

ICICTE
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SIGHTSEEING
CORFU

Corfu Sightseeing

A great opportunity to experience some of the most sensational scenery ever! Drive along the coast of Paleokastritsa known as the Capri of Greece, see turquoise waters and spectacular rock formations and visit the spots described...

Achillion

Achillion was built from 1888 to 1891 by the Italian architect Kardilo, on behalf of Elisabeth, Empress of Austria. It is situated near the village of Gastouri, where, in former times, the mansion of the philosopher Petros Armenis Vrailas stood. Built in the architectural style of Pompeii, it includes elements of the Ionic, Roman and Aeolic traditions. The castle was called Achillion in honour of Achilles, whom the Empress admired. After her death in 1898, Achillion was not inhabited for nine years, until its purchase by Kaiser Wilhelm II in 1907. The Kaiser made several alterations including removing the two statues of Achilles, adding the House of the Knights in order to house his battalion, and rearranging the gardens. During the World Wars, the palace was used as a hospital and a headquarters.

After World War II, Achillion became a public estate. Inside the palace, one can admire beautiful paintings by Italian and Austrian painters, the most impressive being the paintings of Aggelos Gialinas, a painter from Corfu. The most remarkable mural is the fresco of the reception chamber showing Achilles dragging the dead body of Hector in front of the Trojan walls. Exhibits include statues representing heroes from ancient Greek history and mythology, as well as portraits and pots. In the chambers, one can admire the personal belongings of Elisabeth and of Wilhelm II (furniture, jewels, etc). The decoration of the Catholic chapel housed in the palace is also of striking beauty. Scattered between the beautifully decorated gardens and the fountains stand the beautiful statues of the Nine Muses and ancient Greek philosophers, as well as a large statue of Achilles created in 1909 by the German sculptor Goetz, ordered by Wilhelm II. The most impressive of all is the statue of “Achilles Dying” created by the German sculptor Earnest Gustav Herter.



Aggelokastro

The Byzantine fortress known as Aggelokastro (Castle of Angels) is situated near the Krini, opposite Palaiokastritsa, at an altitude of 330 m (990 ft). It was built in the 13th century by Michael Angelo II, son of Epirus archbishop Michael Angelo I. Tradition says that the founder was looking for the most dangerous and the steepest rock, to build upon it an impregnable fortress. Thus, he came across the area of Aggelokastro where there stood a fortress, courtesy of the archbishop of Epirus. The fort's purpose



was to protect the inhabitants from the pirates of Africa and the Venetians. From the castle, they fought successfully against the pirates of Genoa in 1403. For a while it served as the island's capital as the governor lived there. The castle's entrance is an arched gate, but inside are only ruins of the chambers and the storage rooms. In a dark cave, a church is dedicated to the archangels Michael and Gabriel, where one can admire a remarkable fresco of the Virgin Mary.

Gardiki Fortress

This Byzantine fortress stands on a hill between Agios Mathaios and Messogi. It is said to have been built by Michael Angelo II. The only reminder of the castle are ruins dating back to the 13th century. The fortress consists of eight strong towers creating its octagonal shape. The excavations in the surrounding area shed light upon the tools used in the Palaeolithic Era.



Kanoni

World-famous Kanoni is situated south of the Palaiopoli peninsula. It was named Kanoni (cannon) after the battery of artillery established by the French in 1798. One of the battery's cannons still stands at the tourist kiosk. In front of Kanoni is the Monastery of Vlaherna, linked to the mainland by a cement dock and built in the 17th century. From there one can visit Pontikonissi. According to legend, this was the ship of Phaiakes which, after taking Ulysses to Ithaki, was petrified.

Another legend claims that this is the rock where Ulysses crashed because of a storm. On the island of Pontikonissi stands the Byzantine chapel of Pandokrator. The spectacular view from Kanoni inspired the German painter Becklin to draw "The Island of the Dead." This location is one of the most charming parts of the island and has always been the place where the island's inhabitants love to promenade.



Mon Repo

Mon Repo stands where the ancient city used to be, 3 km south of the capital. Built on a very large estate in 1831, initially it was a summer residence for the English high commissioner F. Adam. Later it became the summer residence for the Greek royal family. Two discoveries were made in the surrounding area: in 1822, the temple of Asclepios (6th century BC), and in 1912–1914, the altar of the Goddess Diana (7th century BC). At Mon Repo are beautiful views from the hill of Analipsi, the ruins of the ancient city, and the basilica of Palaiopolis. The beach at Mon Repo is lovely, attracting many tourists during the summer.



The basilica, the only Byzantine monument of Mon Repos, was built in the 5th century AD by the bishop Jovian, on the ruins of a Roman odeum. It was destroyed several times: by the Vandals and Goths in the 6th century, by the Saracens and the Normans in the 11th century, by the Turks in 1537 and, finally, in the Second World War. It was rebuilt twice: after its destruction in the 11th century, with three aisles and a narthex, and again, in 1680, by the Cretan monk Arsenios Caloudis.

In 1968, all the early Christian architectural parts, such as parapets, were collected and stored in the Old Palace Museum. The mosaics of the church were restored in 1960 and 1969.

Monastery of Panayia Palaeokastritsa

This monastery for men was built in 1228 AD on the peak of Palaiokastritsa's hill. The monastery's church, courtyard, and monks' cells were built after its establishment, around the 18th century. The monastery owns a small but valuable collection of Byzantine and post-Byzantine icons, holy books, holy utensils, and vestments.



Monastery of Platytera

The monastery of Platytera was built in the 18th century BC in Corfu's suburb, Mandouki. The monastery was renovated after its destruction by the French in 1799, during the Franco-Russian-Turk war. In the church's interior, are the admirable wood-carved icon stand made by Nikolaos Koutouzis, valuable icons from the Ionian and Cretan Art School, and paintings of post-Byzantine art, such as the "Last Supper" and the "Lavatory" (Nikolaos Kandounis), the "Apocalypse" (Theodoros Poulakis), the "Virgin Mary Holding an Infant" (Emanuel Tzane), and "Doomsday" (Klotzas). In the area, are the graves of Ioannis Kapodistias, Greece's one-time Governor, and of Fotis Tzavelas, a brave Greek fighter during the Greek Revolution.



Panagia ton Xenon

This three-nave basilica was built in the island's capital. At first it belonged to the Epirotes, who came to the island having been persecuted by the Turks. The church's interior is unique due to the valuable icons, utensils and votive offerings, most of which were transferred here from churches at Epirus. The icons, created by Tzanes, are remarkable, and the same applies to the church's hagiographies, painted by N. Kountouzis in the 18th century.



Roman Spas

The village of Benitses is situated 13.5 km south of Kerkira. Near the village, on a private estate, traces of Roman spas have been found. According to studies, during the Roman Era the area was a resort, exclusively for the wealthy Roman conquerors and their families. Today the area is one of the island's most majestic resorts.

Ancient Kerkira

Ancient Kerkira was discovered during the demolition of the Venetian fortress of San Salvatore in 1843, in the area which the locals call Palaaiopolis, on the peninsula ending at Kanoni. It was established under the name of Chersoupolis by the Corinthians in the 8th century BC. The wall (4th century BC) surrounding the city from three sides was built in such way so as to be surrounded by the port of Alkinoos (the current bay of Garitsa) to the north, the Lagoon of Chalkiopoulos (also known as the bay of Chelaios) to the west, and the sea of Mon Repo to the east. The market of the city was built north of the current bay of Garitsa. The acropolis was built on the present position of Analipsi. The only existing tower of the wall was situated at the entrance to the port of Alkinoos, while today it is the foundation of the church of Agios Athanasios. Not far from the cemetery, can be seen the tower of Neratzihia, where the church of the Virgin Mary stood, and the preserved statue.

This is also the area of the ancient aqueduct. In the area of Garitsa, archaeologists have discovered traces of tombs of the Archaic and Classical eras, which were part of the town's ancient cemetery. Among them, the most significant is the statue of Menekratis. The town's fleet sought refuge



in the well-protected port of the bay of Chelaios. The bay's entrance was formed by the two islets of the church of Vlaherna, along with green Pontikonissi which is opposite. The town was characterized by scattered temples of all sizes, built by the first inhabitants from Corinth and Evoia. The largest and most significant temples, built in the 7th and 6th centuries BC, are the Temples of Hera, Diana and Kardaki (built in honour of Apollo) and the Temple of Dionysus. Relics and findings from these temples are exhibited in the local Archaeological Museum.

The Archaeological Museum

The Archaeological Museum of Corfu is located on Vraila Street, near the seaside highway of Garitsa. The most significant archaeological finds of the island, which were first exhibited in the Museum of the Palaces, are kept here. The most interesting of these exhibits is the western stone pediment of Gorgo (17 m. wide and over 3 m. tall) and part of the temple of Diana (590–580 BC), constructed by a Corinthian artist. The oldest Greek pediment represents the winged Gorgo surrounded by snakes, her two children Pegasus and Chrysaor (according to myth, they were born from her blood after her decapitation by Perseus) and two lion-panthers, while on the sides are representations



of the Battles of the Titans. According to archaeologists, the pediment had vivid colors, while Gorgo was connected with Diana, the goddess who protected the animals and the beasts. Another exhibit is part of the left archaic pediment found during the excavation in the location of Figaretto (500 BC), which represents a scene of a bacchic symposium.

Neolithic Era findings from Sidari include pots, utensils, and representations of the lion head from the Temple of Hera (7th century BC). Other interesting exhibits are the archaic lion (7th century BC), discovered near the statue of Menekratis, as well as a livid sink from Attica (6th century BC).

Among others, there are re-

markable finds from the tombs of Garitsa (7th–6th centuries BC); the Temple of Roses (5th century BC); the Temple of Diana at Kanoni (480 BC); Mon Repo (among them the Kouros Head in the photo: made of Kerkyraean poros, 535–530 BC); the Temple of Apollo; statuettes of typical ancient craftwork; objects made of copper and ivory; a tombstone praising the ancient hero Arnias; the capital of the column of Xembaros (6th century BC); as well as coins, the most significant one depicting a cow, released after the liberation of Corfu from the Corinthians.

The Church of Agios Spyridonas

The church of Agios Spyridonas is dedicated to the patron saint of the island of Corfu. Built in 1589, it replaced the older church of Sorokos which was demolished because of the construction of the walls of the town. Saint Spyridonas took part in the Ecumenical Synod which took place in Nice (325 AD). On the church exterior is a tall, castellated bell-tower with a clock resembling the one of the church of Agios Georgios



in Venice. Inside is a marble temple of Kararas and Paros (M. Mawers, architect). The painter Spyros Prosalentis made the icons on the church temple. The most valuable treasure of the church is the golden shrine made in Venice in which Saint Spyridonas's remains are kept. At first these remains were kept in Constantinople, but after its fall, they were transferred to the island of Corfu. The wonderful icons on the dome have golden frames, are divided into 17 pieces, and represent, among other things, the life of Saint Spyridonas. The icons were first made by the hagiographer Panagiotis Doxaras in 1727, but because of their decay from moisture, they were replaced by Nikolaos Aspiotis's copies in 1850–1870. On December 12, there is a feast in honour of the saint. The litanies of Agios Spyridonas are also famous, as they have been performed here since the Venetian years, and they are connected with the history of the island.

The Museum of Asian Art

The Museum of Asian Art is housed in the Palace of Saints Michael and George, in the town of Kerkira. The Museum is unique throughout Greece, and the exhibits were originally from China, Japan, Korea, Tibet, Nepal, India, Pakistan, and Siam. Most of the current exhibits were collected by the diplomats Manou, Sini-ossoglou, Almonahou, and the ambassador N. Hatzivassiliou. Among the exhibits are Chinese works of all Chinese eras: The Sheang era (1500–1027 BC), the Chehou era (1027–221 BC), the Han era (221 BC–220 AD), the Soung dynasty (960–1279 AD), the Ming dynasty (1368–1644 AD), and the Kamakoura era (1192–1338 AD). The most significant exhibits include the infamous copper cauldron used for worshipping rites from the Ming dynasty, tomb statues from the Tang dynasty, a wooden Japanese statue of a temple's guard, and facades from the Japanese theater, Noh.



The New Fortress-Fortress of Agios Markos

This fortress stands on the hill of Agios Markos, where the old harbor used to be. Built by the Venetians (1576–1589), it was later altered and improved by the French and the English. The fortress consisted of two ramparts and two castles. On the left, was the rampart of Sarandaris and the rampart of Agios Athanassios, both linked to the castle by a triple wall. The two fortresses, the Old and the New, were linked by an underground arcade and a rampart wall which surrounded the area of the contemporary



city. The New Fortress had access to its ramparts through corridors, tunnels and underground arcades. Today only two gates are left standing with the emblem of St Markos' lion. The new fortification played a significant defensive role, even in recent wars, as its arcades were used as refuge for the people. The fortress is famous for its architecture.

The Old Fortress

The Old Fortress is situated on an islet and joined with the town by a cement bridge which used to be wooden and movable. Before the bridge, is the marble statue of German Field Marshal Schulenburg, who bravely defended the island during the Turkish siege in 1716. Carved by the Italian sculptor A. Corradini during the Venetian Rule, it was originally housed in the fortress. Between the Old Fortress and the town lies the canal of Contra Fossa (150 m long, 10–15 m wide), with the Stands of Saborniano and Martinego. The construction of the building began with the Venetians, after the Turkish siege in 1537, and was completed in 1588. It



had four gates and two peaks (Korifes), thus the island was named Corfu. The first peak (51 m high) was built by the Byzantines and called Castell del Mar (alias Castell Vecchio) while the second peak (65 m high) was built by the Venetians and called Castell di Terra (alias Castell Nuovo). The Venetians extended the city beyond the fortress, while in the interior they built arches, prisons, storage rooms, and new buildings for the soldiers, the nobles, and the politicians. The new town called for a new fortification and a new fortress. The underground arches of the fortress prove the theory that it was linked underground to the opposite islet of Ptihia (alias Vido). Today, one can still see the ruins of the Venetian walls, the additional fortifications built by the English, the clock tower, the Doric buildings, and the church of Agios Georgios, built in 1840 during the English occupation.

The Palaces of St. Michael & St. George

Situated near Spiniada Square, these palaces were built (1819–1823) by the English major S. Whitmore in the architectural style popular during King George's reign. Built as the English high commissioner's residence, they later housed the headquarters of the Monasterial Battalion of St Michael and St George, founded in 1818 by distinguished English employees of the colony on the Ionian islands. From 1864 to 1913 the palaces were used as a royal summer residence. Today the palaces house the Public Library, the Archaeological Service, and the Museum of Asian Art which was donated by the



Manou family. Inside the building, the chambers are decorated with carved mythological representations of the Ionian island, created by Prosalentis. There are also lavish chandeliers, and the windows exhibit the medals that St Michael and St George won. In the beautifully decorated gardens, the statue of the English high commissioner F. Adam is a dominating figure.

The Town Hall

The Town Hall stands near Spiniada Square at Evgeniou Voulgari Street. The Renaissance stone construction with carved walls was built by the Venetians (1663–1693). Among the interiors carved representations, the most prominent one, placed in 1691, is the bust of Morozini surrounded by four children—symbols of his virtues. At first, the building was a lodge for the nobles (Loggia Nobilei) and a club for the Venetian fleet's officers. In 1720, one of the most significant Greek theaters was housed here, called San Giacomo because of the neighboring catholic church of the same name built in 1632. Since 1903 AD, the building has been used as a Town Hall, where the town's new theater is also housed.



