

## KEFALONIA:

THE HIDDEN GEM OF THE IONIAN SEA

- *Jim Tsiatiris – Marios Chronakis*
- *6° Gymnasium of Petroupolis*
- *B5*



(SB: p.51 ex. 6)

# *A summary of the island*

*Kefalonia is the largest island of the Ionian Sea in the western Greece with a surface of about 780 km and is the 6th largest island in Greece after Crete, Euboea, Lesbos, Rhodes and Chios. It is also a separate regional unit of the Ionian Islands region. It was a former Latin Catholic diocese Kefalonia–Zakynthos. The capital city of Cephalaria is Argostoli.*



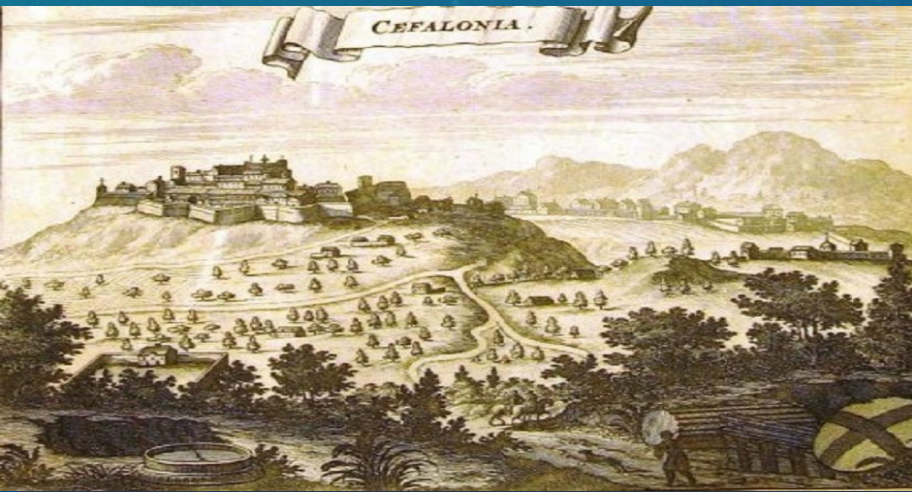
# History of the island



*In the late Roman Empire, Kefalonia was part of the Roman province of Achaëa. The four ancient cities of the island survived into late antiquity, with Samos probably as the island's capital.*

*Following the loss of the bulk of Italy, and the expansion of the Muslims into the Western Mediterranean, the island became a strategically important base of operations for the Byzantine Empire in the area, blocking Muslim raids into the Adriatic and serving as a bridge for expeditions in Italy. The Venetians plundered the island in 1126 until they were defeated and the island conquered by the Ottoman Empire in 1479.*

*Turkish rule lasted only until 1500, when Cephalonia was captured by a Spanish-Venetian army. Venice was conquered by France in 1797 and Cephalonia, along with the other Ionian Islands, became part of the French department of Ithaque. In 1864, Cephalonia, together with all the other Ionian Islands, became a full member of the Greek state.*



# Geography

*The main island of the regional unit is Kefalonia and has a size of 773 km, with a population density of 55 people per km. The town of Argostoli has one-third of the island's inhabitants.*

*Kefalonia lies in the heart of an earthquake zone and dozens of minor, unrecorded tremors occur each year. In 1953, a massive earthquake destroyed almost all of the settlements on the island.*

*Important natural features include Melissani Lake, the Drogarati caves, and the Koutavos Lagoon in Argostoli.*

*The island's highest mountain is Mount Ainos, with an elevation of 1628 meters. The top of Mount Aino is covered with fir trees and is a natural park.*



# *Kefalonia's sights*

## **Melissani Cave:**



The Cave of Melissani in Kefalonia is situated just outside Sami. It is one of the most significant places for tourists to visit in Greece. Surprisingly, there is a lake inside the cave that has trees and forests surrounding it. The cave itself is B-shaped with two chambers or halls separated with land or an island in the center. The roof of one of the halls caved in centuries ago letting sunlight filter in. The depth of the lake is 20 to 30 meters. When the sun is right overhead at noon, the sunlight hitting the turquoise-blue waters creates a magical illusion and the whole Cave of Melissani suddenly feels lit with blue light.

## **Drogaratis Cave:**



The Drogarati Cave in Kefalonia was discovered 300 years ago and opened to the public in 1963. It was discovered when a strong earthquake caused a collapse that revealed the cave's entrance. Drogarati is an impressive cave with remarkable formations of stalactites and stalagmites. Speleologists say that this cave is about 150 million years old and constitutes a rare geological phenomenon. The cave is about 60m deep and has a constant temperature of 18C. Although it has undergone many damages because of earthquakes, stalactites still hang from the roof and form amazing shapes. As water drops fall onto these shapes and solidify, they give them another shape, long but gradually along centuries.

# *The best places to stay in Kefalonia*

1. Argostoli, capital town of Kefalonia
2. Lassi, a tourist hotspot for all ages
3. Lixouri, a popular resort
4. Assos, a great romantic break for couples of all ages
5. Agia Efimia, a holiday destination for all
6. Sami, a good base for exploring the island
7. Poros, a less busy resort for families and couples
8. Skala, a busy package holiday resort
9. Svoronata, a place to stay in Kefalonia for quiet holidays
10. Lourdas, a family friendly destination



# Traditional Kefalonian food



*Like every region and every Greek island, Kefalonia has its own traditional products that make it recognizable.*

*Traditional dishes in Kefalonia are similar to those in the other Ionian Islands, and the ingredients that dominate are meat, fish and seafood, olive oil and local cheeses.*

*Mandola is a traditional candy and is the most famous traditional product of Kefalonia.*

*This sweet is made from almonds and sugar, and its vibrant red color comes from the kind of algae that locals have traditionally used in food coloring.*

*Mandolato is another candy consisting of almonds, honey, sugar and whipped egg whites. During Venetian domination, this sweet treat was considered a delicacy accessible only to aristocrats.*

*Pastokidino is a candy made from wild quince growing in the Paliki Peninsula of Kefalonia. The quince is cooked with sugar, then the almonds and honey are added to make this delicious dessert.*

*Kefalonia also produces excellent honey. Most of them are thyme honey and spruce flowers. Kefalonian honey is known for its very nice aroma and taste.*

*Robola is a grape variety that grows on the slopes of the highest mountain in Kefalonia, Enos. In the winery of the same name you can taste and buy extraordinary wines.*

*The most famous traditional dishes are pies made from spinach and other herbs, and you can also try pies with meat or cod, rabbit stew, strapacade, riganada (slices of oregano bread and local feta cheese), skordalia (potato side dish, garlic puree).*

*Of course, in Kefalonia, as in other Ionian islands, good olive oil is produced.*



# Where to shop and what to buy

For those of you curious about where to shop in Kefalonia, the best place is the town of Argostoli.

In the pedestrian street you can find lots of shops offering everything from typical local crafts, souvenirs and traditional products of Kefalonia island.

There are jewelry pieces also handmade, shops working leather and carving olive wood from which they create useful items and furniture.

There are also products of clothing made by natural fiber or sheep wool, hand-painted tablecloths, mats for home and ceramic products made by hand.

A short distance from Argostoli, other villages have their choice of shops. You will find a lot of art and pottery in Skala. Lassi has a variety of shops where you can buy souvenirs of all kinds. Fiskardo has a couple of shops of clothes and crafts. Worth a special note of the island's wine production Robola, real institution throughout Kefalonia wine production, but also honey, olive oil, cosmetics based on olive oil and spices.





# *Where to have fun*

As the island is gradually developing, things to do in Kefalonia are many. Due to the interesting reefs and underwater caves at the coastline of Kefalonia, some diving centers have opened. These centers offer courses and diving trips in the Ionian Sea, while even diving trips to Melissani Sea Cave are organized to explore the magnificent lake bottom.

Some beaches of Kefalonia island, including Antisamos and Agia Paraskeui, have water sports centers with fun games. Windsurfing is also practiced in the peninsula of Lixouri, while the countryside of the island is great for hiking. Old footpaths have been signposted and lead to monasteries, Medieval castles, mountainous villages and secluded beaches.

Some of the best things to do in Kefalonia are: Sightseeing, to go on tours, to visit beaches and villages, to eat and drink all of the traditional foods and drinks of the island , to participate in sports, to go shopping in one of the island many stores and many other fun things and activities.





*Thanks for watching*