



The best MARCO POLO Insider Tips

Our top 15 Insider Tips

INSIDER TIP ▶ Healthy eating

The Polyphemus taverna on Ithaca serves lots of vegetarian and low-fat Greek food → p. 36

INSIDER TIP ▶ Guided hikes

If you enjoy nature, want to know more about Mediterranean plants and hear all about Odysseus, then take a guided hike across Ithaca with Ester van Zuylen (photo right) → p. 37

INSIDER TIP ▶ In a sea of flowers

On the terrace of the Kástro taverna on Kefaloniá you can sit below a Venetian castle between countless colourful flowers → p. 47

INSIDER TIP ▶ Traces of the ancient past

The Archaeological Museum on Léfkas is particularly attractive and there is also information about musical instruments, the monetary history of the island and the ancient art of weaving → p. 54

INSIDER TIP ▶ Special restaurant

As one of the most unusual restaurants in the Ionian Sea, the Portokáli on Zákynthos serves excellent cuisine in beautiful surroundings, with modern art, and sometimes even with live music → p. 77

INSIDER TIP ▶ Stylish living

On Zákynthos an old olive press, grain mill and wine cellar has been converted into a very atmospheric hotel, the Archontikó Village. Guests may choose to stay in a variety of charming, well-appointed maisonettes or apartments; the swimming pool is situated in a lush garden full of blooms → p. 80

INSIDER TIP ▶ Dream accommodation

The name says it all: the small establishment of Dreams on Kefaloniá offers lovely accommodation in one of eight studios with green lawns that stretch all the way down to the beach and its private beach bar → p. 50

INSIDER TIP ▶ Face to face with Onassis

In Nidrí on Léfkas you can reach your hand out to the famous multimillionaire, but you can't shake it, because the hand, like the whole man, is made of bronze → p. 56

INSIDER TIP ▶ Under your own steam

One rather unique way to explore the Ionian waters is on a guided trip offered by a sporty couple on Kefaloniá. Not only do they rent out kayaks but they also offer multi-day trips around Kefaloniá with visits to the small neighbouring islands → p. 93

INSIDER TIP ▶ Seaside oasis

In the studios and holiday cottages of Daphne's on Zákynthos, pure relaxation is guaranteed → p. 80

INSIDER TIP ▶ A fisherman as host

In the taverna Porto Roulis in Drossia on Zákynthos, the host Dioníssi mostly serves only what he has caught himself → p. 77

INSIDER TIP ▶ Clear view

You can see almost the whole island from Áno Gerakári on Zákynthos and you are far from any traffic – a beautiful place for a picnic → p. 67

INSIDER TIP ▶ Farmer with a forest taverna

In the Oásis on Léfkas, the hosts usually only serve products from their own farm: lamb and kid, cheese and yogurt → p. 58

INSIDER TIP ▶ Sleep surrounded by blossoms

Trifílli guesthouse on Kefaloniá is completely covered with flowering plants → p. 50

INSIDER TIP ▶ Miniature golf in Stonehenge?

On Zákynthos you can forget the boredom of many miniature golf parks and go on a world trip – a themed course has scenes from all over the world such as the Golden Gate Bridge and Stonehenge → p. 79



BEST OF ...

GREAT PLACES FOR FREE

Discover new places and save money

● Discover nature

In the botanical garden *Cephalonia Botanica* on Kefaloniá you will find yourself alone with the flora of the Ionian Islands, because apart from a few school groups, no one else visits. Information panels have the names of the flowers, herbs, trees and shrubs and you can also find a nice spot for a picnic. Entrance is free → p. 41

● Be a knight

The admission-free *Kastro*, above the Livátho Valley on Kefaloniá, looks like a medieval adventure playground for the whole family and offers a fantastic view over the fertile stretch of land to the sea and to the island mountains of Énos → p. 43

● Noble living

In the *Lixóuri Museum* you can experience how the rich Kefalonians lived more than a century ago, at no cost. The stately villa's ceiling frescoes alone would be unaffordable today → p. 45

● Collect some Grecian pitch

At the *tar springs in Keri* on Zákynthos visitors can collect a small amount of pitch as it comes out of the ground and take it home as a free souvenir. Best to keep it in a very tight container ... → p. 70

● Visit those in need of protection

In the *National Marine Park Exhibition Centre* on Zákynthos, you can learn more about sea turtles (photo) and the fauna of the marine national park. You can also enjoy the ceramic works of art and keep the children busy with arts and crafts → p. 72

● Liquid gold

During the winter you can see how olive oil is made at a modern *olive press* in Lithákia on Zákynthos (or hear the explanation throughout the whole year), an olive oil tasting is part of the experience → p. 71

●●● Dots in guidebook refer to 'Best of ...' tips

ONLY ON THE IONIAN ISLANDS

Unique experiences

● Regional cuisine

To unveil the mysteries of Ionian Island cuisine, book an evening cooking course with Vassilikí and Giórgos Balí in the village of *Karavádos* on Kefaloniá. Herbs and other ingredients are gathered from their garden and then enjoyed with other international guests → p. 91

● Ionian wine

Wine has been cultivated on all the Ionian Islands for millennia. The white *Robóla*, which is considered to be typical of the islands, is mainly produced by the *wine cellars* on Kefaloniá. They are open to visitors and also offer free wine tastings → p. 43

● Unique icons

Icons are omnipresent in Greece but the Ionian Islands have evolved a distinct form of icon painting developed under the Venetian influence. In the *Zákynthos Museum* (photo) in the island's capital you can see classic Byzantine icons as well as works in the Ionian School typical of the islands → p. 74

● Hoping for miracles

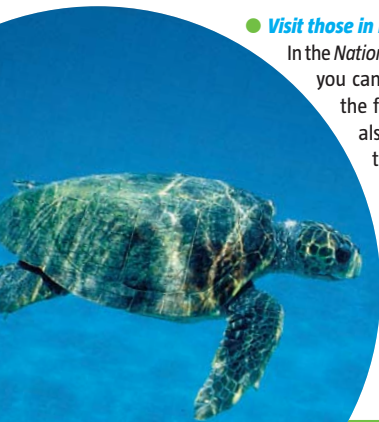
The saints play an important role in the life of the islanders, who pray to them for help. The *Church of Saint Dioníssios* in Zákynthos Town is very impressive and pilgrims visit the sarcophagus of the island saint all day long → p. 75

● Listen to kantádes

The Zakyntians have a reputation as the Greeks who love to sing. Operatic arias and classical songs are sometimes even heard in tavernas. Everyone sings along when the typical Zakyntian *kantádes* are sung, as it happens every evening in the *Varkaróla Taverna* in Zákynthos Town → p. 80

● A social enterprise

Delicious homemade drinks (those that can otherwise only be enjoyed in private households) are produced and served in the *Bell Tower Café* in Argostóli Kefaloniá, an initiative run by people with disabilities. Try their almond juice *soumáda* or plum *vissináda*. Dried herbs, jams and preserved fruit are also sold → p. 47



ONLY IN

THE PERFECT ROUTE

LOVELY ZÁKYNTHOS

From the international ferry port of Pátras the trip goes 70km/43mi to the small port of 1 **Killíni** → p. 81. From there the car ferries cross to 2 **Zákynthos Town** → p. 74. With its museums and spacious squares filled with street cafés, the town itself is worth a day's visit. You can spend another day on the Skopós Peninsula with its National Park Exhibition Centre and the lovely Gerákas Beach as well as the beautiful beaches around the Gulf of Laganás. On the way back you can also pay a visit to Macherádo with its typical island church. From the hamlet of 3 **Ágios Nikólaos** → p. 67 (photo left) you can cross to Pessáda on Kefalonía during midsummer. If the ferry is not running, you will first need to return to Pátras via Killíni and from there take the ferry to 4 **Póros** → p. 46 on Kefalonía.

THE LARGEST OF THEM ALL

From 5 **Pessáda** → p. 51 you can stop at the Monastery of Ágios Andréas and then the Kástro Ágios Geórgios which has a lovely view of the island's capital 6 **Argostóli** → p. 40. It is a particular good place to explore the island from. A ferry leaves several times a day to 7 **Lixouri** → p. 45 with its beautiful beaches on the southern coast of the Palíki Peninsula. Two full-day tours also lead to the north and the south of the island (see p. 86/87). From 8

Sámi → p. 46 with its remains of an ancient city and the Melissáni Cave (photo right), which you can explore by boat, you can head to Vathí on Ithaca, the fabled island of the mythical hero.

ON ODYSSEUS' ISLAND

You can spend a whole day in the island capital 9 **Vathí** → p. 35 with short walks to some of the locations supposedly from 'The Odyssey', and short boat trips to tiny beaches. In the interior of the island the route leads via the Monastery of Katharón and the village church of Anogi (worth a visit) to **Kióni** → p. 34, the most beautiful village on the island which is in the north. Here you can even try your hand as a captain and rent a motor boat. From the neighbouring village of 11 **Fríkes** → p. 34 small car ferries travel to Vassilíki in the south of Léfkas.

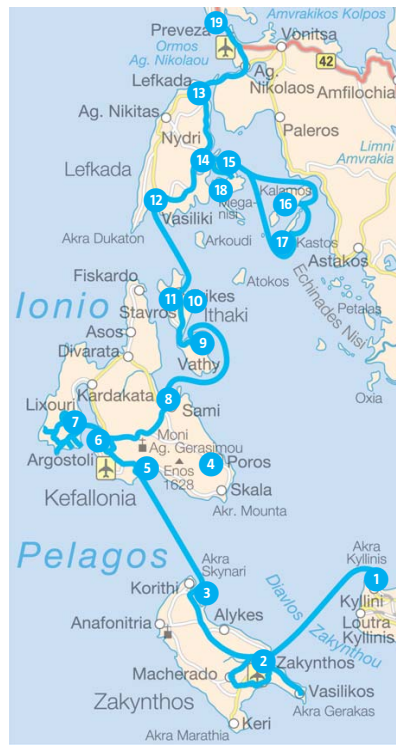
Experience the many facets of the Ionian Islands when you go island-hopping between Léfkas and Zákynthos from Pátras to Préveza

WHITE ROCKS & LONG BEACHES

Just west of 12 **Vassilíki** → p. 57 the Lefkáta Peninsula, with its characteristic white rocks, stretches out to the south. Its sandy beaches under high cliffs are some of the most attractive in the whole country. The island capital 13 **Lefkáda** → p. 55 is ideal for a stroll and museum visits, while the Ionian Sea here offers some of the best surf and kite spots. The main holiday resort of the island is the port town 14 **Nidrí** → p. 56, where various boat excursions are available throughout the season.

ISOLATED ISLANDS

One of the boat trips is to 15 **Skórpios** → p. 63, the private island of the once world famous ship owner Aristotle Onassis and his wife Jacqueline Kennedy. However, only the beach is accessible to the general public. Occasionally, excursion boats also travel to the inhabited – yet incredibly quiet and peaceful – islands of 16 **Kálamos** → p. 62 and 17 **Kastós** → p. 62, which are so isolated that they are unknown even to Greeks. Several times a day small car ferries travel to the island of 18 **Meganísi** → p. 62, offshore of Léfkas, with its three villages which you can comfortably explore on foot. At the end of your tour you can return from Lefkáda via a causeway to the mainland and through a tunnel to the village 19 **Préveza** → p. 63 and from there you can drive 85km/53mi to the international ferry port of Igoumenítsa, from where the large car ferries depart several times a day for Italy.



1200km/746mi.

Driving time: 30 hours without ferry crossings.

Recommended duration: 12–14 days.

Detailed map of the route on the back cover, in the road atlas and the pull-out map