



WELCOME!

Western Mani invites you to visit it, to explore it and to return home richer, as journeys reward the travelers with new images and experiences! Traditional towers, stone-built houses, castles, water mills, bridges, fountains, cobblestone streets, Byzantine monasteries, churches and ancient Greek monuments are hiding in the wild nature of the Maniot land.

Taygetos stands imposingly just above the sea and creates with it, an ecosystem of unique beauty, with a special flora and fauna.

From the peaks of the mountain, to the numerous beaches, visitors discover the natural connection network that consists of canyons and paths and enjoy hiking, climbing, cycling, swimming and water sports. Moreover, the hospitality of Maniots, their traditional customs, the modern tourist infrastructure, which serves several alternative forms of thematic tourism, and the local products ensure the quality of your stay! Happy Holidays!

The Mayor
Ioannis Marampeas

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COASTLINE



WESTERN MANI / TRAVEL GUIDE

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WESTERN MANI ONLINE

www.visitwesternmani.com

SEASIDE VILLAGES



ARCHONTIKO Traditional seaside village. It features stone houses and lush gardens with olive trees, cypress and palm trees. Overlooking the Messinian bay, crystal clear waters, infrastructures and sightseeings attract tourists.



AVIA Beachside settlement. Located in a popular holiday area, stretching between neighboring settlements of Archontiko and Akrogiali. Overlooking the Messinian Gulf and crystal clear waters are attractions for visitors, while it has natural and cultural sightseeings.



AKROGIALI Seaside fishing village. It is located in a popular holiday area, with lacy beaches that records remarkable flow of tourists and visitors. Along with the neighboring villages, they form an attractive destination for leisure and relaxation.



KITRIES Picturesque fishing village. Surrounded by dense vegetation with olive trees and gardens, it has a quiet beach, although it is located only 12 km away from the city of Kalamata. Green waters, smooth pebbles and small coves make up its special beauty.



KAMPOS KARDAMYLIS Beachside settlement. Located within walking distance from Kardamyli. Crystal blue sea, olive groves and cypress trees form a welcoming landscape that offers visitors recreation and relaxation.



KARDAMYLI Traditional seaside village. The stones house complete ideally its natural beauty. Crystal blue sea, olive groves and cypress trees form a welcoming landscape that offers visitors recreation and relaxation. It is the capital of Western Mani.

KALAMITSI Beachside settlement. It is located near Kardamyli. Beautiful and quiet, surrounded by greenery. Have to visit the beach, small and special, with smooth pebbles. Perfect for relaxing and swimming in crystal clear waters.



KALOGRIA Beachside settlement. Located below the old mine of Prastova, where for two years Alexis Zorbas, hero of the famous film "Zorba the Greek", had worked for Nikos Kazantzakis. Apart from natural beauty, its sandy beach has complete infrastructure for families and youths.



STOUPA Cosmopolitan seaside village. Although newly built, it has evolved quickly into a popular tourist destination. Guests enjoy the two nearby beautiful sandy beaches, the natural environment and the vibrant nightlife.



AGIOS NIKOLAOS Classic Greek fishing village. Picturesque streets and buildings surround the harbor, where the visitor overlooks the sea and enjoys fresh fish. It is a starting point for touring the canyon of Tepeni.



AGIOS DIMITRIOS Small, picturesque fishing village. Located in the site of ancient Pefnos, with its rocky island. Here anchored Paris of Troy his ships, when he stole the beautiful Helen. In the islet were born according to the legend, the Dioscuri, twin sons of Zeus, heroes and brothers of Helen.



TRACHELA Traditional fishing village. It is connected with mountain villages and settlements via trails, since it was a commercial port and a sea transport hub. Within walking distance from it are to be found several free, beautiful, rocky beaches.

BEACHES

Organized, free, isolated, inaccessible, sandy, pebble, located near islands, large, small, the beaches of West Mani combine all tastes and satisfy even the most demanding guests! The variety of seawater colours is similar. They change within short distances from deep blue to green or blue! Besides swimming, water sports, relaxation and leisure, many of the beaches are entrance points to the canyons of Western Mani, all of which lead up to Taygetos! This is due to the, globally-rare, proximity to the sea of such a high mountain!

Archontiko



Kitries



Santova



Archontiko



Santova



Kardamyli

Driving on the road Kalamata - Areopolis, which crosses Western Mani, visitors encounter firstly the coastal cosmopolitan area, extending from Archontiko to Akrogiali, then Kitries, many small, hard to reach and quiet coasts, Ritsa near Kardamyli, the two beaches of Kalamitsi, the magical beach of Foneas, from where starts the canyon, the beach Dolphins, the internationally-popular among tourists area of the neighboring villages of Kalogria and Stoupa, the beach of Halikoura, the beach Gnospi in Agios Nikolaos, the Pantazi and Malsova beaches, Agios Dimitrios, then for the more adventurous the rocky beach Katafygio and finally the beach of Trachela!



Ritsa



Foneas



Kalamitsi



Stoupa



Kalogria



Halikoura



Gnospi



Malsova



Pantazi



Agios Dimitrios



Katafygio



Trachela

VILLAGES ON TAYGETOS



MEGALI MANTINEIA

Traditional village with tower-houses. It is built amphitheatrically on a hill, with great views of the Messinian Bay, the peak of Taygetos and the canyon of Ridomo. Just 2 klm. Away from the village lies the cosmopolitan beach Santova.



PLATOMA Small mountain settlement. It is located in a hard to access location, with lush vegetation overlooking the surrounding area. Nearby passes the stream Myloi, poured near Akrogiali, while hikers can visit nearby villages like Kampos Avias.



DROSOPIGI Traditional village. Took its name from the water source, located beneath the nearby Monastery of Saint Nikolaos. The famous cobblestone road Biliovo that ends up in Altomira, crosses the village. It is situated within walking distance from the canyon of Ridomo.



KOURIS Small settlement. Built near Sotirianika, at a lower altitude. The local road from Kalamata to Areopolis crosses Kouris. Megali Mantinia is also situated within walking distance from the settlement.



SOTIRIANIKA Traditional village. Built at the foot of Taygetos in dense vegetation. From this village starts the famous cobblestone road Biliovo that ends up in Altomira. Remarkable sightseeings are the old and the new bridge of Koskaraga and the folk Maniot architecture of the buildings.



CHARAYGI Traditional settlement. Built at the foot of Taygetos among cypresses, pines and olive trees. Main attraction is the three-story Tower Kapetanaki that belongs to a family of great fighters of the Greek Revolution of 1821 and has more than 100 loopholes.

PIGADIA Mountain village at an altitude of 927 meters. Here starts the dry river of Santova that has created the beautiful canyon Ridomo. Bridges, cobblestone roads and non visitable caves, are hidden among fir trees, pines and oaks.



KRYA VRYSI North of Pigadia, on the mountain Taygetos, lies the village of Krya Vrysi, in a wild and rugged area between coniferous trees.



DENDRA Northwest of Pigadia, on the mountain Taygetos, lies the settlement of Dendra, in a wild and rugged area between coniferous trees.



RIZANA The most northern settlement in Western Mani. It lies higher than the village of Krya Vrysi, in a wild and rugged area between coniferous trees.



ALMIRA Beautiful traditional village. Its stone houses are perfect samples of Maniot architecture. Here ends the famous cobblestone road Biliovo. The mountainous terrain made the village suitable for hideout and refuge of the thief Altomoros, after whom it was named.



DOLOI Picturesque village. It consists of the settlements of Ano (upper) and Kato (lower) Doloi, which are built on opposite hills. Churches and Towers dominate the region that has rich vegetation and paths, while it is crossed by the canyon of Santova.

KALLIANEIKA Relatively new village. Named after the family Kaliani who built it. Located above Kitries, it dominates in a sparsely inhabited area. Houses with tiled roofs, yards, olive groves, orchards, palm trees and churches make up the landscape.



MALTA Settlement built by immigrant Maniots that returned from Corsica and Italy. Located beneath the Tower of the Koutifari family, a member of which was the first Bey of Mani. It is not far from the Tower Mavrikou, as well as from Stavropigio.



STAVROPIGIO Traditional village. Olive groves and cypress trees compose the landscape that surrounds it. Situated next to the historic Castle Zarnata, which had been successively under the control of the Byzantines, Venetians, Ottomans and Maniots.



KAMPOS AVIAS Picturesque central village. Easy access as it is located on a plateau with olive and cypress trees. Guests can admire the Mycenaean vaulted tomb and the nearby castle Zarnata. The village lies close to the sea, as well as to the mountainous areas.



OROVAS Traditional small settlement. Built in an area with dense vegetation, mainly olive groves, near Kampos Avias, at a higher altitude. It is linked with the neighbouring villages via paths, while it has a beautiful orthodox church.



TOUMPIA Small settlement. Built in an area with dense vegetation near Kampos Avias, at a higher altitude. It is situated within walking distance from the canyon of Ridomo.

VOREIO GAITSON

Picturesque settlement, the northernmost of Gaitses. Built on the mountain side, in dense vegetation, with wonderful views of the canyon Ridomo. At the edge of the village is the Monastery of Prophet Elias, around which stand remnants of ancient walls.



KENTRO GAITSON

Stone-built settlement in the heart of Gaitses. Built on the mountain side, in dense vegetation, with wonderful views of the canyon Ridomo. It consists of Maniot towers and stone streets. It also has famous churches, Taxiarches (Archangels) and Panagia (Holy Mary) of Helmos.



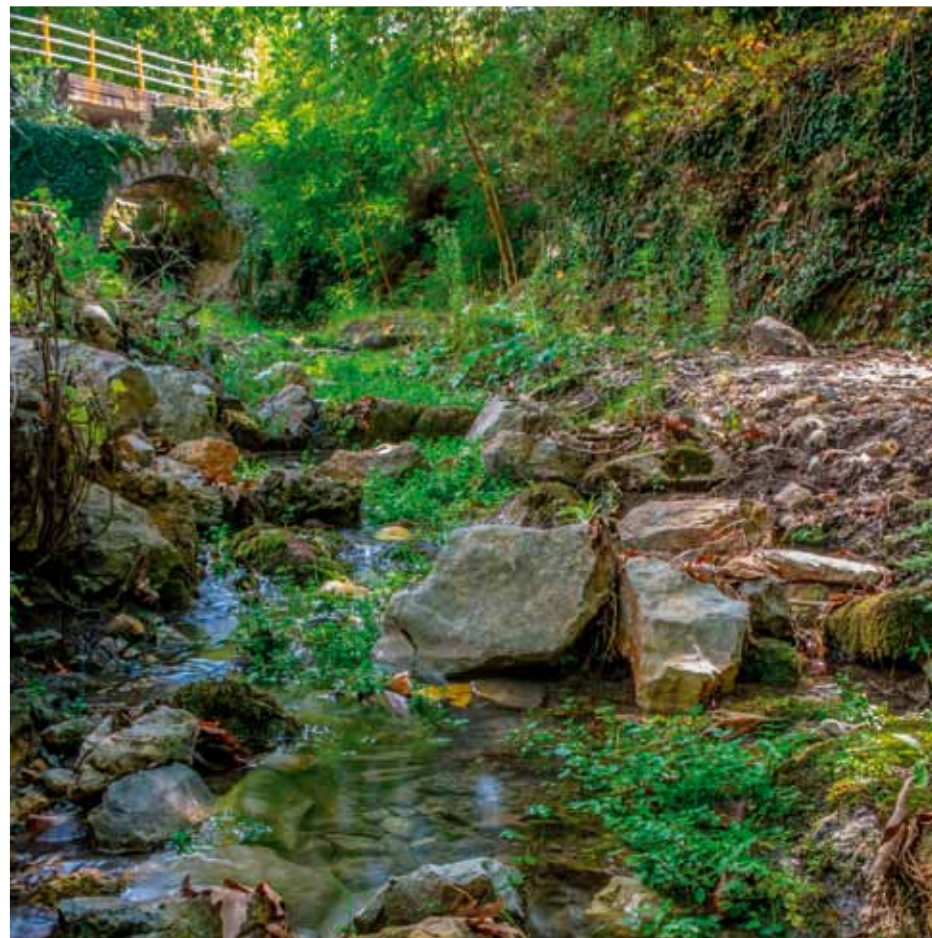
ANATOLIKO GAITSON

Picturesque settlement. Built at an altitude of 640 meters east of the nearby village Kentro and north-east of the nearby village Chora Gaitson, on the mountain side in dense vegetation. Anatoliko has great views of the canyon of Ridomo.



CHORA GAITSON

Picturesque village. Built on the mountain side with thick vegetation, it offers great views of the canyon Ridomo. Leaving the village towards Tseria, hikers seize the opportunity to observe Vythos or Caldera, a huge, verdant "crater" created by the collapse of a cave roof.



PROSILIO Traditional Maniot village, with narrow streets, picturesque stone houses and towers. It is amphitheatrically built on a hillside and has a magnificent view of the wider area of Kardamyli. Sunny, as evidenced by its name that means “towards the sun”, almost all year round.



KALYVES Stone-built settlement, built on top of a hill near Prosilio. Through different trails, hikers can either easily enter the beautiful canyon of Viros or reach villages at higher altitudes. The settlement has the beautiful orthodox church of Agios Mamas.



AGIA SOFIA Beautiful picturesque village, built near Kardamyli, at a higher altitude. It is linked with Kardamyli also through trail and its name derives from the orthodox church of the village. The view is astonishing.



LEPTINI Traditional stone-built settlement, built in the area of Tseria that is known as the Balcony of Mani, because of the panoramic view it has. Inhabited since the Middle Ages, although it was located around 1,000 meters further to the north.



PEDINO Traditional stone-built settlement, built in the area of Tseria that is known as the Balcony of Mani, because of the panoramic view it has. Located on the mountain side, in dense vegetation, with olive trees, cypresses and pines.



KATAFYGIO Traditional stone-built settlement, built in the area of Tseria that is also known as the Balcony of Mani, because of its panoramic view. Katafygio means refuge in Greek. There are caves in the cliff at its western side, where residents used to hide from pirates.

ZACHARIA Traditional stone-built settlement, built in the area of Tseria that is also known as the Balcony of Mani, because of its panoramic view. Located on the mountain side, in dense vegetation, with olive trees, cypresses and pines, next to the settlement of Giatreika.



GIATREIKA Traditional stone-built settlement, built in the area of Tseria that is also known as the Balcony of Mani, because of its panoramic view. Located on the mountain side, in dense vegetation. It took its name from the family Iatroi/Medikoi (doctors), who built the settlement.



TSERIA Traditional stone-built village. It supervises the built-in-circle settlements of the area of Tseria, known as the Balcony of Mani because of its panoramic view. Located on the mountainside, among pine trees. The structure of the settlements' location was chosen due to fortification.



PETROVOUNI Beautiful picturesque village at an altitude of approximately 180 meters above sea level. Its view that captures apart from the wider region of Kardamyli, almost the entire Messinian Bay, is astonishing.



LAKKOS Picturesque settlement, east of Agia Sofia, south of Exochori and north of Petrovouni and Proastio. Stone houses, dense greenery, trails and churches are the main features of the area.



EXOCHORI Traditional, historical, mountain village with Maniot towers. Located near the mountain Taygetos and the canyon of Viros. It has special, rich flora and fauna. Visitors might enjoy climbing, hiking, biking and agrotourism.

CHORA EXOCHORIOU

Traditional, mountain village. Located close to Exochori. In the past, the two villages were parts, along with other settlements, of Androuvitsa, a city on the royal road, used by the last Byzantine emperors, Palaiologoi.



PROASTIO Traditional village. After the Fall of Constantinople settled there known Byzantine families. It is amphitheatrically built on a hillside and has great views. Located near the beach of Kalamitsi and the canyon of Foneas.



SAIDONA Traditional, mountain village. Located near the mountain Taygetos and the canyon of Foneas. Oak trees cover the old traditional houses and the cobblestone streets. Its name arises from the existence of many nightingales and from the beauty of the landscape.



KASTANIA Picturesque mountain village. Located below the peak of Taygetos Mavrovouna, among oak trees and walnut trees. As a natural fortress, it remains hidden from sight, even from a short distance. Here, in the Tower Dourakis, Kolokotronis was hidden from the Ottomans.



LEFKTRO Traditional stone-built village. Situated amongst olive trees, within walking distance from the beaches of Stoupa and Kalogria. Actually, it forms a single tourist destination with these two seaside resorts. Quiet, beautiful and easily accessible.



NEOCHORI From the newer villages, built under the Maniot architecture. Located on a hill, surrounded by olive groves and oak trees, just a short distance from the beaches of Stoupa and Agios Nikolaos. It has great views and the houses of the villages are built amphitheatrically.

PYRGOS One of the oldest villages, the first where a Tower was built, hence the name. Natural observatory, on the road connecting the coastal villages with the mountainous villages. Picturesque houses with inner courtyards, magnificent views of the region. It has a bio-hotel.



KARYOVOUNI Traditional mountain village. Built amphitheatrically on two slopes that form a stream, among oak trees and olive groves. On the square of the village stands proudly a large plane tree. Known as the Arachova of Mani and renowned destination since old times.



DRYOPI Traditional Maniot settlement. Built next to the road that connects Kardamyli with Kokkina Louria of Laconia, it is located near Karyovouni, but at a lower altitude. It is also close to Pyrgos and to Kastania.



ELAIOCHORI Traditional mountain village. Built at high altitude between dense vegetation, within walking distance from the source of the stream that leads to the beach of Pantazi. It overlooks Riglia and the coastal area between Agios Nikolaos and Agios Dimitrios.



ANO RIGLIA Traditional stone-built village. Situated on a plateau amongst olive trees, within walking distance from the beach of Pantazi. Actually, it forms a single tourist destination with Kato Riglia. Quiet, beautiful and easily accessible.



KATO RIGLIA Traditional stone-built village. Situated on a plateau amongst olive trees, within walking distance from the beach of Pantazi. Actually, it forms a single tourist destination with Ano Riglia. Quiet, beautiful and easily accessible.

Pigi Traditional mountain settlement. Built at an altitude of 370 meters within dense vegetation, situated near Platsa, with which they are essentially a single tourist destination. It overlooks the sea and the region of Agios Dimitrios.



PLATSA Traditional mountain village. It has many towers and it is built at an altitude of 370 meters among lush vegetation. Its name means plateau and was the mountainous part of the ancient Pefnos. It overlooks the sea and the region of Agios Dimitrios.



KOTRONI Stone-built, traditional settlement. From a height of 90 meters, it overlooks the sea and the coast of Agios Dimitrios. Sunny during the most part of the year, it is situated close to both the beaches and to the village of Platsa.



KIVELEIA Traditional mountain village. It is built around the road, which comes from Platsa, close to the entrance of the village Milia. It took its name from the tower of the chieftain Giorgakis Kyvelos. Here is the tomb of Constantinos Kolokotronis, who was the father of Theodore Kolokotronis.



MILIA Traditional mountain village. Inhabited since 1465, as there are written references to the name of the village since that year. It is surrounded by dense vegetation, firs, oaks, pines and has mulberry trees in the village square. It was refuge of the Kolokotronis' family.



KATO CHORA Traditional mountain village. It is built around the road, which comes from Karyovouni, close to the entrance of the village Milia and it lies hidden, in the dense vegetation on Mount Taygetos.

KOUMANI Stone-built, traditional settlement. Situated next to Nomitsis. It is built amphitheatrically, overlooking the sea and its surrounding area. Its most important sight-seeing is the Byzantine church of Agioi Anargyroi.



NOMITSIS Stone-built, traditional village. Situated between Platsa and Thalames. It is built amphitheatrically, overlooking the sea and its surrounding area. Byzantine churches, ruined towers and stone houses testify to the glory of the past.

THALAMES Traditional stone-built village. Inhabited since the time of ancient Sparta, when it possessed a sacred oracle, dedicated to the patroness of seafarers Ino. It demonstrated important iconographers like Koutifaris. Situated between the coast and the mountain.



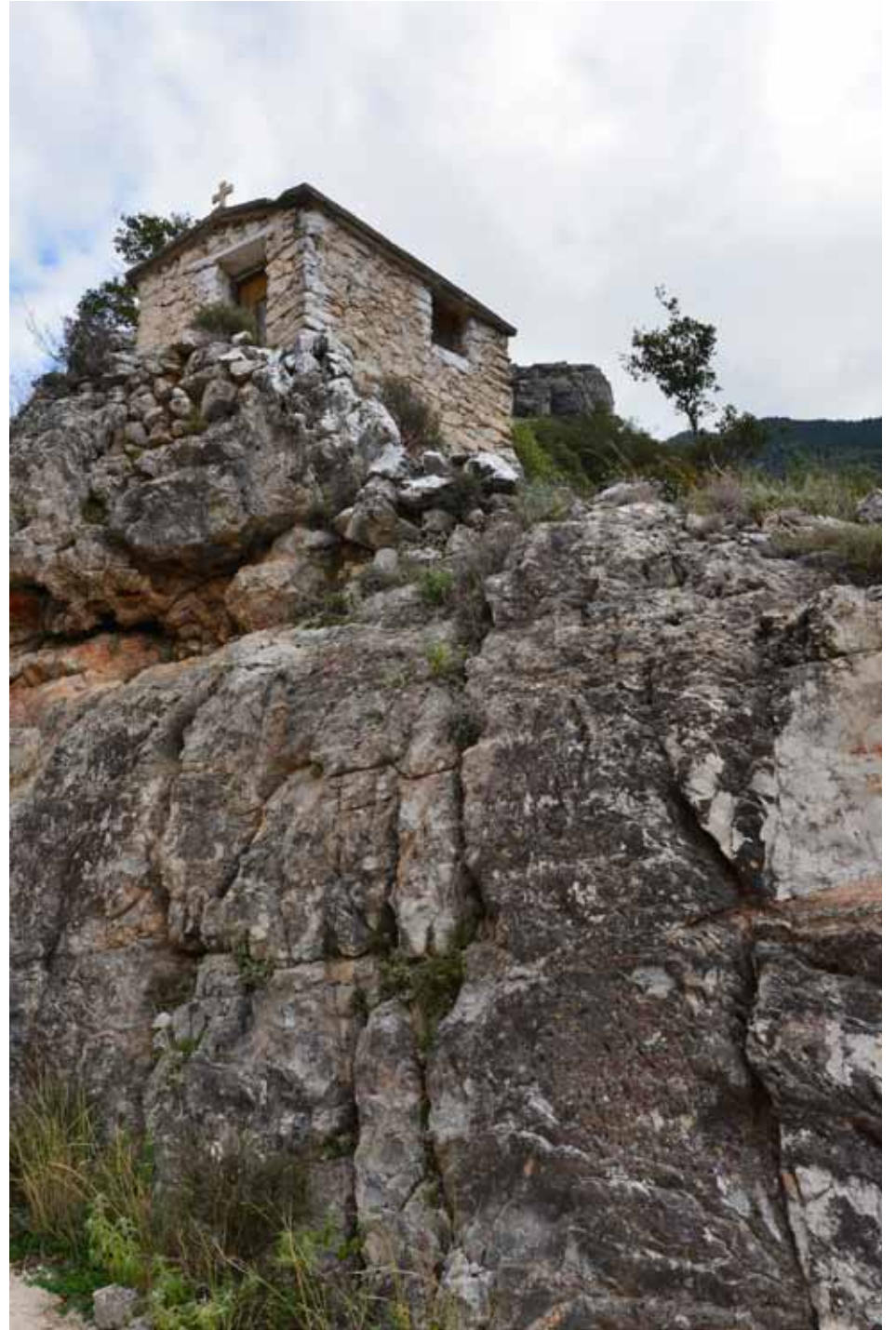
SOMATIANA Traditional small settlement. Built just above Thalames and Platanos. Located closer to the mountain, among cypresses and pine trees, it overlooks the surrounding area.



LAGKADA Traditional Maniot village. Built on a ravine, hence the name. Landmark is the old church of Giatrissa, the largest monastery in the area, which once housed 300 monks. Here died the man, who christianised Mani, known as Saint Nikon.



AGIOS NIKON Gorgeous stone-built village. Also known as Poliana, named after Saint Nikon, the man who christianised Mani. It is the last village of Messinia to the east, overlooking the Messinian bay and has a picturesque square.



TAYGETOS



Mount Taygetos occupies most of the area of Western Mani. The sudden change in altitude from the top of the mountain to the sea, characterizes the region and forms its natural environment. Taygetos has the highest mountain peak of the Peloponnese, Prophet Helias with an altitude of 2,407 meters. The dominant rock is limestone. The steep slopes result in rapid runoff of rain and in the intense ground erosion that has created large canyons, e.g. Ridomo and Viros. The vegetation follows the typical succession of vegetation zones from the brushwood until the alpine meadows. Taygetos presents excellent chloridate interest. This is due to the particular geomorphology of it, combined with geology (oldest district of the Peloponnese with Parnon) and that it was isolated when the rest of the Peloponnese was covered by the sea. Many heroes and warriors took refuge here in the past since the time of ancient Sparta.



Today, Taygetos stands proudly above the sea, royal and peaceful. Guests can work out both physically and mentally, explore the wildlife safely and live unique experiences. Plenty of activities, including hiking, climbing, mountaineering and mountain biking await visitors. Due to the short distance of the mountain from the sea, all mountain activities can be combined with swimming in the sea, during the same day. The mountain, the canyons, the vegetation, the beaches and the sea, form a natural environment, unique in the Mediterranean. The modern tourist facilities coexist in harmony with the traditional character of Western Mani, without altering it.



MOUNTAIN PEAKS

In the region of Western Mani, the altitude ranges from 0 meters to 2.407 meters and the geomorphological terrain is characterized by nearly zero or small slopes in the lowlands and by steep slopes in the highlands. The altitude increases gradually, but not smoothly. Indicatively, the peak of Taygetos, Prophet Helias, the highest of the Peloponnese (2.407m), extends at a horizontal distance of just 12,8 Km from the sea. Other mountain peaks: Chalameno (2.204m), Mavrovouna (1.909m), Tragovouni (1.908m), Neraidovouna (2.032m), St Nikon (1.204m).

CANYONS

VIROS CANYON

Viros Canyon, with a length of about 20 km, is one of the biggest and most impressive canyons in Greece. Its main entrance is near Tseria and goes deep in the heart of Taygetos, below the peak of Mavrovouna. Hikers can walk up to the sources of Viros river. (Distance 2 hours and 30 minutes). Walking the entire length is very difficult, because the paths are lost in the dense vegetation. Near the springs of Viros, there are several old mills. Viros Canyon is accessible easily from one of the villages Tseria, Kalyves and Exochori.





NOUPANTIS' CANYON

Noupantis' Canyon starts to form near the Monastery of Vaidenitsa, three kilometers after Saidona on the road to Exohori and ends after eight kilometers in the beautiful beach Foneas, between Stoupa and Kardamyli. The canyon is filled with caves, many of which are inaccessible, as they are high on the vertical red cliffs. The time required to cross the ravine from the Monastery of Vaidenitsa to the beach Foneas is five and a half to six and a half hours. However, it is possible to cover within thirty minutes, through the preserved cobblestone path that starts outside Saidona, the half distance in order to reach the beach of Foneas in three and a half to four hours.

TEPENIS' CANYON

Tepenis' Canyon starts from the villages Karyovouni and Milea and ends at the beach of Pantazi in Agios Nikolaos.

RIDOMO CANYON

Pausanias called it "Choireios Napi", meaning "valley of the pigs". The canyon starts from Neraidovouna (2031m.), it passes near the villages of Pigadia, Kentro Gaitson, Ano Doloj, Kato Doloj, and ends at the coast of Santova, in the Messinian Gulf near Kitries. Ridomo Canyon is a rich geomorphological formation. Throughout its length we observe multitude of geological phenomena, such as the almost vertical slopes, the folds of rocks and rifts. The exceptional cobblestone streets in Pigadia and Altomira are natural passages to the canyon, while there is also access from Gaitses or Koskaraga, the beautiful bridge on the old street from Kalamata to Kampos.



NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

VASILIKIS' FOREST

The Vasilikis' forest covers about 11,000 acres of forest area, mainly fir-and-pine-forest and stretches to the south of the Taygetos Mountain. From the site Agios Dimitrios hikers follow the international path E4 and descend to the riverbed of the ravine of Viros in the shadow of the mountain peaks, Prophet Helias and Chalasmeno, towards Kardamyli. Walking in the footsteps of the ancient Royal Road of the kings of Sparta, travelers pass sites Dilagkado and Troskona and after a five-to six-hours-walk, they climb up the left side of the ravine to the village Exochori, which is 10 km. drive from Kardamyli. The Vasiliki's forest is accessible from Exochori via a 21-km-long forest road.

FLORA




The flora of the area presents a wide variety of species, including several rare and endemic species. The natural vegetation is typical of southwestern Greece and was formed by climate, geology, and because of the steep slope of the ground. Dominant is the presence of extensive olive groves. In the part of Western Mani, which is characterized by long, dry summers and mild winters, due to the altitude of up to 700 meters, two types of vegetation have developed: maquis and brushwood. The bushes grow in drier and warmer regions with known species of thyme and sage.

In other areas where farming is not practiced encountered the maquis, the typical Mediterranean vegetation. The predominant species are the holm oak, the wild olive tree, the mastic tree and sparto (broom). However, plane trees, oleander and osier grow in the streams. In the part of Western Mani, where temperatures are lower, due to the altitude amounting from 700 to 1000 meters, develop deciduous forests, mainly oak forests, while in drier and southern mountain slopes are growing kermes oaks, wild roses and maples. In the mountainous part, where summers are cooler and rains occur often, due to the altitude amounting from 1000 to 1800 meters, grow coniferous forests, or there are meadows on drier and more arid areas. Dominant is the Kefalonian fir, endemic species of central and southern Greece. Widespread is the presence of black pines, e.g. the Vasiliki's forest. The boundaries of the forest encounter alpine meadows at an altitude of over 2,200 meters, e.g. at the site Portes below the summit of Taygetos, where vegetation includes shrubs and perennial herbs.



FAUNA



The fauna shows strong variety and includes a large number of species. Mammals occurring in the region are the fox, the jackal, the hare, the weasel, the marten, the hedgehog, the badger and the wild cat. Reptiles include turtles, lizards and snakes. Even richer is the bird life of the area and for this reason, Western Mani is considered as one of the most important areas for birds in Greece. Martins, blackbirds, sparrows, crows, mistle thrushes, magpies, coal tit, finches, woodpeckers, partridges, woodpigeons, short-toed eagles, Bonelli's eagles, golden eagles, peregrine falcons, goshawk, nocturnal predators, such as the eagle owl, the long-eared owl, the scops Owl, the owl and some raptors like the kestrel falcon show the size of the variety. Moreover, there are microorganisms (e.g. mites), invertebrates (insects, molluscs, etc.) and Lepidoptera (butterflies). In the marine environment are living fishes, like sardines, mullets, bogues, groupers, snappers, Skorpidi, weevers, cephalopods (squid, cuttlefish, octopus), crustaceans (shrimps, crabs, lobsters), dolphins, seals (*Monachus monachus*) and sea turtles (*Caretta caretta*).

HISTORY

KARDAMYLI The name 'Kardamyli' was first mentioned in Homer's time and it is referred as the first of the "seven well-governed and well-inhabited cities" that Agamemnon would give dowry to Achilles if he marry one of his daughters. It was later renamed "Skardamoula", while in recent years the ancient name prevailed again. In Kardamyli, refugees resorted from Mystras, after its destruction in 1460 and took refuge in caves, hence they got the name Troupakis. Kolokotronis, together with other chieftains of Mani, designed the 1821 revolution in Kardamyli.

ZORBA THE GREEK Between Stoupa and the new Proastio in Prastova in the mid 1920s, Nikos Kazantzakis with Giorgos Zorbas, set up the lignite mine and the setting of the book written by the great Greek writer, starring "immortal Greek" with existential concerns, who was called "Alexis" in the book. Kazantzakis lived in the magnificent shore of Kalogria in the period 1917-1918. In the southern cape of the bay there is the cave of Kazantzakis, where he wrote his work, while in the northern part of the bay there is the house where he lived. Above the bay, at the edge of the road stands his bust, while, before the entrance to the village and left to the main road, there is the abandoned mine of Prastova.

AGIOS NIKOLAOS OR SELINITSA The name Selinitza comes from the small moon (in Greek: Selini) or small Eleni (Helen), according to: "Selinitza, listening to you, the Moon is shivering, as Paris fondles Helen".

AGIOS NIKON Known as Poliana, it was renamed after Saint Nikon (Agios Nikon) in 1929, in the honour of Agios Nikon of Metanoieite (Regret), who lived and acted in the village during the second half of the 10th century. The Saint toured throughout Mani to enhance and strengthen Christianity (980-998), he converted the Slavs Miliggoi of Taygetos and he lived, according to the tradition, in a cave eastern of the village.

EXOCHORI It was first mentioned as Androuvista in 1278 in a Venetian court document, and in the "Orismon" of the bishop of Mystras, Theodore II Paleologos, drafted in 1440.

THALAMAI 20 km north of Oitilo, there was the ancient town of Thalamai (Koutifari). It was one of the cities of the “League of Free Laconians” and it was located in the area where today it is the village of Thalamai, which, according to Stravon, was called “Boeotians”. During Classical period it had 7,500 inhabitants. On the road from Oitilo to Thalames there was the sacred Oracle of the goddess of seafarers, Ino. The city covered a large area where the Law school and the Courts of that time were located. It is said that Tyndareus, father of Helen and Dioscuri, Castor and Pollux, lived in Thalamai. In the region, some inscriptions have been found, indicating that the inhabitants of Thalamai considered as their protectors the emperors of Rome, Marcus Aurelius, Antonius and Adrianus.

KASTANIA In 1481 the hero Kladas escaped in the mountains of Kastania from the siege of the Turks and arrived in Italy through Porto Kagio.

LAGADA It was a commercial settlement and, during the ancient period, it was a crossing road leading from Sparta to the Messinian coastline. It was built on the territory of Thalamai. It was granted as a feud to N. Atzaglioli in 1336 and the Voultzos family dominated it in 1503.

MILIA According to the tradition, in ancient times at this location, there was a temple of the goddess Athena, in which many priests were deacons.

PROASTIO From the 15th century some areas of Proastio were granted to Palaiologos and Melissinos families. Many people from the known Melissinos family emigrated in Zakynthos and began the dominance of Pourgalis’ generation. It was mentioned as Chora Proastiou and numbered 100 families in 1618. Due to its strong position, Proastio was badly damaged by the Turks, who burned it in 1615 and 1670, and 340 inhabitants emigrated in Taranto of South Italy in 1675. In 1743 it was the seat of the Diocese and it was filled with Byzantine and post-Byzantine monasteric, parish and family churches that reflect the old and intense religious life.

SOTIRIANIKA The archaeological findings, discovered by accident in 1938, suggest the Mycenaean residence in Sotirianika. Among others, gold grave gifts were found in a sarcophagus, such as a two-handled gold cup with raised representations of trees, a gold amphore, a gold disc and a semicircular gold diadem.

KAMPOS AVIAS Many archaeologists place Kampos in the area of ancient Gerinia and in the Homeric Enopi. It is considered, that is, as a successor of the two ancient civilizations. According to Pafsanius -with whom the geographer Ptolemy agrees- Gerinia was a mediterranean city. He identifies it with Enopi, which Homer mentions as one of the seven “seven good cities” of Agamemnon and states that it was called “Gerinia” in his days. Gerinia (and Gerina), according to the traditions preserved by Pafsanius, gave its name to the legendary King of Pylos, Nestor, also called “Gerinios” because Hercules resorted and stayed some time there when he occupied Pylos. Nestor carried there the bones of Machaon, son of Asclepius, who was killed in the war of Troy and buried them at “Rodon”. In the same place there was the “Holy Saint”, where a bronze statue of “wreathed Machaon” had been set up and where “disease healings” were taking place. The Mycenaean domed - royal “tomb of Machaon” dated around 1250 BC, has been found at “Garmpelia” Kampos and maintained in pretty good condition.

GAITSES As for the temples of Dionysus and Artemis (also mentioned by Pafsanius), they are placed northeast of Kampos, near the preserved ancient Pelasgian citadel, in the village Kentro-Brinta Gaitses, where even Valmin sees the legendary sanctuary of “Artemis Limnatida”, placing the ancient “Chirios Napi” (valley of boards) in the ravine of “Koskaraga”. In this ravine are preserved the byzantine walls of the once powerful city of “Marvinitsa”.



KITRIES It was a sea port of Zarnata and a seat of Mani's "Beys", since five out of eight "Beys" of Mani used periodically Kitries as their seat (Tzanetbey Koutifaris, Michalbey Troupakis, Panagiotbey Koumountourakis, Antonbey Grigorakis and Petrobey Mavromichalis). On 8 March 1821 the National Contract of the Greek War of Independence against the Ottoman Empire was signed there, as Petrobey became chieftain of the fight, after the decision taken by his assembled Maniots warlords and notables.

MEGALI MANTINEIA The Venetian governor made it his seat in 1470. The Venetians surrendered the city to the Turks in 1479 and it was released by a local hero named Kladas in 1480. During the 17th century, the city was badly damaged by the Turks and the area was temporarily deserted. In the southeast region of Megali Mantinea, in the Santova ravine, there is the cave "Katafigi" (Shelter), with a small opening at its entrance, from which just one person can pass. The local residents used it as a refuge from pirates and Turkish invasions. During the Orlov Revolt, the Mantinians were tragically killed by the Turk-Albanians, who found them and choked them with burning sulphur or massacred those who managed to get out.

AVIA King Kresefontis renamed the area into Avia after Hercules' daughter and Heraclides Glinos' nursemaid, Avia, who resorted there with the infant Glinos, after being persecuted by the Achaeans. According to Pausanias, it is one of the seven cities that Agamemnon promised to Achilles as a dowry. In the wider Avia area valuable archaeological findings have been discovered, which testify the existence of a pre-Mycenaean civilization.



CASTLES AND TOWERS



CASTLE OF ZARNATA Located near Stavropigio, a mediterranean village smothered in olive groves, built on the slope of the hill.

MEDIEVAL CASTLE- ANO KARDAMYLI Under the medieval castle of the 12th century near Ano Kardamyli, there are the Hellenistic chamber tombs "Dioscuri".

FORTRESS COMPLEX OF TROUPAKIS- MOURTZINOS The fortress complex of Troupakis - Mourtzinos, was donated in 1967 to the Greek State by its previous owners Maria and Eleni Boukouvalea, heirs of Mourtzinos family, in order to house Classic, Byzantine and Folklore Museum.

MALTA- TOWER OF KOUTIFARI-ALOUPI Malta is a tower village of Mani, where the historic Tower of Koutifari-Aloupi can be found.

MALTA- MAVRIKOS TOWER This tower fortress was built in 1814 by Mavrikos, headman of Malta.

KASTANIA- TOWER COMPLEX OF CAPTAIN K. DOURAKIS The five-storey tower complex of Captain K. Dourakis, where Theodore Kolokotronis found asylum and resided, during the famous persecution of thieves in 1803, is preserved in Kastania. He escaped from Kastania to Elafonissos in 1806.



CHURCHES AND MONASTERIES

DOLOI Doloi have several notable churches. The church of Agia Parask-evi – a monastery with a double dome and beautiful murals by Panagiotis Benizelos in 1698; the church of Saint Vasilios at the central square of Kato Doloi, which was built in 1776. The bell tower of the village was repaired after a major earthquake that hit the region; the church of Saint Nikolaos in the Ketseas Tower with murals of 1785; the church of Agia Triada with frescoes of 1739 and the church of Panagia with murals of the 18th century. The monastery church of Saint Nikitas in Ano Doloi has hagiographies of 1752 and it was previously operated as a secret school.

PLATSA The beautiful churches suggest the importance of the area during the Byzantine and post-Byzantine times. In Platsa there are several churches of Byzantine and post-Byzantine years: Church of Agion Panton, Church of Agios Antonios, Church of Ypapanti Sotiros, Church of Kimisis Theotokou, Church of Metamorfosis Sotiros, Church of Profitis Ilias, Church of Panagia Giatrissa, Church of Agia Paraskevi, Church of Agios Ioannis, Church of Agios Dimitrios, Church of Isodia Theotokou, Church of Taxiarches, Church of Agia Marina, Church of Agios Nikon, Church of Agioi Theodori, Church of Agia Triada and Church of Nikolaos Kaminaris.

MONASTERY OF PROPHET HELIAS Located near Gaitses, built on a place that oversees the paths to Ridomo and Pigadia.

ANDROUMPEVITSA The female monastery of Androumpevitsa, a Byzantine building with Mani's architectural elements, is located near the village of Malta.

SOTIROS' MONASTERY In the ravine of Viros, under Kalives, we can find the monastery of the savior (Sotiros), where a traditional Greek festival it is hosted every year.

SAIDONA Monasteries of Samouil, dated on the first half of the 17th century and of Vaidenitsa, dated on the post-Byzantine period) are near the village of Saidona.

