

Corfu

LIVE IT - LOVE IT

PREFECTURE OF CORFU
ENGLISH EDITION





THE ISLAND THAT HAS ENCHANTED POETS AND KINGS

the harbour that joins East and West, the place that welcomed Odysseus, Homer's resourceful hero, the haven chosen by Poseidon for his idyll with Amphitrite - Corfu remains unchanged and continues to welcome and inspire the visitors of today: beau-

tiful, romantic, natural, historic, but above all rich in the unexpected – it is very easy for the traveller to become infatuated with the island. The most frequently heard request at hotel reception desks is: 'Can I stay a few days longer?'





Though it may no longer be considered an exotic destination for the Europeans, it continues to be one of the most delightful regions of Europe.

With a stunning display of flowers and plants of all kinds, secluded beaches, crystal-clear waters, paths that wind through shady, cen-

turies-old olive groves, Byzantine chapels, villages that originated in Venetian times, traditional Greek tavernas – all of which exist alongside the most up-to-date facilities in

holiday accommodation and entertainment, **Corfu refreshes the mind and regenerates the senses of the visitor.**







The island of Corfu lies in the Northern Ionian Sea, south of the Adriatic, between mainland Greece and Italy. Its important strategic position caused it to become 'the apple of discord' for the great powers of every age.

Today, this same position facilitates not only Corfu's direct air connections with almost the whole of Europe, but also the daily ferry links with numerous Italian ports. **In other words, it is easy to get here but so very hard to make up your mind to leave.**

Corfu has attracted visitors since earliest times, as is evidenced by the remains of Roman villas excavated in the south-east of the island, at Benitses and at Moraitika, near Messonghi, and also by the famous Achilleion Palace, built above the village of Gastouri. The Mediterranean climate and the high quality of life make **Corfu an ideal Place in which to stay at any time of the year.** It has

mild winters with relatively warm temperatures (5-14C) and a fair amount of sunshine (about 4.5 hours a day). **Spring is spectacular** and offers the visitor the privilege of being able to enjoy the splendour and colour of the vegetation that is the accompaniment to a walking holiday at this time.

The **summer** is the most popular time to visit Corfu, with its glorious beaches and water as clear as glass, that positively invite the visitor to take a carefree swim. **Autumn** is the winemaking season, and the entire island is fragrant with the aroma of the grape – this is perhaps the best time to get to know something of the daily life of Corfu and its inhabitants.

Christmas and New Year celebrations in Corfu are defined by music, song and carols, a sense of peace, decorated streets and houses, mild weather, and a quiet, classically refined atmosphere.



WORTH SEEING

The **Old Fortress**, where the city of Corfu was located from 60 BC until the 14th century AD;

The **New Fortress** with its panoramic view of the city; the **Church of Saint Spyridon**, the island's Patron Saint, whose relics are housed in a silver casket; these are just a few of the most important sights of the city.

Outside the town, the most famous landmark is **Pontikonissi**, which, together with the Vlacherna monastery, must be the best-known combination of sights in Corfu, followed by the **Achilleion Palace**, the summer residence of the Empress Elisabeth of Austria and subsequently of Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany. On the west coast, there is **Paleo-castritsa** with the monastery dedicated to the Virgin, founded in 1225, and Angelokastro, a forbidding Byzantine fortress built on the summit of a steep crag.

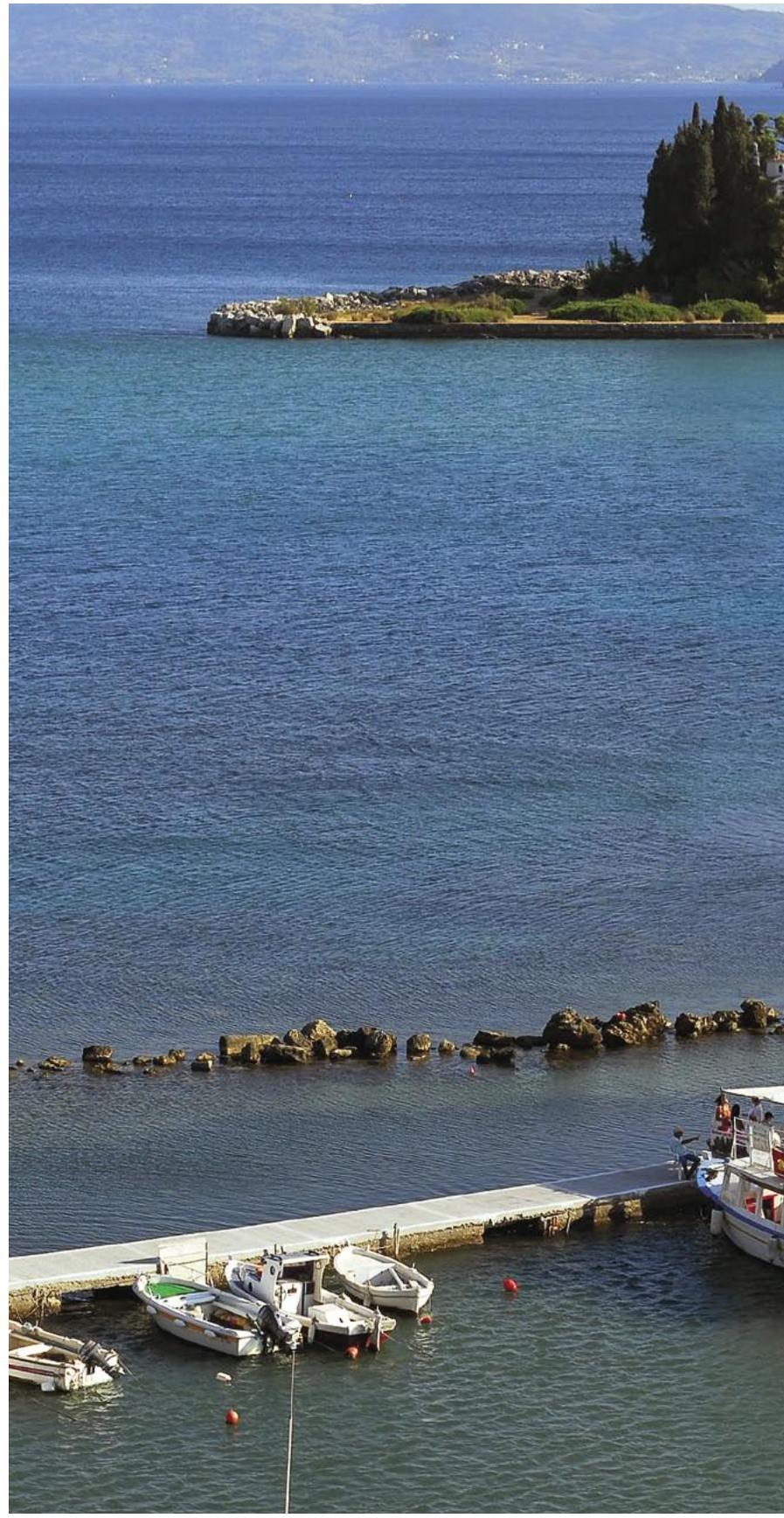
Two more fortresses are to be found at some distance from the town of Corfu – **Gardiki**, a Byzantine castle of the 13th century, in the south of the island, and the **fortress at Kas-siopi** in north-eastern Corfu, involved, in the

distant past, in attacks by pirates and would-be conquerors.

In the island's villages the visitor will find museums that highlight local history, folk art, customs and traditions of each area. The **Capodistria Museum**, featuring personal items belonging to Ioannis Capodistria, the first Head of State of Greece, is to be found in Evropouli, 4 kilometres from the town. The **Historical and Folklore Museum of Mesis** has been established in the village of Sinarades, and includes a precise recreation of a countryman's house of the 19th century as well as Corfiot traditional costumes, musical instruments, tools and many other objects and utensils of that period.

In Gaios, Paxos, the second **Folklore Museum** of the province is to be found, with some very interesting exhibits, arranged in such a way as to illustrate eloquently the living conditions in a Paxiot house of former times.

A visit to the **Olive Museum**, housed in an ancient olive-press in the village of Kinopiastes, will guide you through the traditional methods of extracting the oil from the olives.







Corfu in its entirety is a sight worth seeing, a living museum of history, culture and nature. Wherever you look, your glance falls upon unique sights whose origins are lost in time. The history, traditions and culture of the island are safe-guarded by national and private

museums, and also by well-looked after private collections. Rare and unusual objects, bearing the traces and imprint of a long journey through time, are preserved with respect and bring the highly significant past history of the island to life before the visitor's gaze. The

most important museums are to be found in the historic centre of Corfu which in the summer of 2007 was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is foremost amongst the island's places of interest. In the Palaces, the two fortresses of the town,

in historical buildings and mansions, easy of access and scientifically classified, Corfu's past is laid out before you. The collection richest in historical importance is housed at the Archeological Museum where the most commanding exhibit is undoubtedly



the famous pediment depicting the Gorgon, dating from the 6th century BC. The **Museum of Asian Art**, unique in Greece and one of the best in Europe, is to be found in the Palace of St Michael and St George, the most important of the island's monuments of

the British Protectorate. A church of the 15th century, dedicated to the **Holy Virgin the Antivouniotissa**, has been converted into a museum housing works that illustrate the religious expression of the Byzantine tradition alongside Western influences. Close by is **the house**



where Greece's national poet, **Dionysios Solomos, once lived**. It now houses the Museum of the same name and also the very significant Centre for Corfu Studies. Unique in Greece, and one of the most interesting museums of its kind worldwide, the **Banknote Museum** has

been open since 1981 and occupies part of the historic Ionian Bank building. Surrounded by the beautiful park of Paleopolis, **the Palace of Mon Repos** now functions as a branch of the Archeological Museum, displaying finds from the ancient city of Corfu.

CORFU MEANS MUSIC



Corfu's musical tradition goes back to the earliest times. In the Odyssey, Homer mentions the blind bard Demodocus who performs in Odysseus' honour at the banquet arranged by King Alcinous.

The art of music has always led the way on the island, as evidenced by the Venetian The-

atre of San Giacomo where opera was performed for the first time in the Balkans and the eastern Mediterranean, and by the foundation of the Philharmonic Society in 1840, and on, right up to the present day. **Music is to be heard everywhere** - at the festivals, in the alleys of the town, in homes, even in

the Corfiot accent. Here everything is melodic. **The Philharmonic Bands of Corfu** are world-famous. Their origins lie in the general climate of formation of clubs and societies that flowered in Europe in the 19th century, and which was well-known to the Corfiots thanks to the number of students from the

island who attended European universities. Today, in Corfu, nineteen philharmonic bands are active, their aim being to spread the idea of musical education. They have set up scholarships for outstanding pupils and are noteworthy for their presence at festivals and celebrations on Corfu and further afield.







During the summer in Corfu there are many interesting musical events.

The International Festival of Corfu, 'Ionian Concerts', jointly organized annually by the Music Department of the Ionian University, the Prefecture of Corfu and the Municipality of Corfu is the chief cultural event. This great festival is the result of international musical co-operation by the Summer Academy. Well-known musicians from the USA, from Europe, the Far East and Greece, meet each year in Corfu with students from Europe, Asia and America for seminars, lectures, discussions and, of course, music. The result is a unique contact between teachers and students, resulting in a chemical reaction, a communion, a festival of the highest quality.

Folk festivals in Corfu, as in the rest of Greece, take place on the occasion of reli-

gious celebrations or anniversaries. They usually occur in summer and in the old times presented an opportunity for socialising. In the main squares of the villages, and in the various quarters of the town, the 'pavioni' would be set up, a decorated wooden platform with tables and chairs set around it. The orchestra would be installed on the platform, the chief instrument being the violin, and everyone would dance and enjoy themselves below. The most accomplished violinists were always from the region of northern Corfu and any festival that employed such musicians was bound to be a success. The standard dance was the Corfiot 'syrtos', performed with lightness and grace and an intense lyricism. The stalls of the itinerant pedlars were set up in the forecourt of the church and in the neighbouring streets, selling toys and gifts, spit-roasted meat and wine.

A TOWN MUSEUM

The town of Corfu was established in the 8th century BC and has existed in its present form for the last nine centuries.

It is a well-preserved old city, built between the two fortresses that reflect a thousand

years or more of European history. This is the chief reason for the inclusion of the entire historic centre of Corfu town on the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites, in June 2007.





BEACHES





The combined forces of sea, sun and wind have, over thousands of years, brought about a strikingly sculpted coastline, graceful and beautiful in its nature. On beaches with golden sand or multi-hued pebbles, rock-sculptures worthy of display in a gallery of modern art are set off by trees that proffer their shade to the edge of the water. **This is the natural beauty of Corfu.**

The eastern shores, protected by the mainland coast, offer quiet waters for swimming, depths that are rewarding to explore, all relatively easy of access from the town. The north-east coast is justly famous for its astonishingly clear water, the multi-coloured pebbles and the steeply shelving beaches. It is no coincidence that the most exclusive villas and yachts are to be found here.

In the south-east there are shallow waters,

sandy beaches with shade and small tavernas right at the water's edge, with roads coming right down to the shore. **These are ideal conditions for a holiday with children.**

Off the north-west corner of Corfu the Diapontian Islands may be found – Mathraki, Othonoi and Erikoussa. The first of these is surrounded by reefs and rock shelves and is extremely difficult to approach – making it almost a forgotten island. The other two islands, however, are often the first port of call for sea traffic coming from the Adriatic and can be very busy. Their craggy shores attract those who love nature in its wilder forms. The western coast of Corfu is characterized by the prevailing winds that sweep across it – the persistent 'maistro' that comes from Venice to the accompaniment of high waves and cooler temperatures, while the 'bstria' blows up from the south laden



with the warmth of the shores of Africa. The west coast has developed its huge sandy beaches interspersed with dramatic rocks and cliffs. **A sense of complete freedom prevails, and there is nowhere to hide and nothing to hide from.** In the north-west the precipitous cliffs that culminate in the crags and rocks of Paleocastritsa are perfect for underwater ex-

ploration. This is everyone's idea of paradise, with endless golden beaches and aquamarine and turquoise water down the entire length of the west and south-west coastline. Sometimes crowded, sometimes deserted, such beaches are always inviting, for games in the surf, sun and wind, or for quiet relaxation with a good book.

The outstanding beauty of the Paxos coastline is famous throughout the Ionian. The natural harbours of Lakka, Gaios and Mongonisi are inundated with yachts during the summer months. As moorings, these harbours really come into their own at the times when the maistro blows and the microclimate of the area favours the currents and the swell

of the sea. The western side of the island is carved into impressive cliffs with sea-caves which are well worth a visit when the weather permits. No-one can fail to be captivated by the beauty of Anti-Paxos with its brilliantly coloured sea, its beaches, and the unbelievable sense of being free from cares that even a short visit can bring.



ISLES OF PARADISE

Only a few miles away but seemingly much further from the cosmopolitan life of Corfu, the smaller islands that surround it are set apart by their peaceful and undisturbed way of life that offers an irresistible alternative for those who seek peace and tranquility on their holidays. Verdant Paxos, with its awe-inspiring sea-caves on the west coast, the almost deserted islets of Anti-Paxos, with their turquoise water, the Diapontian Islands

of Othonoi, Erikoussa and Mathraki, as well as the protected natural beauty of Vido, right opposite the town of Corfu, remind visitors of the unspoiled, untouched Greece of the early twentieth century. Picturesque villages, country paths, traditional tavernas and a clean and sparkling sea combine to offer a 'different' prospect for idyllic holidays, for carefree travels in a favoured natural environment.





PAXOS, ANTIPAXOS & DIAPONTIAN ISLANDS

Welcome to the kingdom of the minimal.

Small dimensions, short distances, limited choices for eating and sleeping, few people. The only thing you will find in any quantity is the sense of satisfaction you will feel.

Othonoi marks the westernmost point of Greece; 10.8 square kilometres in size, about 3.6 kilometres in width and 5.6 in length, with a coastline of 30 kilometres.

It is a superb tourist destination, ideal for sailing holidays, walking or for fishing. You will love the cave of Calypso, the beaches of Ammos, Aspri Ammos and Fyki. **Erikoussa** is entirely round in shape, 2 kilometres in diameter, with approximately 90 inhabitants. It is said that its name derives from the heather bush (reiki in Greek) that grows here profusely. The landscape here resembles that of the opposite shore of Sidari. Its southern beach, where the hamlet Porta is to be found, is one

enormous expanse of sand which attracts people in large numbers from Corfu.

A footpath leads north through lush green vegetation and leads to Prangini Beach. There are 6 small villages on Erikoussa, with about 20 houses in each. **Mathraki** is the smallest island of the Diapontian group, with an area of 3 square kilometres, and it lies just 4 miles off Cape Arillas. Its coastline forms a number of small bays of which the two most important are Ammos and Apidies, used as harbours for the arrivals and departures of the small caiques that operate the ferry connection with Corfu. There are some beaches of powdery sand, surrounded by reefs, rocky shelves and islets that attract all the fishing boats of the area.

The island's two villages are built at opposite ends of Mathraki and are known as Ano (Upper) and Kato (Lower) Mathraki. Here you will





find two hotels with fine views and some delightful small tavernas.

Said to be, in antiquity, the favourite place of Poseidon, the god of the sea, Paxos today is a favourite with celebrity tourists. Yachts from every corner of Europe rendezvous here for

a few days of utter relaxation and dedication to the good life. Excellent facilities, local produce of the highest quality, superb food, the finest wine and atmospheric surroundings of small coves and green, translucent water make Paxos a very special hideaway. Here

the sea plays a defining role. Always close by, you hear the whisper of the waves wherever you are. Loggos, Lakka and Gaios will captivate you with their charms and Anti-Paxos is bound to steal your heart with its unbelievably beautiful beaches

Stone-built houses with windows that gaze upon the open sea, paths that wind through the olive groves, solitary churches, windmills, traditional grocery stores-cum-cafes, folk festivals, concerts of classical music – all exist side-by-side in an enviable harmony.



LIFE IN THE VILLAGE

More than 100 villages and hamlets are to be found scattered throughout the green countryside of the province of Corfu. According to the period in which they were first established, they still bear witness to the years of Byzantine and Venetian rule, with some vestiges of early 20th century village archi-

itecture and even, here and there, remains of Ancient Greek and Roman times.

You will be enchanted by the stone houses, the traditional village square with its cafeneion and well-tended church, but above all the hospitable, **kindly nature of the villagers will appeal to you and make you feel at home.**

TRAVELLING WITH FRIENDS





With a well-organised infrastructure and a wide range of activities Corfu is an attractive proposition for group holidays of all kinds. Incentive trips, conference tourism, school trips, the Ferrari automobile club and the Harley-Davidson enthusiasts have all kept an annual rendezvous in Corfu for several years now.

It is also a perfect destination for holidays with children. This may not be apparent at first glance but with a little research you will see that you really should bring your children here one day. There may not be a Disneyland or kids' museums, zoos or theme parks or any of the other 'children's attractions' we are accustomed to elsewhere, but the entire island can be considered as one giant children's playground. It remains one of the

few places in the world where children may experience what they truly have need of – a gentle human welcome and hospitality.

In Corfu there are no tropical diseases, no crime or violence, no dangerous seas or any other kind of hazards. Children here, as you will see for yourselves, can play safely in the streets and squares and in the playgrounds or on the seashore. The way of life in Corfu is still very much that of the family. In town and village neighbourhoods the inhabitants leave their doors open, sit out and gossip in the alleyways while their children play around them and the stranger is always welcome. In other words, the local way of life is characterized by security and friendliness. It is no coincidence that the word 'philoxenia' (hospitality) is Greek.





LOCAL PRODUCTS



Welcome to one of the most interesting shopping areas in Greece!

Shopping in Corfu is a reflection of the island's history and takes place in an atmosphere reminiscent of the Corfu of the 17th and 18th centuries.

It was in those days that the port of Corfu was the meeting place of peoples and cultures. Ships from East and West called here at the

first major port of the Serene Republic of Venice and, as might be expected, people, ideas and merchandise from every part of the world met here to enrich the local culture. Since those days, something has remained that is unique to Corfu; on the island today Greeks and foreigners alike have taken up residence, to live here permanently of their own free will. They have opened businesses, bringing in

a variety of goods that it would be hard to match anywhere else in Greece.

In the centre of the Old Town craftsmen and artisans used to make and sell an unbelievable variety of objects. In the streets of the Jewish Quarter and in the 'Pinia' area, and throughout the town in general, all kinds of shops existed. Today, not only in the town but also throughout the island, you will come across shops and

galleries that maintain that tradition. The originality and quality of the goods and produce, derived from the countryside and from the traditions of folk art, will amaze you.

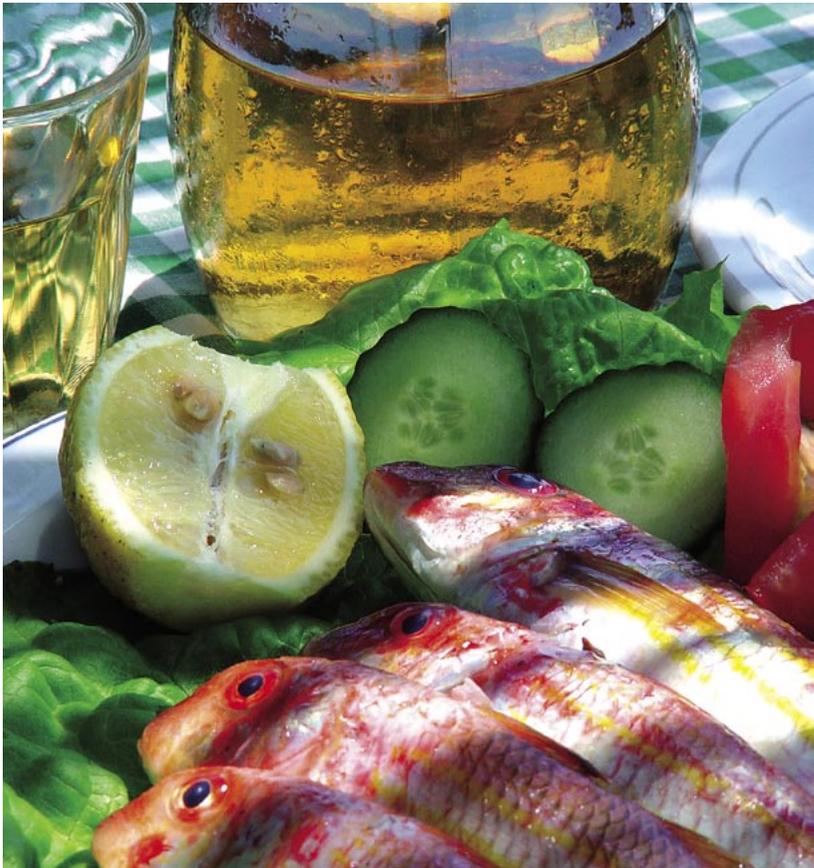
Hand-crafted jewellery, ceramics, wood-carvings, wine, sweet preserves, honey, olive oil, green soap, and Koum Kouat are just a few of the many products that you will find in plenty and at reasonable prices.



CUISINE

A short stay in Corfu will soon convince you that **the local cuisine is a perfect example of what we call 'the Mediterranean Diet'**. Watermelon fields, grape-vines, fishing boats and flocks of sheep and goats bear witness to the agricultural activities of the inhabitants. Salads, greens, fish, meat in moderation, dairy products, virgin olive oil and many kinds of fruit make up their daily diet. Influenced

chiefly by Italy, due to the years of Venetian rule, and less by the rest of Greece, the Corfiots enjoy cooking and tend to add just a little more pepper and garlic than is strictly necessary in order to have an excuse to drink more of their excellent wine. And since all good meals end with dessert, bear in mind that in Corfu you will find exceptionally good sweets.





MORE THAN YOU WILL HAVE TIME FOR

Nature, the sea and the history of Corfu have seen to it that you, today, from wherever you come, for however long you stay, whatever sort of person you are, will find original and interesting ideas for activities and entertainment. In a place with a tourist tradition that goes back at least 130 years, influenced by the upper classes of England, France and of course Venice, on an island that was for many decades the haunt of the international jet-set, the possibilities for sport and entertainment are naturally outstanding.



Walking

The huge variety of plants, flowers and trees, the abandoned villages, the solitary chapels and the endless diversity of the countryside make walking in Corfu exceptionally interesting. Rare flowers, Byzantine and Venetian buildings, 'secret' lakes and tiny streams will be the reward for your first 'off-road' excursion.

Many of the island's municipalities have instituted networks of foot-paths equipped with clear signs and resting places, facilitating your ventures into the Corfiot countryside.

Cycling

Over 6000 people a year visit Corfu solely for the purpose of a cycling holiday, while exactly double that number hire bikes for several days during their holiday.

For all of them, Corfu is a paradise in which to enjoy their hobby. With a bicycle you can get to places that you would otherwise only reach on foot. You feel closer to the place and its people, you can experience the silence and the peace, and you can even swim undisturbed on an otherwise deserted beach even on a public holiday such as 15th August. A slow bike ride along shady roads and the feeling of freedom as you ride past trickling streams are experiences that you should not miss.

Golf

The good thing about golf is that it can be played anywhere in the world - as long as there is a golf course. Corfu's 18-hole course is very well-known. It has all the facilities and amenities necessary but it also has one unique feature - a setting that takes the breath away. Designed by the internationally-renowned golf architect, Donald Harradine, it is situated in the Rope Valley at Ermones. The Corfu Golf Club is open from March to | November and is suitable for both beginners and experienced players.

Tennis

Tennis was played for the first time in Greece around the end of the nineteenth century, in Corfu. Ever since that time, the children of the 'good families', have played the sport that has now acquired a wider popularity.

Apart from the historic Corfu Tennis Club, many of the island's hotels now have tennis courts. Every summer the island hosts international tennis tournaments.

Horse-riding

Few places in Greece have as many opportunities for riding as Corfu does. The dense vegetation, the countless quiet paths and the interest in riding that continues from the days of the British Protectorate, afford visitors today some unmatched opportunities for carefree riding. Whether you are experienced or not, Corfu's riding clubs will supply you with the right horse and the proper guide, who will show you places that only a well-trained animal can take you to.



Cricket

170 years of tradition continue today in the only part of Greece where cricket is played seriously. Five clubs and two splendid pitches are at your disposal for a visit with your own club - or alone – for the enjoyment of your favourite sport. Throughout the summer there are official tournaments as well as friendly matches, many of them played on the most atmospheric pitch in Europe, that which is to be found in Corfu's main square, known as the Spianada (Esplanade), right in the heart of the Old Town. The majority of matches are played nowadays, however, at the new Cricket Club ground in the Gouvia Marina, with its up-to-date facilities.

Water Sports

All the main beaches of Corfu are supplied with floating platforms where professional instructors will initiate you into the wonders of a journey over the waves; water-skiing, jet-skiing, paragliding or windsurfing. There are more traditional (and slower) ways of travelling over the water, too – pedalo or canoe, all of which are available for you to explore at speed or take your time and discover some quiet beach of your own. Safety rules are strictly adhered to, equipment is subject to frequent inspection, and the professionals take their job very seriously, so that you have no need to hesitate: water sports in Corfu are safe and truly enjoyable.

Sailing

Sailing holidays in Corfu benefit from a number of factors including the island's geographical position, its beauty, the multitude of good moorings in the vicinity, and the gentle climate. These, combined with the convenience of an international airport, contribute to the suitability of Corfu for sailing tourism. In a place famed since ancient times for the maritime skills of its inhabitants, you will today find a top-quality yacht marina in the Bay of Gouvia and new harbours at Benitses, Paleocastritsa and in the town of Corfu. Whether you travel with your own boat or prefer to charter one in Corfu, the possibilities and facilities will undoubtedly meet all your requirements.

Diving

Corfu is one of the top destinations for underwater activities and organized diving centres are to be found in every part of the island. The beaches and coves, headlands and endless reefs, constitute a small paradise for lovers of the deep. From June onwards the sea warms up appreciably and it is possible to enjoy to the full whatever underwater activity most interests you. Regardless of whether the purpose of your dive is to fish for a few delicacies for your friends to try, or underwater photography, or just to explore for hours with mask and snorkel, the underwater depths of Corfu's seas can be very exciting.





A world where from ancient times to the present day people live with respect for tradition, modernizing without losing touch with their roots, breathing the air of a lush and fertile environment, swimming in unsullied waters, walking through the streets of European history, watching their children play in safety and enjoying themselves as Greeks do – this is the world of Corfu. Smiling, hospitable people, a sense of history, an island blessed in its natural beauty, these await you in Corfu, for you to get to know and to live with for a while. One thing is certain – when you leave you will become aware that a new love has entered your life and will be with you from now on. Once you know Corfu, you will always love it.

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