ▶ 1/2 cup butter, melted and cooled slightly, for brushing the phyllo
- ▶ 1 lb. package phyllo dough, thin pastry sheets

For the syrup:

- ▶ 2 1/2 cups water
- ▶ 2 1/2 cups sugar
- ▶ 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- ▶ 1 shot almond liqueur

In a large saucepan, bring the milk up to a boil with the sugar over medium high heat. Once the milk comes to a boil, reduce the heat to medium and stir in the semolina, continuing to stir until it thickens slightly. Remove from heat and add the vanilla extract and the beaten eggs, stirring constantly. Stir in the cold butter and the chestnuts. Set aside and allow the cream to cool.

Brush a 13 by 9-inch baking pan with a little of the melted butter, and place the first sheet of phyllo in the pan, brush with butter, and continue with half the sheets of phyllo in the package.

Pour the cream on top of the buttered phyllo sheets and then top with the remaining sheets of phyllo, brushing each layer with butter.

Score the kastanopita with a sharp knife into the individual pieces and bake in a preheated 350-degree oven for 40-45 minutes or until golden brown. Remove the baked kastanopita from the oven and allow to cool slightly while preparing the syrup.

For the syrup, stir together the water, sugar, lemon juice, and almond liqueur in a large deep pot and bring to a boil over medium high heat. Reduce to medium heat and simmer the syrup for 5-7 minutes. Pour the warm syrup over the slightly cooled kastanopita and allow it to absorb for 10-15 minutes at least before serving. Store any leftovers tightly covered in the refrigerator.

Preveza Shrimp

Preveza, at the southern tip of Epirus, is bordered by both the **Ambracian Gulf** and the Ionian Sea. During the summer months, fresh fish and seafood are the highlights of the local cuisine. In the 1981 film For Your Eyes Only, James Bond, played by Roger Moore orders Preveza prawns (shrimp) for his dinner, according to JamesBondFood.com.

Grilled seafood, the traditional ouzo bars and fish tavernas draw visitors from around the world in the summer months. Preveza is famous for **Ambracian ‘gabari’ shrimp** and the ‘poor man’s fish’, the sardine, which is not to be missed, particularly when freshly grilled at your table. Special delicacies also include oven-baked eel, fried red mullet, grilled grey mullet, and cuttlefish with spinach.

The delicious journey ends with a traditional Greek coffee and sweets, looking out over the Ambracian Gulf.





The Roots of History... the Breaths – and Breads... of Life!

Dipyros is the famous baked rusk from Epirus and Ioannina – AKA ‘Gianniotiko Paximadi (Rusk of Ioannina) and the BREADtree, or ‘ARTOdentro’ in Greek, is a family bakery business located at Despotiko, a village close to Ioannina, the capital city of the Region of Epirus.

Next to the ancient watermill of Geromitsaina, next to the gushing spring in an incredible natural setting, there is a building of that reflects Ioannina’s traditional architecture, and one wing functions as an interactive bread museum where they prepare the Gianniotiko Paximadi.

The heptazyme ‘kounenos’, the ‘gianniotiko dipyros,’ ‘the Greek Snack’ or the ‘Lazaros’ all use Gianniotiko Paximadi and are products of origin that are consumed immediately – but they are not mere ‘fast food.’ They are a nutritional proposition that comes directly from Homer!

Gianniotiko rusk is prepared according to the protocols of HACCP and ISO. They are kosher and halal, addressed to the modern citizens of the world.

It is also noted that Epirus has always been the place of origin of famous bakers. The family of Lazaros Tsekouras at Despotiko of Ioannina has a history or renowned bakers since 1885.

Executive Chef Andreas Georgoulis, who is from Epirus, offers this delightful recipe based on rusks:

Tart with Gianniotiko Paximadi (Rusks), Mutton Saganaki, Spicy Tomato, and Pindos Kashkaval Cheese in a Clay Pot

For the crust:

- ▶ 250 grams Gianniotiko Paximadi (rusks)
- ▶ 7-8 tablespoons Greek olive oil
- ▶ 2-3 tablespoons water
- ▶ A pinch of Greek dried oregano

For the filling:

- ▶ 1 kilogram mutton or lamb (leg or shoulder), cut into cubes
- ▶ 1/2 cup olive oil PGI Preveza
- ▶ 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- ▶ 2 fresh Preveza tomatoes, grated
- ▶ 1 cinnamon stick
- ▶ 1 clove
- ▶ 2 medium onions grated
- ▶ Salt, black pepper to taste



Executive Chef Andreas Georgoulis

For serving:

- ▶ 200 grams Pindos Kashkaval cheese
- ▶ 1/2 teaspoon spicy boukovo (paprika) or 1 small hot pepper

Crush the rusks until they are crumbs, place them in a bowl, sprinkle with the water and olive oil. Add the oregano, salt to taste and set aside to soften. Then, knead them into dough. To help it become a uniform dough, we occasionally wet our hands with water.

Tip: Be careful when adding the water and oil since the rusk crumbs should be softened, but not like mud.

Transfer the softened rusk crumbs to the tart pan and pat down to evenly coat the bottom and sides of the tart pan. Place in the fridge for 30 minutes.

Boil the meat for about 7 minutes, strain it, and rinse it with cool water.

Fry the onion, cloves, cinnamon, and meat in olive oil in a saucepan for about 10 minutes. Add salt, pepper, tomato paste, and 2 cups water to cover the meat. Boil over medium heat for 45 minutes.

Then, transfer the meat to the traditional clay pot. Bake in the oven at 350 degrees F for 3 hours.

When the meat is ready, place in the prepared tart pan, add the Pindos Kashkaval cheese and the boukovo, and bake for 10 minutes in the 350-degree oven.

Serve with a good quality Greek sheep’s milk yogurt.

The Anemolia Hotel is the Accent on the Charms of Parga

By Constantine S. Sirigos

The Anemolia hotel, with its stylish suites and many charms, and spectacularly located on the Sarakiniko beach, is the beginning of a wonderful vacation in Parga, a small town on Epirus’ Ionian coast with a rich history.

Built in ancient times by Greeks, it was later developed by the Normans, who built the fortress in the 14th century, and the Venetians, the Turks, and the English who followed.

The area’s rich history, with sites of great archaeological interest, is fascinating but Parga’s environs will enchant you with their natural beauty: endless beaches, legendary rivers, unique wetlands, lush olive groves.

And most important of all are the people, who give life to the place and can turn your vacation into a unique life experience with their renowned hospitality, embodied today by Kleopatra Papanikolaou and her family, owners of the Anemolia.

“Our hotel is the dream of a lifetime that was born in 2018. Our family already had a restaurant that continually offered delectable flavors and memorable experiences – all flowing from our local traditions. But it was always our dream to add a small hotel where visitors were converted to members of our family, receiving from us the highest level of service in the atmosphere of a Greek family.”

“And while our vision was realized in 2018,” she said, “it is our desire to add even more pieces” to the wonderful place called Anemolia, whose renown is spreading apropos of its name, “words of the wind” – word of mouth being the hotel’s best advertisement, its visitors sharing their experiences with friends and loved ones.

“Our hotel’s aesthetics are unique, but just as important is the respect and attention we pay to our guests. It is located on a beautiful beach and offers visitors memorable experiences inside and outside, in its environs of great natural beauty, as well as tasty adventures in the restaurant.”

It is a delightful voyage with caring owners at the helm whose only destination is the guests’ delight. “And we believe that our special ad-



vantage is the people of the hotel who from the moment you arrive will hug you and make you feel like home because they are there to fulfill your wishes and satisfy your needs with smiles and warmth.”

Kleopatra noted that the hotel is open from early May until the end of October, and emphasized that “guests can get to know the town of Parga, its surrounding villages and the picturesque chapels in addition to the museums, the olive mill, the watermills, and the castles.”

The area is also suitable for an escape to the island Paxos with its exotic beaches. Visitors can also take a convenient trip to the capital of the prefecture, Ioannina, the ‘wonderful city by the lake,’ to mountainous Zagorochoria and its delightful villages, the gorge of Vikos, the traditional villages of Tzoumerka, and to the unique city Preveza with its inviting traditional taverns.

“There are many activities for those who love nature, and very interesting archaeological sites for history lovers such as ancient Nikopolis and the legendary Necromancy of Acheron, which ancient Greeks believed was the gateway to the Underworld – just one of the many elements of a vacation visitors will tell their friends is “out of this world.”



In the Heart of Epirus

Paramythia

Offers Natural Beauty, History, Food, and Hospitality

By Constantine S. Sirigos

Paramythia is a picturesque little town belonging to the famed Municipality of Souli, which a cultural and historical magnet that draws Hellenes and non-Greeks from all over the world. Paramythia also sent some pretty renowned people into the world, like the founders of Bulgari luxury brand, who emerged from its silversmith industry, Sotirios Boulgaris having established his first workshop there.

The town's name, which sounds like it's rooted in the word 'παράμυθι - fairy tale,' is a corruption of the name of the church 'Panagita Parigoritria – The Comforter.'

Located between the famous Acheron and Kokitos rivers – and roughly between the cities, of Ioannina and Igoumenitsa, about 12 miles from the Adriatic coast – Paramythia is also situated deep in the hearts of its residents and diaspora.

Giannis Karagiannis is proud to serve as its mayor. After a career largely with Piraeus Bank that included 10 years managing his hometown's branch, his love for the area and a desire to contribute to its well-being moved him to turn to public service.

Of course, the conversation begins with the town's environs, which tug at the heartstrings of all Hellenes. "This is the heroic Souli, for which we feel a special pride – it reminds us of our debt to our heroic ancestors."

They also recognize a duty to the world today. "We are renowned, in Paramythia and generally as Epirotes, for our hospitality and warm hearts, people of 'philotimo'. We look forward to people coming to meet us."

Karaianis explained that, "the locals have traditionally



EUROKINISSI

tended livestock. They continue to make their livelihood through the farm animals, and with recent progress in the tourism sector they are working on integrating the nurturing and promotion their products with agritourism."

Greece and the EU are helping. The Egnatia and Ionia highways have fed the tourism boom, stimulating joint ventures such as centers of canoeing and kayaking, and bringing many to the area's delightful walking paths.

"Paramythia is now just two-and-a-half and four hours from Thessaloniki and Athens, respectively – it used to take more than eight hours – and we are 20 minutes from the beaches."

More and more people who were drawn to Epirus by its spectacular beaches are venturing into the interior to enjoy its natural beauty, delicious cuisine, and culture – especially its music, cuisine, and architecture.

Karagiannis noted that the famous school established by Sotirios Boulgaris is being restored and will become a cultural center with multiple museums and venues.

Athina Kalyvas, whose parents are both from Paramythia, loves her homeland because "it is one of the places where Greeks truly maintain the treasures of nature and traditional architecture, the man-made and natural colors that have not been lost to tourism or other interventions."

She also delights in the unique traditional flavors of the area's cuisine. "The farmers work the land in a pure, natural way that leads to authentic cuisine."

Kalyvas is Secretary General for Tax Policy and Public Property at Greek Ministry of Finance, so, trained as an economist, she knows about striking balances.

"It has been demonstrated around the world," she said, "that economic development can proceed hand in hand with the preservation of nature and the traditional character of a region. In Epirus they are not re-inventing the wheel, they are adopting best practices."

Specializing in tax policy, she emphasizes that development must also proceed on the basis of a sound tax pro-



COURTESY OF FREDERIKI PAPPAS

Frederiki Pappas' painting is based on a sketch turned to gravura she had seen depicting Albano-Turk soldiers firing on the Church of the Panagia in Paramythia.

through her paintings and well-researched text those crucial though all-but-forgotten heroes of the Greek Revolution, has also devoted paintings to her beloved homeland, which is loves to talk about.

"Americans must come to learn about the Souliotes – who helped inspire participation in the revolution –and extend a relationship that began in 1821. William Washington, nephew of the first American President who fought with the Greeks, married the daughter of Markos Botsaris captain of the Souliotes."

She adds that, "Greek-Americans must come to discover the roots of their history and Greek mythology. Olympias, an Epirote princess, brought her son Alexander the Great to the Acheron River so the child would be infused with its magic powers." And the Kokitos River, according to Greek mythology, was the place the dead are permitted an annual one-week vacation on Earth – a scene that inspired one of William Blake's illustrations for Dante's Inferno.

Lou Katsos, President and Founder of EMBCA, also has roots in Paramythia. He loves it for its rich history, noting that Dodona is one of the most famous ancient oracles. "Paramythia is a wonderful town," he added, spotlighting its churches – but he loves it also as a center for the passionate Epirotic music.

The area is connected to the heroic events at Zalongo, almost 30 miles away which foreshadowed, in tragic fashion, the War of Independence. After the Fall of Souli to the ruthless Ottoman-Albanian ruler, Ali Pasha, on December 16, 1803 a mass suicide took place by women and their children in order to escape enslavement and rape.

Each year on May 30 special events, usually with the President of Greece in attendance, honor the memory of the Fall of Souli. This year they hope to present the annual "To antamoma ton Soulioton – the Gathering of Souliotes' from all over Greece and around the world, including the United States. There are lectures and cultural events, presented by the municipality in cooperation with numerous organizations.

The date should be set by early June and people can learn more at www.paramythia-online.gr.

gram. "Since the election of the New Democracy government, we have created tax incentives for attracting people and investment."

The government has made it easier to change tax residences, which facilitates the development of the 'silver economy', attracting retirees, Greek and non-Greeks alike, from which she says Epirus will benefit greatly. "And from Agritourism – for which we have a golden opportunity since very nice hotels and rooms to let have been established, on the shores of Epirus and its interior," she said.

An Autumn attraction is the Lampovos commercial fair, and Epirus has excellent skiing centers.


Distinguished artist **Frederiki Pappas**, whose book 'Portraits of American Philhellene' brings to life



Metsovo - A Mountainous Charm: This tree-shaded village, retaining its traditional character, dots the mountain side below Katara Col in the Mountain Range of Pindos. Metsovo is full of life throughout the year generously offering you its natural surrounding beauties. Particularly during winter, the famous vlach village, birthplace of various national benefactors (Tositsas, Stournaras, Averof etc.), is Epirus' beloved tourist destination.



Vikos Gorge: The Vikos Gorge is part of the 12,600 hectare Vikos-Aoos National Park and has been listed in the Guinness book of records as the deepest canyon worldwide in proportion to its width. The gorge begins after Monodendri village and constitutes a true natural monument. Its overall length exceeds 30 km (Tselepovo-Kleidonía). Due to its geological isolation and the absence of human presence, Vikos gorge includes rare plant and flower species of Epirus. There have also been recorded more than 110 bird species, 19 serpent and amphibian species, as well as many rare butterfly species. Finally, in Aoos and Voidomatis rivers live 7 fish species. The best period to visit the gorge is during summer and in the beginning of fall when the river is shallow.



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